

# THE GNOSTICS

AND

THEIR REMAINS,

ANCIENT AND MEDIÆVAL.

BY

C. W. KING, M.A.



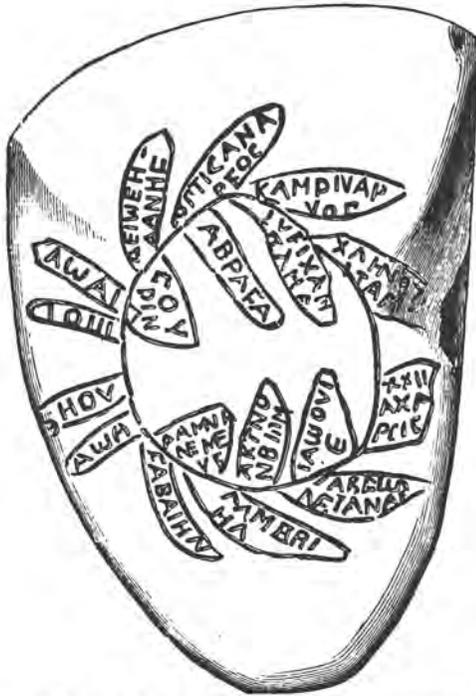
" Nam veluti pueri trepidant atque omnia cæcis  
In tenebris metuunt, sic nos in luce timemus  
Interdum nillo quæ sunt metuenda magis quam  
Quæ pueri in tenebris pavitant, finguntque futura."

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CERAUNIA OF GREEN JADE, CONVERTED INTO A GNOSTIC TALISMAN.  
*(See page 197.)*

020 My 15-8-8

Reclus 12.24-28 N.T.T.

## PREFACE.

WHEN this work first appeared, three-and-twenty years ago, it became at once an object of unmerited abuse, and of equally unmerited praise. Small divines mistaking it for an insidious attempt to overthrow opinions "as by law established," *sputtered* at it with pens dipped in the milk of the Gospel; whilst, under the very same hallucination, "Friends of Light" lauded it to the skies—either party equally ignorant both of the subject, and of the purpose of my labours. One noted *Zoilus* (whose recollections of Homer would seem to be of the same *deeply-marked* nature as Ensign Blifil's) is disgusted at my citing "Aidoneus" as a title of the God of the Shades; another is astonished at my ignorance in calling Bardanes a *Persian*, whereas he was a native of *Pontus*; not understanding that my argument was equally valid in spite of the mistake—*Pontus* being originally a province of the empire of Darius, and what is more to the purpose, the actual focus whence Mithraicism diffused itself over the Roman world.

A still greater cause of outcry against the book was my presuming to lay presumptuous hands upon the Sacred Ark of Masonry, and openly express my opinion that the "Free and Accepted" of these times have no more real connexion with the ancient *Craft*, out of whose terms and forms, like fig-leaves, they have stitched together *aprons*, wherewith to cover the real nakedness of their pretension, than the Italian *Carbonari* of Murat's day had with the trade of *charcoal burners*, whose baskets were borrowed for the President's throne. King Hiram's skull gnashed his teeth with rage within the *cista mystica*; and one *valiant* young Levite of the course of Abia,

proceeds thus logically to confute all my assertions: "Athelstan built a church: he could not build without masons; *argal*, Athelstan was the founder of Masonry in England.

But enough of this; the same treatment is necessarily in store for the present edition; it must look for

"Verbera, carnifices, robur, pix, lamina, taedae."

The one reviewer of its predecessor who exhibited any acquaintance with the literature of the subject, felt himself (from his position) "in duty bound" to qualify his praise by passing the summary judgment "that I had displayed in the work more of the spirit of a Gnostic than of a Catholic Christian." This sentence, intended for *condemnatory*, I accept as the highest praise that could be given to my labours—taking *γνωστικός* in its strict sense of "one addicted to knowledge"; and who therefore studies the history and remains of any opinion for the sole purpose of understanding the truth; and not for the sake of demonstrating the Truth can only exist under *one* defined form.

Let me now proceed to state how, in the present edition, I have endeavoured still further to deserve the appellation attached to me by the good-natured *Aristarchus*. My Treatise was the only one upon Gnostic Archaeology (for Dr. Walsh's little book scarce deserves the name) that had appeared since Chiflet's admirable "Apistopistus" (1617);—Matter, in his 'Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme (1827), an excellent analysis of the doctrines of the Gnosis, doing nothing for its monuments, beyond republishing, on a reduced scale, the engravings of the "Apistopistus." The only sources of information accessible to me at the time of writing that edition were the same as those drawn upon by Matter before me, namely the treatises of *Irenaeus* and *Epiphanius*. In the interval, I have become acquainted with, and, in order thoroughly to master, have made complete translations of, two recently discovered works that throw much light upon many difficult questions in this investigation. The one is the 'Refutation of all Heresies,' ascribed either to Origen or Hippolytus; its author being intimately acquainted with the doctrines which he holds up for

detestation, or for ridicule; and (what makes his criticisms of far higher value to students of the present day) illustrating them by copious extracts from the then so extensive heretical literature, soon to be completely exterminated by the triumph of the "orthodox" Faith.

The other aid is the "Pistis-Sophia," sole survivor of the once numerous family of *Gnostic Gospels*; but fortunately the most important of them all for our purpose, and the very one for whose escape (in its Coptic disguise) the archæologist ought to feel most grateful to the ignorance of the destroyers. For, whereas the other Gnostic teachers appear (as Hippolytus loves to point out) to build up their systems upon the lines of various Grecian philosophies, the "Pistis-Sophia" makes known to us what were the deepest secrets of the so celebrated Egyptian Mysteries, which are identical with those of the Rabbinical Kabbala, the only alteration being that of putting them into the mouth of Scripture personages, in order to adapt them to the prevailing change of ideas. This book, therefore, from its very nature supplies a kind of elucidation of contemporary monuments not to be found elsewhere, for the Christian Fathers discuss only the *doctrines* of their adversaries, not condescending to notice their application to the uses of everyday life. It is the latter point that gives such interest to the "Pistis-Sophia"—we gain from it the whole category of *Holy Names*, of such talismanic virtue; the powers and titles of the actual genii, the constitution of the soul; and its state after death. But what is yet more curious, the "Pistis-Sophia" exhibits the leading principles of the Kabbala already established, and applied to the demonstration of the highest truths in exactly the same manner as these principles were used by the heresiarch, Marcus, in the third century. And here it may be remarked parenthetically, that no one really acquainted with the history of religious opinions, can for a moment imagine that Marcus (a born *Jew*, be it remembered) was the first *inventor* of the wondrous machinery which he used in the development of his system, and the 'Manifestation of Truth,'—he did but apply to a new purpose the rules that he found already established as authoritative in the Rabbinical

schools. For in Religion there is no "new thing"; the same ideas are worked up over and over again; the gold in the *sovereign* of to-day may first have circulated in the new-coined *stater* of Cræsus.

