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Wilfred L. Knox

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I

THE FAILURE OF ESCHATOLOGY

THE meeting between Paul and the philosophers of Athens on the Areopagus revealed the limitations of the apocalyptic version of Christianity which he had been content to accept from the Church of Palestine. The meeting was apparently an accident,¹ the result of Paul's inability to keep silence in a city of such intense and misguided piety, and the publicity which the arrival of a new variety of teaching attracted in a city so given over to curiosity. Paul's speech began with the commonplaces by which Hellenistic Judaism sought to establish the unity of God; they were acceptable enough, for they were largely borrowed from conventional philosophy, though they were scarcely novel or interesting.² But these commonplaces were quite inconsistent with the belief that the world could come to an end. An end of the world presented no difficulty to the followers of Epicurus; the world was the result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and there was no reason why the atoms should not at any moment fly asunder.³ But to the godless believers in atoms the rest of Paul's speech was merely a borrowing of fragments of the absurd theistic philosophies which they had long since rejected.

Stoics went further than other schools of philosophy in the direction of admitting the possibility of an end of the world. According to the strict view of the Stoa the world was governed by a divine principle of intelligent fire, permeating the whole, and passing by degrees from its nature of fire into the other elements of the cosmos. In immense periods of time it must return again to its nature of pure fire. Thus at

¹ Acts 17. 16 *seqq.* seems to imply that Paul had no intention of preaching there. Meyer's suggestion (*Urspr. u. Anf.* 3. 90) that he had any serious intention of conquering the Greek world for Christianity is hardly probable; he was not really concerned with philosophy. The "affliction" of 1 Thess. 3. 7 may of course refer to his failure at Athens; but it may refer to some unknown incident. It is not easy to reconcile Meyer's view here with the statement (3. 309 n. 2): "Athens, as is well known, from Sulla to Hadrian was quite unimportant (*lag ganz darnieder*) and was only of consideration as a place of study for strangers, especially Romans."

² For the speech cf. *Jos. c. Ap.* 2. 22 (190), the prologue to *Or. Sib.* (Fr. 1. 1-9, *Ap. and Ps.* 2. 377), *Wisd.* 13. 3 *seqq.*, Philo, *De Spec. Legg.* 1 (*De Sacr.*), 3 (271, M. 2. 253), *ib.* (*De Mon.*) 1 (16 *seqq.*, M. 2. 214), *De Virt. (De Poen.)*, 2 (183, M. 2. 406), *De Sacr. Ab. et Cain*, 18 (67, M. 1. 175), *De Conf. Ling.* 27 (136, M. 1. 425). For the quotation from Aratus cf. pp. 26 and 90.

³ *Placita* 2. 4. 6 and 10 (*Dox. Gr.* 331).

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the end of recurring periods all things returned to a state of incandescence and the process then began once more.¹ The soul of man, being a spark of that divine fire, might indeed retain its conscious existence until the next of these conflagrations; survival beyond that date was impossible, while it was uncertain whether that measure of survival was proper to man as such or only to the wise.² Later developments of Stoicism allowed a larger measure of transcendence to God, recognising that the divine fire or reason was concentrated as a dominant element in the firmament;³ they were therefore able to allow a greater transcendence to the principle of reason in man, which beside being diffused through the whole body was also particularly concentrated as a dominant element in the heart (which was regarded by most Stoics as the seat of reason rather than the head). This tradition allowed both for the real transcendence of God and for the immortality of the soul; but came no nearer to believing in the possibility of an end of the world. Panaetius had even expressed doubts as to the return of all things to the state of fire at the suitable periods of time.⁴

But the Stoicism of Paul's age had no doubts on this point. It was faced with the task of reconciling philosophy and religion with science in the form of astrology. To those acquainted with the teachings of astrology there could be no question of the end of the world. The end of each Great Year must witness the return of the stars to their original positions at the first moment of creation, and this for the Stoics simply meant that all things must return to their original state of fire; science had proved that Panaetius' doubts were unfounded. From this state the world must proceed to an exact repetition of all the events of every preceding cycle; whatever the length of each cycle of the Great Year might be, there could be no doubt that it must witness a precisely identical procession of the heavenly bodies through their courses, and therefore a precise repetition of the events of all its predecessors. The fate of man throughout all the ages must be an infinite

¹ For the strictly physicist view as laid down by Heraclitus (Diog. Laert. 9. 8) and carried on by the earlier Stoa cf. Diog. Laert. 7. 142 and 156; *Placita* 1. 7. 33 (*Dox. Gr.* 305).

² Diog. Laert. 7. 157 for the difference between Cleanthes and Chrysippus on this point; *Placita* 4. 7. 3 (*Dox. Gr.* 393).

³ Diog. Laert. 7. 147 and 159; Ar. Did. *Epit.* 29. 7 (*Dox. Gr.* 465) and *Placita* 4. 4. 4 (*ib.* 390). Cf. Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* 2. 11. 29 *seqq.* Bevan (*Stoics and Sceptics* 43) traces the doctrine back to Zeno. It certainly is true that the later Stoics made this distinction, but it seems doubtful how far Zeno allowed this measure of transcendence to God and how far he was forced at times to use it by the difficulty of expressing a pantheistic system in language drawn from a tradition of theistic religion.

⁴ Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* 2. 46. 118; cf. 2. 33. 85; Diog. Laert. 7. 142.

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series of identical details.¹ The Stoics, though they might be falsely charged with believing in the end of the world in virtue of their doctrine of periodical returns to the original state of fire,² were less able than any other school of philosophy to believe in its final termination. Even if the latest development of Stoicism had forsaken the strict demands of its own logic so far as to allow for some real measure of immortality to the best and wisest of mankind, the privilege was normally reserved for a select few.³ Thus the conception of a general resurrection at the end of the world was ridiculous and impious; it is possible that some of the audience were sufficiently familiar with Oriental beliefs to know that something of the kind was to be found in the religion of Persia; Paul's Gospel may have seemed a variation of that contemptible and barbarous religion, as indeed it was in so far as Judaism was indebted to Zoroastrianism for a large measure of its eschatology.⁴ The final verse of his speech as recorded in the Acts (17. 31) could only arouse the ridicule of the philosophers of Athens.

There had indeed been a period, nearly a century before Paul addressed the Areopagus, when apocalyptic hopes had been widely entertained in the Hellenistic world. They may indeed, like the hopes of Judaism, have drawn their ultimate inspiration from the religions of Babylonia and Persia. But they had been amalgamated with beliefs of an entirely different character and drawn from sources whose contact with the East, if any such existed, lay far back in history. The belief in successions of world-ages lay behind Heraclitus and Hesiod; the latter's conception had become part of the permanent stock of Greek culture, while the former's series of world-ages beginning and ending in fire would appear to have been necessitated by the fact that the other elements had already been adopted by his predecessors.⁵

¹ For these cycles cf. Ar. Did. *Epit.* 37 *ap.* Eus. *Pr. Ev.* 15. 9. 1 (*Dox. Gr.* 469); Philo, *De Aet. Mund.* 3 (8, M. 2. 489); Chrysippus *ap.* Lact. *Div. Inst.* 7. 23; Philo, *De Cher.* 32 (114, M. 1. 159) (here Philo has incorporated a fragment implying reincarnation in successive world-periods, a view which he certainly does not hold); Orig. *c. Cels.* 5. 20.

² Philo, *De Aet. Mund. loc. cit.* and *passim*. I find it difficult to believe, in spite of Cumont, that Philo could really commit himself so completely not merely to abandoning belief in the end of the world, but actually to polemising against it. Cf. Diels, *Dox. Gr.* intr. p. 107.¹ The interest of the author in Judaism can be paralleled from Hecataeus *ap.* Diod. Sic. 40. 3 and Varro *ap.* Aug. *De Consens. Evang.* 1. 30 (xxii); see also below, pp. 45 *seqq.*

³ See below, p. 75.

⁴ For the Iranian influence on the origin and development of the eschatology of the O.T. cf. Bousset, *Rel. des Judenthums* 578 *seqq.*; Meyer, *Urspr. u. Anf.* 2. 58 *seqq.* For the general Greek opinion of Persian religion see Note I.

⁵ Water by Thales and air by Anaximenes. Earth could not be used for the purpose, since this would have involved a relapse into mere mythology, cf. Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Glaube der Hellenen* 1. 204.