Last, in point of time, but equally valuable with any of the fresh sources that have served me for the completion of this work, must I gratefully acknowledge the oral teachings of Rabbi Dr. Schiller-Szinessy—that unchanged representative of the Gamaliels of old—at whose feet I have sat for many years, listening to his exposition of the "Holy Zohar." Whatever may be the date of the *present* form of that transcendental development of the *Torah*—no one but an *inverted Jew*, totally unread in the *Greek* historians of the Gnosis, can fail to perceive that its principles and traditions are the very same as those taught in the schools of Babylon and Tiberias at the time when Simon Magus and Justinus studied there.

During the many years that have slipped by since its first publication, I have from time to time re-cast and re-written the entire Treatise, incorporating with the former contents whatever fresh information, reading, or chance, might throw in my way. In the same interval, two other works upon this subject have made their appearance. Dean Mansel's 'Gnostics' is a well-written and accurate summary of all that the Greek Fathers have left us upon the doctrines of the various sects; but, as the book is evidently intended for the use of theological students alone, the author has regarded his subject from a strictly *professional* point of view; totally ignoring the archæological side of the question (with which I am chiefly concerned), as being altogether foreign to the purpose for which he wrote.

On the other hand, Dr. Ginsburg's 'The Kabbala: its Doctrines, Development, and Literature,' possesses not only the merit of a lucid exposition of the most abstruse of all *Theosophies*, as contemplated in the shape to which it has been brought by the refining subtlety of successive generations of *Rabbins*—but will be found an invaluable guide to all who attempt the interpretation of talismanic inscriptions. For example, the Hebrew *radicals*, which express the Names of the *Sephiroth*, are to be discovered in the strings of Greek

consonants, now dumb for want of vowels, which have hitherto baffled the ingenuity of every reader.

There seems reason for suspecting that the Sibyl of *Esoteric Buddhism* drew the first notions of her new religion from the analysis of the *Inner Man*, as set forth in my first edition. I may therefore promise to myself the gratitude of those "clear spirits" (the Miltonian phrase) who are busying themselves "by searching to find out God," for now making known to them a still more profound theosophy, whose revelations definitely settle hardest problems relating to our mental nature, and the world beyond the grave. Investigators of the same order as the *Esoteric Buddhists* will find here a Gospel ready made to their hand—so full of great truths, so original in its conceptions, that it would seem to flow from no human source; and must carry conviction of its divine origin to every mind that shall be adapted by its nature for the reception of the *good seed*.

In conclusion, I must express my grateful acknowledgments of the services of my indefatigable friend, Mr. S. S. Lewis, Fellow of Corpus Christi College; but for whose persuasion, and negotiations with the publishers, these pages would never have seen the light. Not merely this, but he has enabled me to overcome an apparently insurmountable difficulty in the way of the publication—the failure of my sight, which totally prevented my conducting the work through the press—by taking upon himself the correction of the proofs: a laborious and irksome task to any one besides the author; and demanding a sacrifice of time that can only be appreciated by those, who, like myself, know the multifarious nature of the engagements by which every hour of his life is so completely absorbed.

Mr. Joseph Jacobs has furnished a carefully compiled list of authors quoted in this work, and of the references made to them, which will be found of use to those who wish to pursue the subject still further.

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TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
August 26, 1887.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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THAT nothing upon the subject of Gnosticism should have hitherto been attempted in our language except by Dr. Walsh in his very meagre sketch (long since out of print), seemed to me a sufficient excuse for my undertaking the same task upon a more comprehensive scale, as well as upon different principles. Dr. Walsh's performance, entitled 'An Essay on Coins, Medals, and Gems, as illustrating the progress of Christianity in the Early Ages,' is little more than an abridgment of some popular Church History for the period comprehended within its scope, illustrated from the very scanty store of monuments at his command; whilst his explanations are, like the source supplying them, based upon grounds altogether fallacious, and, even to the beginner, obviously unsatisfactory.

Taking for granted, upon the bare word of their opponents, that the various Teachers of the Gnosis were mere *heretics*, that is, perverters of the regular (!) Christian doctrine which they had at first embraced as a divine revelation, he, like his guides, did not trouble himself any further to investigate the true origin of their systems, but was content with roughly sketching their most prominent features; whilst in explaining their extant productions, he refers all, however diverse in nature, to the same school, and interprets them according to his own preconceived and baseless views of their character.

On such a plan as this, neither the doctrines nor the monuments they have bequeathed to us in such profusion are susceptible of even a plausible explanation, much less of one capable of satisfying an unprejudiced and inquiring mind. The method, therefore, of treating the subject which I have followed in the present work is to begin by reviewing the great religious systems of the East, flourishing at the time of the promulgation

of Christianity in those regions, with the influence of these systems upon the modes of thought and expression of both the missionaries of the new creed and their opponents; and lastly to establish, upon the testimony of the Apostle to the Gentiles himself, the *previous existence* of the germs of Gnosticism in the cities that were the scene of his most important labours.

In my sketch of these older systems I have done little more than condense Matter's admirable introduction to his '*Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme*'; but from that point forward have carried on my investigations according to a theory to which that writer once alludes approvingly, although, from some unaccountable reason, he has neglected to follow it out to its legitimate consequences. Restricting himself to describing in his lucid and elegant style the speculations of the several heresiarchs, and seeking no further back than the Zendavesta and Kabbala for the storehouses whence they all must have drawn their first principles, he falls into the grave error of representing their doctrines as *novel*, and the pure *inventions* of the persons that preached them.

That the seeds of the Gnosis were originally of *Indian* growth, carried so far westward by the influence of that *Buddhistic* movement which had previously overspread all the East, from Thibet to Ceylon, was the great truth faintly discerned by Matter, but which became evident to me upon acquiring even a slight acquaintance with the chief doctrines of Indian theosophy. To display this in the most incontrovertible manner, the two systems, each in its highest form of development—that of Valentinus, and that of the Nepalese Buddhists—are described and confronted for the sake of establishing their original identity: and throughout these pages innumerable other points of affinity will be found noticed as they present themselves. Actual *historical proof* of the same fact will also be adduced, establishing the important circumstance (but hitherto entirely unnoticed, or disregarded) that Buddhism had already been planted in the dominions of the Seleucidæ and the Ptolemics at least as early as the times of the generation following the establishment of those dynasties, and was provided for in treaties made between those Grecian princes and the great

Hindoo promoter of the religion. In the history of the Church it is most certain that almost every notion that was subsequently denounced as *heretical* can be traced up to Indian speculative philosophy as its genuine fountain-head: how much that was allowed to pass current for *orthodox* had really flowed from the same source, it is neither expedient nor decorous now to inquire.