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Its adoption by the Stoics gave it an enormously increased importance; but by 50 B.C. it was tending to be syncretised with one which was in nature and origin entirely different. In the *Timaeus*, the bible of Hellenistic cosmogony, Plato held that at long intervals, as a result of planetary disturbances, cosmic catastrophes are fated to occur on a vast scale.¹ Elsewhere we learn that these catastrophes are the not unnatural effect of the reversing of the courses of the heavenly bodies.² The source of the scheme appears to be Plato's imagination assisted by the statement of Hecataeus that the Egyptian priests had preserved records of four such changes in the past 11,340 years.³ The belief had many advantages; it harmonised with the old belief in a series of world-ages⁴ and with the remains of the older Minoan civilisations, which could hardly be fitted into the scheme of classical mythology and history; it also explained how barbarians in Egypt and elsewhere appeared to possess a civilisation more ancient than Hellas.

The scheme was even more attractive to exponents of Eastern religions who could claim an older and truer account of one such cosmic catastrophe, the great deluge. When Berossus came from Babylon and introduced the history and astrology of his countrymen to the Greeks, he was entirely ready to accept the probability of a cosmic conflagration to counterbalance the historical deluge, though he corrected the astronomical conceptions of Plato and the Egyptians; the deluge had occurred when all the planets stood in line in the sign of Capricorn, the conflagration would occur when they reached a similar position in Cancer.⁵ His influence led the later Stoics to modify their original belief in periodical conflagrations of a strictly physical character by the inclusion of deluges; in any case the influence of the *Timaeus* in the Alexandrine period might have produced the same effect without his assistance.⁶ After all there was no reason why the period furthest from the conflagration should not be marked by an

¹ *Timaeus* 22 d. For the Great Year see 39 d.

² *Politicus* 269 a *seqq.* How far Plato was influenced by Babylonian astrology is a matter on which I offer no opinion.

³ *Ap.* Herodotus 2. 142.

⁴ For the Hesiodic scheme (*Works and Days* 109 *seqq.*) as an attempt to fit the old beliefs as to the souls of the dead into the Homeric view of the Gods and of history cf. Rohde, *Psyche* 67 *seqq.* (Eng. tr. 1925). Reitzenstein and Schäder, *Studien zum Antiken Syncretismus* 57 *seqq.*, find an Iranian origin for Hesiod.

⁵ Seneca *N.Q.* 3. 29. 1. Cf. Censorinus (*De Die Nat.* 18. 11), where the "winter" of the Great Year is marked by a deluge, its "summer" by a conflagration. It appears that there is no evidence of the latter doctrine in the Babylonian sources (Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des N.T.* 147; cf. Bousset, *Rel. des Judenthums* 573): the Jewish parallels suggest that he invented it in order to win acceptance in philosophical circles.

⁶ Cf. Seneca, *loc. cit.* and Dio Chrys. 36. 42 *seqq.* (v. Arn. 2. 178).

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excess of water. The latest development of Stoic philosophy of the first century B.C. even abandoned the supposedly Babylonian scheme so far as to dissociate the periods of world-catastrophes from the Great Year, leaving the Great Year to be inaugurated by some other suitable event of a portentous character both in heaven and earth.¹ The belief in this form had the advantage of avoiding the destruction of all mankind at the end of each world-period: the individual could hope to survive into the new era.²

The cosmogony of Judaism was a variant of the Babylonian, and Hellenistic Judaism was quite as ready as Berossus to adapt it to the Platonic view of world-catastrophes. The end of the world, an awkward legacy from the tradition of the Scriptures, could easily be reduced to insignificance or omitted entirely.³ This had been found necessary long before Paul excited the ridicule of the Areopagus. On the other hand, world-catastrophes could be employed to enhance the credit of Moses. Not only had he recorded the true story of the deluge, in which he was confirmed by many heathen writers;⁴ he had also recorded a great conflagration. If any one doubted this story he could easily be convinced by a visit to the Dead Sea, where the traces of that disaster were plainly visible.⁵ Further, the story confirmed the modernity of Greek history and so enhanced the prestige and antiquity of Moses.⁶ It could even be claimed that the wise man who had

¹ In Cicero, *De Rep.* 6. 21. 23 and 22. 24 (*Somm. Scip.*), while we have cosmic catastrophes at fixed periods, as in the *Timaeus*, the end of the Great Year is marked by portentous events in heaven and earth (the last Great Year was marked by the eclipse at the death of Romulus); it is not marked, at any rate necessarily, by a cosmic catastrophe. Presumably this is Posidonius. Cf. p. 93.