In order to obtain a clear view of the principal forms of Gnosticism, as well as to escape relying upon second-hand information (in this case more than elsewhere untrustworthy), I commenced the collecting materials for the present work by carefully perusing the vast 'Panarion' of Epiphanius—a laborious undertaking, but well repaid by the vivid picture he presents of the inner state of society under the Lower Empire, and of the war even at that late period so fiercely waged between Reason and Faith. The 'Panarion' is a connected history of the Gnosis in all its developments during the first three centuries—the author quoting Irenæus for the earlier ages; for the later his account is of the highest value, having been derived from personal experience, Epiphanius having in his youth belonged to the Marcosian sect. After his days nothing new sprung up in the field of Religious philosophy, before so diversified with the vigorous and more curious flowers (or weeds) of the Gnosis; the civil now combining with the ecclesiastical power to cut down and root out all such daring and irregular growths of the human mind.

Since the first publication of this treatise I have become acquainted with and minutely studied two authorities of the greatest importance for the true understanding of Gnosticism—the one for its philosophy; the other for its tangible remains. 'The Refutation of all Heresies,' of Hippolytus, written two centuries before the 'Panarion,' gives a view of the chief schools of the Gnosis, drawn up with the utmost intelligence united with the most charming candour; qualities sadly to seek in the other ecclesiastical historians. The 'Pistis-Sophia,' the only Gnostic Gospel preserved, throws a light upon the terminology and machinery of the religion that, before its discovery and publication was perfectly unattainable. Both

these treatises are of recent discovery, and consequently their assistance was lost to the previous historians of Gnosticism. I have therefore availed myself largely of these invaluable resources, which will be found doing good service in almost every section of the present work.

After considering the class of speculations that owed their birth to India, next in importance for her contributions to the *opinions*, still more to the *monuments* before us, comes Egypt with her primeval creed, although exhibited in its Romanized and latest phase; and whose productions are too often confounded with the true offspring of the Gnosis. These remains are here discriminated; their distinctive characters are pointed out; and they are arranged under several heads, according as their object was religious or medicinal. In the consideration of these remains, Bellermann's classification has been chiefly followed; according to which the truly Gnostic are regarded as those only that exhibit the figure of the Pantheus, *Abraxa*, the actual invention of Basilides, and which gives its name to the class. The second, *Abraxoids*, includes the types borrowed from different religions by the other Gnostic teachers. The third, *Abrazaster*, consists of such as in their nature are purely astrological, and intended for talismans; deriving their virtues from the stars. In the first of these classes much space has been devoted to the ingenious creation of the Alexandrine philosopher, the pantheistic image of the supreme Abraxas; whose title has hitherto been improperly applied to monuments some of which are anterior in date to his embodiment in a visible form; whilst others spring from nations entirely unconnected with his worship. Of this *eidolon* of the *personage* thereby typified, of the meaning of his *name* and titles, much information has been collected, and presented here in a connected form for the benefit of those interested in learning what can on safe grounds be established in elucidation of these abstruse questions.

*Mithraicism*, under whose kindly and congenial shelter so much of Occidental Christianity grew up unmolested, is reviewed in its due order, and the causes explained of an alliance at first sight so inexplicable. With this subject are connected the singular resemblance between the ceremonial of the two, and the transfer

of so much that was Mithraic into the practice of the orthodox; and many curious memorials will be found described bearing witness to the reality of this adaptation.

After the Mithraic, the religion of *Serapis* comes to be considered; a worship which, besides being the last of the Heathen forms to fall before the power of Christianity, had previously contributed, as largely as the Mithraic, to the constitution of the later Gnosticism. It is in truth a great mistake, the confining the name of "Gnostic" (as is commonly done) to the sectaries who, boasting of their "superior lights," declared that they were the only real Christians (as did the Ophites), and that too in virtue of a creed professedly of their own devising. Such Gnostics indeed were Christians by their own showing, and regarded all who differed from them as *heretics*: but at the same time they based their arguments upon the tenets of Pagan religions; very far from regarding the latter as the empty fabrications of demons, which was the persuasion of the orthodox. But although they accepted these ancient Ethnic legends, it was only because through the help of their "knowledge" they were enabled to discern the truth enveloped within these seemingly profane traditions. But the followers of Mithras and of Serapis had in reality, and long before them, a Gnosis of their own, communicated in their *Mysteries* to the initiated few; and they opposed to the predictions of orthodox and Gnostic alike claims and pretensions lofty as their own. The Emperor Hadrian, a most diligent inquirer into things above man's nature, got himself initiated into one mystery after another; nevertheless we shall find him writing from Alexandria that the worship of Christ and of Serapis was in that city one and the same, and moreover the sole religion of that immense population. Consequently, those initiated into the true secrets of the old religion must have recognised the fact that their deity, whether the Sun or the Soul of the Universe, was nothing but a *type* of the *One*, the Saviour recently revealed to them: or else it would appear (which tells equally for our argument) that the new converts, in order to escape persecution, enjoyed their own faith under the covert of the national worship, which was susceptible of a spiritual interpretation quite cognate to their own ideas,

and indeed enshrouding the same. As for the worshippers of Mithras, their whole elaborate system of sacraments and degrees of initiation had no other object than the securing of spiritual enlightenment and spiritual blessings. The foundation being the pure teaching of Zoroaster, its holders were prepared gladly to accept any higher revelation, and to discover that the greater mystery had been foreshadowed in the types and ceremonies of the former one. In this way a man might continue a Mithraicist and yet accept all the doctrines of Christianity, as the priests of that religion in their last days assured the incredulous Augustine.

After thus pointing out the various elements which the Apostles of the Gnosis worked up so ingeniously into one harmonious whole, incorporating therewith so much of the Christian scheme as fitted to the rest, we come prepared to the examination of the *Symbols* and *Terminology* by which these ideas were communicated to the members of the sect who had attained to the *Arcanum*; the composite *images* or *sigils* "having a voice for the intelligent, which the vulgar crowd heareth not."

*Astrology* justly claims for her own a large share of the relics popularly called *Gnostic*; for Gnosticism, from the beginning, had linked its own speculations to those of the Magians' national science, and borrowed as a vehicle for its own peculiar ideas the machinery of the latter—its Astral Genii, Decani, and Myriageneses. And this truth was seen by the earliest writers upon Gnosticism, for Hippolytus proves conclusively, at much length, that the system of the Peratae (a branch of the Ophites) was nothing more than a barefaced plagiarism from the rules of Astrology. Under this head I have endeavoured to separate the purely Astrological talismans from those to which the *illuminati*, their makers, had given a more spiritual sense. "Astrology, not Christ, is the author of their religion," says Hippolytus of the sects founded by Euphrates and Celbes; and proceeds to give extracts from their writings, held in the highest esteem at the time, which amply bear out his assertion.

Next pour in, a multitudinous swarm, the stones covered over with long strings of bare *inscriptions*, genuine offspring of the Kabbala, that betray the handiwork of the idol-hating Jewish

dreamers of Alexandria—spells even then ascribed to Solomon, and which secured the favour

“Of those demons that are found  
In fire, air, flood, or under ground;  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With planet or with element.”

One object I have kept steadily in view throughout the whole of this investigation—to show how the productions of the different schools are to be distinguished from each other; and to this particular attention has been given in describing the numerous remains proceeding from the several sources just enumerated, that are collected in the accompanying plates, and thus in some degree to remedy the confusion that reigns at present in the whole department. My predecessor, Matter, busied himself only with the doctrines, making use of the monuments merely in illustration of his remarks; but as my own labours are properly designed to be subsidiary to his invaluable treatise, I refer the reader to him for the more complete elucidation of the *philosophy* of Gnosticism, and give my full attention to its *archæological* side, which he has too cursorily glanced at, and for which nothing has been done of any importance since the publications of Chifet and Montfaucon.

Last to be considered comes the Gnosis in its final and grandest manifestation, the composite religion of *Manes*: with its wonderful revival and diffusion over Mediæval Europe; and its supposed connexion with the downfall of the Templars, of which catastrophe the history and causes are here briefly sketched; although to form a satisfactory judgment on the merits of the case is about the hardest problem history can offer. With their scandal and their fate is coupled the most singular phenomenon of modern times—the preservation by their *professed* descendants, the *Freemasons*, of so much symbolism that appears to be indisputably Gnostic in its origin. For this, however (unfortunately for the lovers of mystery), a very matter of fact but doubtless sufficient cause can be assigned, and by valid arguments established: when the solution of the enigma irresistibly suggests to mind Æsop's apologue of the “Fox and the Maa” the exclamation of disappointment after he had at

last mustered up sufficient courage to examine the interior of the awe-inspiring and venerable head. This section is illustrated by all the information I have been able to glean from different sources upon the curious subject of *Masons' Marks*—which, yet existing and in common use amongst our own craftsmen and equally so amongst the Hindoos in daily religious observance, can be traced back through Gothic retention, and Gnostic usage, through old Greek and Etruscan art, to their ultimate source; and which attest more convincingly than anything else what region gave birth to the theosophy making such liberal use of the same *siglæ* in Roman times. To assist inquirers into this point I have been careful to give references to all the published lists of these Marks that have come to my knowledge; which same rule I have observed as regards other monographs upon the several various questions discussed in the following pages. In this way the shortcomings of myself can be supplied by those desirous of fuller information: for I am well aware that my own best qualification for attempting an arduous investigation like the present, extending over so many and unconnected branches of learning, lies in a larger practical experience of the monuments themselves, tangible and literary, than was possessed by those who have hitherto attempted it. And as it is a most true adage, “*Dans le pays des aveugles le borgne est roi,*” there is some probability of my labours proving both novel and interesting to many, who desire to know something authentic upon the much-talked-of but little understood subject of Gnosticism.

Related to this religion by their nature are *talismans* and *amulets* in general; for Gnostic symbols and Gnostic formulae gave their virtue to many of the class: being borrowed either directly from the Gnosis, or from the older creeds out of which the latter was constructed. Their employment, and the notions of which they are derivations, have been here described; showing the derivation of many of the mediæval examples from the Gnostic class; and by following out the same principle it has been attempted to find a key to their cabalistic legends, which have been better than any hitherto offered by their interpreters. *Emblems* being with them those conveying the truth,

## INTRODUCTION.

which last indeed has of all others furnished the of such imagery; for thereby the human mind e familiarise itself with the thought of mortality bellishing the idea tried to reconcile itself to 1 This being a topic of universal interest, to s its very important relations to Art, my collections connected therewith have been somewhat extensive, and embrace many particulars neglected by Lessing in his curious essay entitled 'Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet.'

With respect to the *illustrations* of this book, many doubtless will be surprised as well as disappointed at finding them derived entirely from monuments of such small apparent importance as *engraved stones*; and, thinking this part incomplete on that account, may accuse the author of negligence in not having had recourse to other evidences of a more public character. But the limitation is in truth the necessary result of the nature of the things discussed in this inquiry. Secret Societies, especially the one whose maxim was (as Clemens records) that truly wise one—

“Learn to know all, but keep thyself unknown;”

erect no *monuments* to attract public attention. They deal but in *symbols*, to be privately circulated amongst their members in *passwords* known only to the *illuminati*; or else they embody their doctrines in mystic drawings, like the Ophite “Diagramma”; or upon papyri long since committed to the flames. The man of taste, but not an antiquary, will certainly exclaim against the rudeness of the drawing in my illustrations; but the truth is that, rude as they look, they in most cases *flatter* their originals, the extreme barbarism of which it was often found impossible to reproduce with any hope of leaving the meaning recognisable. Be it remembered that

“Gratia non habitat, non hoc Cyllenius antro.”

Pallas no longer, as in the earlier ages of the art, guided the engraver's hand, but Siva and Bhavani (ill-disguised as Hermes and Isis) suggested the designs; or else he was inspired by the Typhonian monsters which imagined the Genii of Astrology. The religion of *Fear*, under its various manifestations, now

reigned supreme, having banished the beauteous sensuous machinery of the old Greek Nature-worship, into which nothing that was malignant or hideous was ever suffered to intrude. The virtue of the *talisman* lay in the type it carried; and in its own material substance the *manner* of the exhibition of the potent sigil was altogether unregarded. One of the most learned men this University has ever produced once remarked to me that the Gnostic theories reminded him of the visions that float through the brain of a *madman*—not of a *fool*. Circumstances following gave a melancholy *force* to this acute and accurate distinction. Let any imaginative person read my extracts from the "Revelation" of Marcus, with all its crazy ingenuity in deducing the nature of the Deity from the properties of numerals; above all, his exemplification of Infinity by the perpetual multiplication of the letters contained in other letters making up a name—he will speedily find his brain begin to whirl, and be reminded of similar phantoms of numerals recurring in endless series, and the equally endless attempts to sum them up in order to obtain repose, that fill the head when suffering from the first approaches of fever before actual delirium pushes memory from her seat. Or, again, when the febrile disturbance of the brain is yet slighter, one will sometimes awake out of a dream with a fleeting sensation of inexpressible happiness arising from the immediate attainment of Omniscience in virtue of something that has just been revealed to him; but too soon he finds that ineffable *something* has fled for ever, all that is left of it being the faint recollection that it was contained in a *numeral*. And one of the most striking points in the revelation of the 'Seherin von Prevorst,' so religiously recorded by Justinus Kerner (and which proves that *all* the wondrous narrative was not imposture), is her declaration that she could see the entire history of each year as it closed, with every event, however trifling, clear and distinct before her mind, all comprehended within the form of a single *numeral*; and her assertion upon these grounds that at the Judgment-Day the whole past life of every man will thus be pictured in a single moment before his mind's eye.