² Seneca however, following Berossus, believes in catastrophes by flood and fire which annihilate mankind (*loc. cit.* 5).

³ Note the insignificance of the judgment of the world in the Wisdom of Solomon. Philo ignores it or positively controverts it, if he is the author of the *De Aet. Mund.* (see above, p. 3, n. 2).

⁴ Philo, *De Vit. Moys.* 2. 10 (53 *seqq.*, M. 2. 142), with the technical Stoic term *παλιγγενεσία*; cf. *De Aet. Mund.* 3 (9, M. 2. 489); *Wisd.* 10. 4. For the remains of the ark cf. *Jos. Antt.* 1. 3. 6 (93) following Berossus; another proof of the truth of the Bible seems to be implied in Philo's statement that Noah means "righteous" (*Leg. Alleg.* 3. 24 (77, M. 1. 102)); there seems no excuse for this, since Gen. 6. 9 does not imply that the name means "righteous". But Sydyk, the Phoenician deity of Sanchuniathon *ap.* Philo of Byblus (*Eus. Pr. Ev.* 1. 10. 10), means "righteous"; he is also the father of the Dioscuri, Cabeiri, Corybants and Samothracians (*sic*), who were the inventors of ships. I suspect that Philo has incorporated a tradition of Judaism which explained that Sydyk and his sons were a Gentile perversion of the true story of Noah and his sons in the ark.

⁵ Philo, *De Vit. Moys.* *loc. cit.* 56; *Wisd.* 10. 7; *Jos. B. J.* 4. 8. 4 (484). For the two catastrophes by water and fire, cf. *Ad. et Ev.* 50 (*Ap. and Ps.* 2. 152; cf. Wells' note *ad loc.*). Celsus treats the Jewish-Christian last judgment as a misunderstanding of such cosmic disasters (*Orig. c. Cels.* 4. 11); for a similar view of Zoroastrianism, cf. p. 207.

⁶ *Jos. c. Ap.* 1. 2 (9 *seqq.*); cf. p. 36.

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survived the conflagration had behaved as Chrysippus had pointed out that he would be compelled to act, if he and his family were the sole survivors of such a catastrophe.¹ The scheme could of course be combined with the orthodox eschatology; all previous catastrophes could be regarded as rehearsals for the one great event, which was yet to come.² It was normally, however, substituted for the end of the world, where Judaism was in sufficiently close touch with Greek thought to feel the difficulty of the biblical tradition.

Such catastrophes again could be fitted into the scheme of eschatology which regarded history as consisting of a fixed number of world-periods. The Iranian tradition believed in four such periods, while the classical tradition of Hesiod believed in five.³ But the Iranian tradition, at any rate as described by Theopompus,⁴ believed in periods of 3000 years, one of which covered the reign of Ahriman and one the age of conflict. Babylonian tradition as recorded by Berossus recognised two Great Years, one of 600 and one of 3600 ordinary years.⁵ Both were calculated to suggest to Judaism the belief that the duration of the world consisted of six ages, a view which corresponded admirably with the Jewish predilection for the number seven. It was popular in Hellenistic circles, since it corresponded with the value attached by Pythagoras to the number seven, the seven ages of man and the seven planets; to Judaism these were all imitations or else mystical types of the sabbath.⁶ It was obvious that there ought to be six ages of the world, to precede the eternal sabbath of God;⁷ the view was

¹ For Chrysippus cf. Orig. *c. Cels.* 4. 45 and the parallel versions given in v. Arn. *Stoic. Vet. Fr.* 3. 185. For the rabbinical interpretation of the story of Lot's daughters by their belief that they were the sole survivors cf. *Gen. R.* 49. 8. *Clem. Recog.* 1. 32 modifies the tradition by making the intercession of Abraham avert the world-catastrophe.

² 2 Pet. 2. 5 *seqq.*, and cf. the Hellenisation in Lk. 17. 26–28 of the logion of Mt. 24. 37.

³ *Loc. cit.* p. 4, n. 4 above. For the Iranian belief cf. Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras* 139 *seqq.*

⁴ See note on Greek writers and Persian Religion, p. 204. It may perhaps be pointed out here that for the Hellenistic age it is more important to know what Theopompus and Greek opinion thought than what Zoroaster really believed. Cf. also Bousset, *Rel. des Judenthums* 578.