About half the number of the drawings for these illustra-

tions were done by myself from the most interesting specimens that came under my notice in the course of several years, so that I am able to vouch for their scrupulous fidelity. Afterwards, when the sudden failure of my sight prevented my carrying on the drawings, the kindness of the then owner of most of the originals came to my assistance and furnished the remainder. Most of them in fact were taken from the large and unpublished set contained in the ancient Praun Cabinet (formed three centuries ago), now unfortunately broken up. The Gnostic stones, however—73 in number—have been since that time purchased for the British Museum, where they will be found conveniently arranged for consultation, in the Egyptian Room, which contains the works in terra-cotta. This my collection of drawings was in truth the occasion of the present work; for after making out a detailed description of each specimen, it became easy to put the mass of materials I had collected for their elucidation into a form available for supporting my explanations by showing the grounds on which they were based: and in this way the work has grown up by gradual accretion to its present dimensions. The theme offers so boundless a variety of interesting subjects for research, one suggesting another in endless succession, that it can only be compared to Marcus' own exposition of the infinite composition of the Ineffable Name (quoted above), and would alone supply materials for a whole library of distinct treatises upon its various subdivisions.

In those few instances where the better style of the original deserved reproduction by a more artistic hand, I have had recourse to the services of Mr. R. B. Utting, who has executed the woodcuts with a spirit as well as an accuracy that leave nothing to be desired.



PART I.

GNOSTICISM AND ITS SOURCES.

B

Τουτοῦ με χάρω πέμψον, Πάτερ,  
σφραγίδας ἔχων καταβήσομαι,  
Αἰῶνας ὄλους διωδεύσω,  
μυστήρια πάντα διανοίξω,  
μορφὰς δὲ θεῶν ἐπιδείξω,  
καὶ τὰ κεκρυμμένα τῆς ἁγίας ὁδοῦ,  
ΓΝΩΣΙΝ καλέσας, παραδώσω.

*Orphic Hymn, (Hippolytus, v. 10.)*

“Non è puleggio da piccola barca  
Quel che fendendo va l'ardita prora,  
Nè da nocchier ch'a sè medesmo parca.”  
(Dante, *Parad.* xxiii. 68.)

## THE GNOSTICS AND THEIR REMAINS.

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### GNOSTICISM AND ITS ORIGIN.

THE general name "Gnostics" is used to designate several widely differing sects, which sprang up in the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire almost simultaneously with the first planting of Christianity. That is to say, these sects then for the first time assumed a definite form, and ranged themselves under different teachers, by whose names they became known to the world, although in all probability their main doctrines had made their appearance previously in many of the cities of Asia Minor. There, it is probable, these sectaries first came into definite existence under the title of "Mystae," upon the establishment of a direct intercourse with India and her Buddhist philosophers, under the Seleucidae and the Ptolemies.

The term "Gnosticism" is derived from the Greek, *Gnosis*, knowledge—a word specially employed from the first dawn of religious inquiry to designate the science of things divine. Thus Pythagoras, according to Diogenes Laertius, called the transcendental portion of his philosophy, Γνώσις τῶν ὄντων, "the knowledge of things that are." And in later times *Gnosis* was the name given to what Porphyry calls the *Antique* or *Oriental* philosophy, to distinguish it from the Grecian systems. But the term was first used (as Matter on good grounds conjectures) in its ultimate sense of *supernal* and *celestial* knowledge, by the Jewish philosophers belonging to the celebrated school of that nation, flourishing at Alexandria. These teachers, following the example of a noted Rabbi, Aristobulus, surnamed the *Peripatetician*, endeavoured to make out that all the wisdom of the Greeks was derived immediately from the Hebrew

Scripture; and by means of their well-known mode of allegorical interpretation, which enabled them to elicit any sense desired out of any given passage of the Old Testament, they sought, and often succeeded, in establishing their theory. In this way they showed that Plato, during his sojourn in Egypt, had been *their own* scholar; and still further to support these pretensions, the indefatigable Aristobulus produced a string of poems in the names of Linus, Orpheus, Homer, and Hesiod—all strongly impregnated with the spirit of Judaism. But *his* Judaism was a very different thing from the simplicity of the Pentateuch. A single, but very characteristic, production, of this *Jewish* Gnosis has come down to our times. This is the "Book of Enoch" (v. p. 18), of which the main object is to *make known* the description of the heavenly bodies and the *true names* of the same, as revealed to the Patriarch by the angel Uriel. This profession betrays, of itself, the Magian source whence its inspiration was derived. Many Jews, nevertheless, accepted it as a divine revelation; even the Apostle Jude scruples not to quote it as of genuine Scriptural authority. The "Pistis-Sophia," attributed to the Alexandrian heresiarch Valentinus (so important a guide in the following inquiry), perpetually refers to it as: The highest source of knowledge, as being dictated by Christ Himself, "speaking out of the Tree of Life unto  $\text{I}\epsilon\text{O}\text{T}$ , the Primal Man." Another Jewish-Gnostic Scripture of even greater interest (inasmuch as it is the "Bible" of the only professed Gnostic sect that has maintained its existence to the present day, the Mandaites of Bassora) is their text-book, the "Book of Adam." Its doctrines and singular application of Zoroastrism to Jewish tenets, present frequent analogies to those of the Pistis-Sophia, in its continual reference to the ideas of the "Religion of Light," of which full particulars will be given when the latter remarkable work comes to be considered (see p. 14). "Gnosticism," therefore, cannot receive a better definition than in that dictum of the sect first and specially calling itself "Gnostics," the *Naaseni* (translated by the Greeks into "Ophites"), viz., "the beginning of perfection is the knowledge of man, but absolute perfection is the knowledge of God." And to give a general view of the nature of

the entire system, nothing that I can do will serve so well as to transcribe the exact words of a learned and very acute writer upon the subject of Gnosticism ("Christian Remembrancer," for 1866).

"Starting, then, from this point, we ask what Gnosticism is, and what it professes to teach. What is the peculiar *Gnosis* that it claims to itself? The answer is, the knowledge of God and of Man, of the Being and Providence of the former, and of the creation and destiny of the latter. While the ignorant and superstitious were degrading the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made with hands, and were changing 'the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator,' the ancient Gnostics held purer and truer ideas. And when these corrupted and idolatrous forms of religion and worship became established, and were popularly regarded as true and real in themselves, the 'Gnostics' held and secretly taught an *esoteric* theology of which the popular creed of multitudes of deities, with its whole ritual of sacrifice and worship, was but the *exoteric* form. Hence all the mysteries which almost, if not all, the heathen religions possessed. Those initiated into these mysteries, whilst they carefully maintained and encouraged the gorgeous worship, sacrifices and processions of the national religion, and even openly taught polytheism and the efficacy of the public rites, yet secretly held something very different—at the first, probably, a purer creed, but in course of time, like the *exoteric* form, degenerating. The progress of declination differed according to race or habit of thought: in the East it tended to superstition, in the West (as we learn from the writings of Cicero) to pure atheism, a denial of Providence. This system was adopted likewise by the Jews, but with this great difference, that it was superinduced upon and applied to a pre-existent religion; whereas in the other Oriental religions, the external was added to the *esoteric*, and developed out of it. In the Oriental systems the external was the sensuous expression of a hidden meaning; in the Jewish, the hidden meaning was drawn out of pre-existing external laws and ritual; in the former the *esoteric* alone was claimed as divine, in the latter it was the *exoteric* which was a matter

of revelation. To repair this seeming defect, the Kabbalists, or teachers of the 'Hidden Doctrine,' invented the existence of a secret tradition, orally handed down from the time of Moses. We may, of course, reject this assertion, and affirm that the Jews learnt the idea of a Hidden Wisdom, underlying the Mosaic Law, from their intercourse with the Eastern nations during the Babylonian captivity; and we may further be assured that the origin of this Secret Wisdom is Indian. Perhaps we shall be more exact if we say that the Jews learnt from their intercourse with Eastern nations to investigate the external Divine Law, for the purpose of discovering its hidden meaning. The heathen Gnostics, in fact, collected a Gnosis from every quarter, accepted all religious systems as partly true, and extracted from each what harmonized with their ideas. The Gospel, widely preached, accompanied by miracles, having new doctrines and enunciating new truths, very naturally attracted their attention. The Kabbalists, or Jewish Gnostics, like Simon Magus, found a large portion of apostolic teaching in accordance with their own, and easily grafted upon it so much as they liked. Again the Divine power of working miracles possessed by the Apostles and their successors naturally attracted the interest of those whose chief mystery was the practice of magic. Simon the Magician was considered by the Samaritans to be 'the great Power of God;' he was attracted by the miracles wrought by the Apostles; and no doubt he sincerely 'believed,' that is, after his own fashion. His notion of Holy Baptism was probably an initiation into a new mystery with a higher Gnosis than he possessed before, and by which he hoped to be endued with higher powers; and so likewise many of those who were called Gnostic Heretics by the Christian Fathers were not Christians at all, only they adopted so much of the Christian doctrine as accorded with their system."

The consideration of the local and political circumstances of the grand foci of Gnosticism will serve to explain much that is puzzling in the origin and nature of the system itself. *Ephesus* was, after *Alexandria*, the most important meeting-point of Grecian culture and Oriental speculation. In regard to

commerce and riches, although she yielded to the Egyptian capital, yet she rivalled Corinth in both, which city in truth she far surpassed in her treasures of religion and science. Her richness in theosophic ideas and rites had from time immemorial been manifested in her possession of Diana, "whom all Asia and the world" worshipped—that pantheistic figure so conformable to the genius of the furthest East; her College of "Essenes" dedicated to the service of that goddess; and her "Megabyzae," whose name sufficiently declares their Magian institution. Hence, also, was supplied the talisman of highest repute in the antique world, the far-famed "Ephesian spell," those mystic words graven upon the zone and feet of the "image that fell down from Jupiter;" and how zealously magic was cultivated by her citizens is apparent from St. Luke's incidental notice of the cost of the books belonging to those that used "curious arts" (*τὰ περίεργα*, the regular name for sorcery and divination), destroyed by their owners in the first transports of conversion to a new faith. Such converts, indeed, after their early zeal had cooled down, were not likely to resist the allurements of the endeavour to reconcile their ancient, far-famed wisdom with the new revelation; in short, to follow the plan invented not long before by the Alexandrian Jew, in his reconciliation of Plato with Moses and the Prophets. "In Ephesus," says Matter, "the speculations of the Jewish-Egyptian school, and the Semi-Persian speculations of the Kabbala, had then recently come to swell the vast conflux of Grecian and Asiatic doctrines; so there is no wonder that teachers should have sprung up there, who strove to combine the religion newly preached by the Apostle with the ideas so long established in the place. As early as the year A.D. 58, St. Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy, enjoins him to warn certain persons to abstain from teaching 'strange doctrines,' those myths and interminable genealogies that only breed division. These same 'myths and genealogies' apply, without any doubt, to the theory of the Emanation of the Æons-Sephiroth, and to all the relations between the Good and Bad Angels that the Kabbalists had borrowed from the religion of Zoroaster."

Again, after condemning certain doctrines concerning the

obligation to complete asceticism, adopted literally from the Essenes, the Apostle adds, "Keep safe the precious charge entrusted to thee, avoiding profane novelties and the *antitheses* of the *knowledge*, falsely so-called, of which some making profession have gone astray from the faith of Christ." It was assuredly *not* the mere fables by which the new converts sought to enrich and complete the Christian doctrine (such as we still have samples of in the childish, though pious fictions of the Apocryphal Gospels), such things as these were certainly not the "false knowledge," which set itself up against the "true knowledge," that is, Revelation itself, as something superior to that Revelation. It must, on the contrary, have been a doctrine professing to make a *science* out of the Christian faith, and that, too, a *science* founding its principles upon *antitheses*. Now what are these "antitheses" (or oppositions) but the teaching of the Zendavesta, concerning the two Empires of Light and Darkness; the two grand classes of Intelligences, the good and the evil spirits, and the perpetual combat going on between them? Now these antitheses, or the principle of Dualism, is that which forms the most conspicuous feature of the Gnostic scheme; and in the Apostle's words we trace one of the most obvious ways in which such doctrines were communicated, and how they insinuated themselves into the infant Church.

In fact, the ancient commentators, Theodoret and Chrysostom, who were thoroughly conversant with the Gnosticism of their own day, apply this passage of St. Paul to that actual precursor of Gnosticism, his indefatigable rival Simon Magus himself, whose curious tenets had by that time been widely diffused throughout Asia Minor.