⁵ Syncellus 17a *ap.* Muller, *Fr. Hist. Gr.* 2. 498. 4; *Jos. Ant.* 1. 3. 9 (106).

⁶ Cf. Philo *passim*. In *De Mund. Op.* 30 (89, M. 1. 21 *seqq.*) all but the first two sentences and the last section are Hellenistic; the sabbath alone is a Jewish addition. *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 6. 16. 145 (815 P) mentions a book on the subject by Hermippus of Berytus.

⁷ 2 En. 33. 1; cf. the systems of Irenaeus and Augustine quoted in *Ap. and Ps.* 2. 451 *ad loc.* Irenaeus is probably following Jewish convention rather than Enoch. In 1 En. 93. 3 we have seven "generations" represented by their leading figures, from Enoch to the Messiah; in 4 Esdr. 3. 4 *seqq.* the fall of Jerusalem represents the sixth age. Cf. *Test. Abr.* 19 (*Texts and Studies* 2. 2. 101); Firmicus Maternus, *De Err. Prof. Rel.* 26. 3. In Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 7. 14, God's religion and truth labour against evil in the present sixth day as in the first day He laboured in creation;

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also easily adapted to at least one heathen view, which accepted seven world-ages, one ruled by each of the planets,¹ though naturally in the heathen view the seven ages were repeated one after the other to all eternity; the Jewish system led to an end, either after a seventh Messianic age or at the end of the sixth. In the later Christian tradition the Messianic age was essential; there must be seven ages, of which six were occupied with the history of the world to correspond to the days of creation, while Christianity could not identify eternity with anything below the ogdoad, the eighth day, which was like the first day of the week a Sunday, and corresponded to the resurrection of the Lord, the first day of the new creation, as the first day of the week was the first day of the old.² Judaism and Christianity agreed in a lack of serious interest in astrology, while both were concerned to fit whatever scheme of world-ages they adopted into the framework of history provided by the book of Genesis. Consequently they were compelled to abandon the astrological Great Year, whose duration was in any case a matter of dispute, while there were even sceptics who doubted its existence.³ For this could be substituted either periods of history as recorded in the Old Testament, without regard to their real or supposed duration, or periods of 400, 600 or 1000 years,⁴ while the number of periods of world-history could be adjusted accordingly: thus twelve periods corresponded to the tribes and the signs of the zodiac. The duration of history itself was of a pleasing uncertainty; calculations of the time from Adam to Moses varied from 3859 to 2450 years.⁵ It was agreed that Adam fell on the same day as that on here as elsewhere Lactantius shows affinities with Zoroastrian ideas (cf. Lommel, *Die Rel. Zarath.* 143 for the conception of the true religion labouring in the world). Although the number seven need have nothing to do with the planets it is always associated with them in Hellenistic literature; for its original independence cf. Jastrow, *Rel. Bab. et Ass.* 1. 282. For the antiquity of the hebdomad in Semitic religion cf. Jack, *The Ras Shamra Tablets* (O.T. Studies, no. 1), p. 36.

¹ Cumont, *Catal. Codd. Astr. Gr.* 4, quoted by Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes* 15; cf. Boll-Bezold, *Stern Glaube u. Sterndeutung* 158. The Mandaean belief in planetary world-ages appears to be derived from Babylon (Bousset, *Rel. des Judenthums* 575). Lactantius, *loc. cit.*, ascribes a belief in seven ages of Rome to Seneca.

² For this kind of playing with numbers cf. the way in which Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6. 16. 138 *seqq.*, 810 P) revises, without acknowledgment, the attempt of Aristobolus (Eus. *Pr. Ev.* 13. 12. 13) to equate Wisdom, as the precosmic light, with the sabbath; here Christian arithmetic fared better than Jewish. Cf. *Ep. Barn.* 15. 5, 8 and 9: the last may be taken from Aristobolus.

³ Censorinus, *De Die Nat.* 18. 11. The Egyptians held that it was of 1461 solar years; Hellenistic views varied from 2484 (Aristarchus) to 136,000 (Cassander).

⁴ For millennia, cf. *Ap. and Ps.* 2. 451, and Rev. 20. 3; the writer's predilection for hebdomads makes it fairly safe to assume that he would have accepted six periods of world-history before the millennial kingdom. In 4 Esdr. 7. 28 the Messianic kingdom lasts 400 years, while in 14. 11 we have twelve periods; cf. 2 Bar. 53. 5 *seqq.*, where each period is a mixture of good and evil.

⁵ Cf. Charles' note on *Ass. Moys.* 1. 2 in *Ap. and Ps.* 2. 414.

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which he was created; but it was impossible to say whether the “day” on which he was created was a mere human day of 24 hours or a “day of the Lord” of 1000 years.¹ Even history from Moses to the writer’s own day was not dated with any exact precision. Thus it was possible to have six periods of 600 years, five millennia of history with a sixth millennium spent by Adam in the Garden of Eden except for the last few minutes, or twelve of 400 without going outside the limits of Holy Scripture. The substitution of periods of history for exact periods of time naturally allowed an infinity of speculation both as regards the precise numbers and their mystical meanings.²

Thus both Jews and Christians could fit this kind of speculation into their systems; Christianity, if it adhered to the popular system of hebdomads, was cursed with the necessity of an otiose millennial reign of Christ upon earth, while Judaism could always merge its seventh millennium into eternity; on the other hand, Christianity was not compelled to regard seven as the highest and best of numbers in virtue of its association with the sabbath. It was thus able to associate God with the ogdoad, the number of the zone of the fixed stars which was the proper home of the supreme deity who dwelt in the highest heaven. He was the Mind that ruled the whole,³ just as mind was the ruling element in the eightfold soul of man; this remarkable correspondence between the heavens and man was a discovery admirably typical of the temper of the Hellenistic age.⁴ Judaism, on the other hand, was liable to find its god identified with Saturn:⁵ who could the “most High” God be, whom the Jew worshipped every Saturday, but the highest of the planets, the seventh from the earth?

A century before Paul spoke, speculations similar to those of Judaism and Christianity were finding a ready welcome in the Mediterranean world. Persian religion may have been one of the influences which led mankind to look for the speedy establishment of an age of gold, and to associate this hope with a ruler who was

¹ Cf. Str.-B. on 2 Pet. 3. 8 for this difficult question.

² So Orig. *In Ev. Matt.* 15. 33 *seqq.* explains the five “hours” of Mt. 20. 1 *seqq.* as five world-periods, corresponding to the five senses. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1. 21. 147 (409 P) explains the genealogy of Mt. 1. 17 as meaning six hebdomads of generations.

³ *Placita* 4. 4. 4 (*Dox. Gr.* 390).

⁴ The eightfold division of the soul (*Placita loc. cit.*) harmonises the microcosm with the macrocosm. The limitation of the gods to eight, the firmament and the planets, was as old as Xenocrates of Chalcedon (c. 300 B.C.), according to Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* 1. 13. 34, Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 5. 66, (58 P), both from a doxographic collection (Diels, *Dox. Gr.* 130 and 540).

⁵ Tac. *Hist.* 5. 4 assumes that the God of the Jews is Saturn and mentions the position of Saturn as the highest, and therefore the object of Jewish worship. A further reason lay in the equation of the God of the Jews with the El-Cronos of Phoenician religion (Philo of Byblus *ap. Eus. Pr. Ev.* 1. 10. 16).

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an earthly king and yet at the same time a saviour sent from heaven; it is not entirely certain whether the belief of the later Avestas that the final saviour is both a son and a reincarnation of Zoroaster had appeared before Sassanid times.¹ But whatever their origin may have been, hopes of this kind had appeared in different parts of the world whenever intolerable conditions led men to hope for a miraculous deliverance, or when it seemed politic to regard the sudden emergence of a new ruler as the realisation of the best hopes of the past. Egyptian literature had described the triumphs of the rulers of the land in remote ages in language of a thoroughly Messianic type. "He shall make himself a name for all eternity... the Asiatics shall fall before his carnage and the Libyans before his flame. Right shall come again into its place and iniquity is cast forth."² Thus Egypt had a native tradition of apocalyptic; it will be seen shortly that it was revived in the Hellenistic age. Judaism was in close contact with the Gentile world from the time of Alexander onwards; and during this period it was transforming the hope of a prosperous reign for the latest king of the house of David, described in the language of court-poetry, into the faith that the judge of all the earth would vindicate His will and His power to uphold the right, by the establishment of a golden age on earth under a more or less divine ruler of a Messianic age. It is not clear how far the development was spontaneous, and again it is possible that language which appears to reflect the newer developments of the Messianic hope may really express a quite primitive belief in the divinity of the king. In any case contact with Judaism was quite probably a contributory factor in the development of apocalyptic hopes in the Gentile world. On the other hand, while it is clear that the main stimulus to Judaism came from its contact with Persia, early Jewish literature contained much material which could be interpreted as justifying such hopes.³

Yet another element in the development of apocalyptic came from

¹ Lommel, *op. cit.* 205 *seqq.*

² From the "prophecy of Neferrohu", apparently glorifying the recent triumph of Amenemhet (c. 1995-1960 B.C.) (Blackman, *Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* 110).