So deeply rooted were such speculations in the minds of many of the Ephesians, that the Apostle, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, written six years later, returns perpetually to the subject, whilst in his Epistle to the Church at Ephesus he entreats his flock not to be seduced by "vain discourses," or "new-coined appellations" (as one reading has it, and which applies forcibly to the Gnostic nomenclature), nor by human doctrines that have no more solidity in themselves than the

wind, whereof no one knows whence it cometh, or whither it goeth. Nay more, he even employs the very terminology of Gnosticism, as when he says, "Ye were dead in error and in sins: ye walked according to the *Æon* of this world, according to the *Archon* who has the dominion of the air," that is, the Demiurgus Idabaoth. Here we have the Devs of Zoroaster, whose hosts fill the air, deceive mankind, blind their understandings, and lead them into temptation. Again when he adds, "We war not against flesh and blood, but against the *Dominions*, the *Powers*, the *Lords* of the *Darkness*, the malevolence of the *Spirits* in the upper regions"—all these are regular Gnostic epithets, having also their place in the Kabbalistic theology. The later Gnosticism is, in fact, as Chiflet has well expressed it, "the spirit of Asiatic antiquity seeking to assert its empire over the soul of Man by insinuating itself into the Christian Church." The Ophites, even in the early times of Hippolytus, boasted that they of all men were the only real Christians, because they alone *comprehended* the *real* nature of the Saviour. At the same time, they diligently attended the celebration of all the ancient Mysteries, notably the Eleusinian and the Phrygian, declaring that through their *knowledge* they had gotten the key to the hidden meaning of the whole ceremonial, which by types and figures foreshadowed the coming of the Christ. But indeed, Gnosticism, in its primitive form, had almost supplanted, by spiritualizing it, the beautiful materialism of the early Greek and Latin mythologies. Catholicism, through its unity and greater simplicity, in the end triumphed over the conflicting Gnostic philosophies, which became extinct as a *professed* religion in the sixth century, so far as Europe was concerned, and whose relics in Asia were at the same moment covered over with impenetrable obscurity by the sudden deluge of the Mahomedan conquest. Nevertheless, even in the first-named scene of its domination, it was not to be eradicated without leaving behind it deep traces in the writings and symbolisms of the magicians, astrologers, and seekers after the *grand arcanum* throughout the whole course of the Middle Ages. Thus there is a passage in Dante (Paradiso, xviii.) replete with the profoundest symbolism, and which, of course, our Freemasons claim for their

own, and *that* with all possible security, because the very nature of the assumption exempts them from being called upon to publish the interpretation of the mystery. The poet here tells how the *five times seven* letters making up the *five* words "Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram" came forth in the star Jupiter, when the beatified spirits of just princes hovered over the final M, forming their hosts into the figure of an eagle. Certainly the importance given to the numerals *five* and *seven* in this revelation savours much of Gnostic phraseology, and reminds one of the thirty letters which make up the quadrisyllabic Name of God, as made known by Truth unto the heresiarch Marcus, the history of which shall be given in the fitting place. Dante had before (Canto vi.) spoken of the "awe that overcomes him before the B and I C E," evidently the initials of some mighty password, although his commentators most prosaically interpret them as the mere diminutive of the name of his lost love, Beatrice. It was to its connection with Gnosticism that primitive Christianity owed the accusation of being a *Magical* system—a superstition not only *nova* but *malefica*. There is a curious passage in Dio Cassius, where, mentioning how the Christian Legion in M. Aurelius' Quadian War obtained rain from Heaven through their prayers, he remarks, "The Christians can bring about anything they desire through prayer." In later times the various factions within the Church were fond of retorting upon each other this ancient aspersion of the pagans: it was on the charge of magical practices, says Ammianus, that the Arians managed to depose and exile the great Athanasius himself.

The history of Gnosticism, written by its contemporaries, still forms a copious library, despite the losses and damages it has sustained through the injuries of time. In the carrying out of the chief object of the present work—the elucidation of the *tangible* remains of the Gnosis—no historical record has yielded me by any means so much service as "The Refutation of all Heresies," composed by *Hippolytus*, bishop of Ostia (Portus), early in the third century. Many points, hitherto seeming hopelessly enveloped in darkness, have been made clear by the careful perusal of his judicious summaries of the systems

of the different gnostic apostles. His views of their doctrines are evidently drawn up with equal candour and intelligence, and fully bear out his declaration, "that his design was not to vilify the holders of such doctrines, but merely to make known the sources whence they had really derived their pretended revelation." And he keeps his word throughout, never once indulging, like the later controversialists, in invectives against asserted *practices*, but exhibiting the tenets only of his opponents, and, with much ingenuity, showing up their gross plagiarism from Pagan philosophy. His eagerness for discovering the latter source in the fount of every gnostic stream, sometimes leads him to detect relationship that does not actually exist, and still oftener to pronounce a recent *copy* of the other what was in reality drawn directly from the same Oriental prototype—true origin of the old Greek idea with which he identifies it. But this invaluable, as well as most interesting, treatise breathes all through that spirit of charity and forbearance that made a writer belonging to a still persecuted religion, happy to be allowed to subsist through the tolerance of its neighbours. The abuse and scurrilous tales in which the later Epiphanius revels sufficiently indicate the writer belonging to an established Church, able at length to call in the secular power to assist in convincing all adversaries of their errors by the unanswerable arguments of rack, rope and faggot.

*Irenaeus*, a Gaul by birth, and disciple of Polycarp, himself a disciple of St. John, was elected Bishop of Lyon in the year 174. In that city he composed his great treatise generally styled "Five Books against Heresies," written in an easy and indeed elegant style, although in one place he excuses its rudeness by the fact of his having been forced during so many years to converse "in a barbarous language"—a remark of interest as showing that *Celtic* still remained the vulgar tongue in his diocese. He is supposed to have died soon after the year A.D. 200; and therefore is somewhat earlier than Hippolytus, who was put to death in A.D. 222, and whose "Refutation" was clearly written after the death of Irenæus, for he quotes him occasionally by the title *ὁ μακάριος*, "the deceased"; and has incorporated some entire chapters respecting Marcus in his own work.

The great *Origen*, another contemporary, has given some important details concerning the religious systems of the Ophites in his celebrated "Reply to Celsus." Two centuries after him comes *Theodoret*, Bishop of Cyrrhus, in Syria, during the second quarter of the fifth century, who has left very full particulars respecting the great Gnostic school flourishing in that region. The other Christian writers who have treated upon the origin and nature of the same doctrines were nothing more than ignorant churchmen, able to discern nothing in any religion beyond its external forms, and which they construed in the darkest possible sense, ever seeking for the worst interpretation of which these external appearances were susceptible. At the head of this latter class stands *Epiphanius*, author of the most detailed and, from its furious partisanship, amusing account of the Gnostic sects that is extant—his vast *Panarion*, "Bread-basket," or rather "Scrap-basket," a whimsical title intended to express the motley nature of its contents, picked up from all quarters. This immense folio (admirably translated into elegant Latin by the learned Petavius) is of the highest interest, full of pictures of the struggles of the human mind to devise for itself a *revelation* that shall plausibly solve all the problems of Man's other nature. Its compiler lived as Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus A.D. 367–403, and displays great zeal in raking up all manner of scandalous stories against the enemies of his adoptive Church. But there is one thing that gives immense value to his labours, the minute account given of Manichæism—that latest and grandest development of the Gnosis, which had come into existence in the interval between Epiphanius and Hippolytus.