³ Thus Briggs (*Int. Crit. Comm. the Psalms*) dates Ps. 2 before the exile and includes v. 7 as authentic; Ps. 45 to Jehu, but vv. 7-8a as a gloss "later than the Ps.", and its Messianic interpretation was later still"; Ps. 72 is a prayer on the accession of a king, vv. 8-12 later Messianic additions; Ps. 110 is a Messianic Psalm, earlier than Ps. 2 and embodying a belief in the priestly character of the Davidic monarch. See notes *ad loc.* These views are all liable to dispute, but there seems no reason to doubt the possibility that what was originally court-poetry became, either by interpretation or by interpolation, Messianic Psalmody. The fact that this type of literature was current would assist an independent development of the Messianic ideal, even if the first stimulus came from outside.

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the Hellenic world itself. The tragedy of the Peloponnesian War had led to the first deification of a man, when the people of Samos bestowed divine honours on Lysander in his lifetime:¹ it is possible that the Greek practice rested on a misunderstanding of the ceremonial of the court of the Great King.² The career of Alexander could scarcely fail to impress his contemporaries with the belief that he was more than man. The period of the wars of his successors and the growth of the power of Rome, culminating in the conquest of the Hellenistic world and the final agonies of the Republic, produced a state of chaos which not only convinced the world that its destinies were largely ruled by an inevitable fate,³ but also made it ready to offer divine honours to any saviour who seemed able to offer some deliverance from the evils of the present situation. The old city life, in which the individual had at least some control over his own affairs, was at the mercy of strange rulers of whom he had hardly heard, and the old local city-gods seemed powerless to help in a hostile universe.⁴ The only hope of mankind lay in a God who should prove his power to deliver.⁵ The Eastern cults, which later invaded the Western world, only gradually made their way into the West, offering a faith which satisfied man's desire for religion in this world and immortality hereafter; the Ptolemaic cult of Isis and Sarapis was the first to make itself felt. This was an Egyptian cult artificially Hellenised to serve as a bond of union between the Greek and Egyptian subjects of Ptolemy I.⁶ The cults of Asia were later to follow those of Egypt, adapting themselves to their surroundings as they moved Westwards; Attis offered salvation to his initiates in perfect iambic trimeters, while the ancient cults of Greece retained their primitive language and their primitive methods of versification.⁷ They, and some of the ancient Greek mysteries which

¹ Plutarch (*Lysander* 18. 443 b), quoting Duris (c. 300 B.C.). Cf. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste*, 49.

² Bevan (*E.R.E.* 4. 526, Art. "Deification") holds that the Greeks invented the practice and handed it on to the East. But Theopompus' story of Nicostratus of Argos, who set a special table for the δαίμων of the Great King in imitation of the Persian court (ap. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 6. 60. 252 a), and the story of Themistocles in Plutarch (*Themistocles* 27. 125 c) suggest that Persian court practice may have led to Greek deifications.

³ See below, pp. 63 seqq.

⁴ The change has been often described; cf. Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics* 98; Nock, *Conversion* 99; Murray, *Four Centuries of Greek Religion* 111. For the effect of the amalgamation of clans and townships in ancient Babylonia in changing social into personal religion cf. *Kyrios* 2. 48.

⁵ For the development of the god of a social unit into a personal deliverer of *Kyrios* 3. 343 seqq., with special reference to Marduk.

⁶ Nock, *Conversion* 38; cf. Cumont, *Rel. Or.* 69; *UPZ* 83.

⁷ Cf. Firmicus Maternus, *De Err. Prof. Rel.* 22. 1, where the verses θαρπέιτε, μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένοι, ἔσται γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐκ πόνων σωτηρία from the rites of Attis