The rule observed by all *these later* historians of Gnosticism is to represent it as a mere spurious offshoot and corruption of Christianity; invented, usually out of disappointed ambition, by apostates from the true faith established by the several apostles in the Eastern provinces of the Empire—a mode of representing the system than which nothing can be more unfounded. For in its earliest shape, such as it shows itself in the doctrine of Simon Magus, or of Basilides, the heaven-sent *knowledge* merely added upon the old foundations such articles and terms of the Christian faith as seemed capable of being

assimilated to and combined therewith, whilst on the other hand she availed herself of the machinery of the older paganism to elucidate and prove the mysteries of the new theosophy; and this was conspicuously the character of the systems of Justinus and of the Peratae; as the very curious extracts given by Hippolytus from their text-books exhibit to the astonishment of the modern reader. That sagacious controversialist was right in calling all these heresies nothing better than the old philosophies disguised under new names; his only error lay in not going back far enough to find their ultimate source. Basilides, for example, never professed Christianity (in fact, Tertullian calls him a Platonist), but he superadded upon the esoteric doctrines of the Egyptian priesthood the newly-imported notions of Buddhism—that probable source of so much that is strange in the Gnosis. The introduction of the religion of Buddha into Egypt and Palestine, a fact only recently discovered, yet substantiated by strong monumental testimony, affords the best solution for innumerable difficulties in the history of religion; but the circumstances relating to this very important question must be reserved for a separate chapter.

As for the actual TEXT-BOOKS of the Gnostics, which in their day formed so immense a library (every founder of a sect being, as if by obligation, a most prolific writer, as Hippolytus shows by the number of works he quotes), hunted up and carefully destroyed by the victorious orthodox, never perpetuated by transcripts after the sectaries became extinct, all have perished, leaving one sole specimen to attest their nature. But this survivor is of a character so wild and wondrous, that had fortune left it to our choice we could not have preserved a more characteristic representative of its class. This is the *Pistis-Sophia*, "Faith-Wisdom," a work to be perpetually quoted in the following pages, as it throws more light upon the actual monuments of Gnosticism than could hitherto be collected from all the other writers on the subject put together. On this account a brief summary of its contents will be the best introduction to our inquiry into the nature of the system.

## PISTIS-SOPHIA.

This treatise, ascribed to Valentinus (I know not on what authority), was discovered by Schwartz in a Coptic MS. preserved in the British Museum. He transcribed the Coptic text and translated it into Latin; both texts and version were published by Petermann in the year 1853. The original is copiously interspersed with Greek words and phrases; in fact, the Coptic was evidently so poor a language as to have no terms of its own to express any but the most materialistic ideas. The matter of its professed revelation is set forth also with endless repetitions, bespeaking a language destitute of relative pronouns, of conjunctions, and of all the other grammatical refinements necessary for the clear and concise expression of thought.\*

The authorship of this record is assigned by itself in several places to Philip the Apostle, whom the Saviour bids to sit down and write these things! This circumstance made me at first conclude it to be the lost Gospel of Philip quoted by Epiphanius, but the particular anecdote adduced by him from that gospel is not to be discovered anywhere in this. But as the original is full of wide lacunae, which often fall in very interesting places, as if purposely defaced to escape the eyes of the profane, such an omission is not altogether conclusive against the identity of the two.

The nature of the book may be briefly sketched as follows. It professes to be a record of the higher teaching of the Saviour communicated to his disciples during the *eleven* years he passed with them on earth after his crucifixion, and when he had returned from his ascension into heaven. This ascension had been made from the Mount of Olives, where he received from on high two shining vestures inscribed with five mystic words (§16), and the names of all the powers whose domains he had to traverse. He thus (as he relates to the disciples) passes through the gate of the Firmament, the Sphere of Fate, and the regions

\*It is intended to issue an English translation as a supplement to the present work.

of the Twelve Great Æons, all of whom in succession are terror-smitten, and fall down before him and sing hymns of praise. On arriving at the thirteenth æon, he finds seated below and weeping the excluded Power Pistis-Sophia,\* who gives her name to the revelation. She, having once caught a glimpse of the Supreme Light, was seized with a desire to fly upwards into it: but Adamas, the ruler of her proper place, being enraged at this act of rebellion against himself, caused a false light, a veritable *ignis fatuus*, to shine upon the waters of the subjacent chaos which lured down the hapless aspirant, and she was inextricably immersed in the abyss, and beset by the spirits thereof, all eager to deprive her of her native light. The doctrine of the admixture of light, derived from the Treasure of Light, with matter, its imprisonment therein, and its extraction and recovery by the appointed "Receivers of the Light," is the pervading idea of this revelation, to a greater extent even than in the Ophite scheme. As part of the same notion comes the frequent allusion to the *κέρασμος* or chaotic commixture of Light and Matter, to re-organise which is the special object of the Saviour's descent from above.

At least one half of the book is taken up with the account of the successive steps by which she ascends through all the Twelve Æons by the Saviour's aid, and the *confession* she sings at each stage of her deliverance out of chaos. Each confession is proposed by Jesus to a disciple for explanation, and is referred to some psalm or other prophecy containing parallel sentiments; this concordance being occasionally made out with considerable ingenuity. A remarkable peculiarity is that all throughout Mary Magdalene is the chief speaker, and the most highly commended for her spiritual knowledge, though once she is sharply rebuked by Peter for her presumption in thus perpetually putting herself forward unbidden—and not giving the *men* a chance to speak. After Pistis-Sophia has thus regained her lost position, the most valuable portion of the

\* This banishment of Sophia from the society of the other Æons is the grand turning-point of the principal Gnostic schemes, although each assigns a different reason for her degradation, as in the system of Valentinus, and also that of the later Ophites.

exposition of doctrines commences. The Magdalene asks the great question as to the final cause of Sin (§ 281), to which Jesus returns a long and minute description of the composition of the soul of man, which is fourfold, the divine spark therein (a particle of the Light yet entangled in the *κέρασμος*) being encased in a threefold envelope formed out of the *effluvia* of the rebellious *Æons*, the tendency of which is to keep it in subjection to the passions and to themselves, so that when separated from the body it may not be able to escape out of their domains, "the regions of mid-space," here represented as places of pain. These *Æons* are elsewhere identified with the signs of the Zodiac. Next comes a detailed account of the Rulers of the regions of torment (§ 320), of their *authentic* forms, a crocodile, a bear, a cat, a dog, a serpent, a black bull, &c., and of their *authentic* names; these last are not Semitic, but either Coptic or belong, judging from their terminations, to the mystic language generally used upon the Gnostic stones. After this we have the several punishments appointed for the various sins of mankind, and the exact number of years and even of days required for the expiation of each in its proper dungeon (*ταμείον*). These places of torment are all enclosed within the Dragon of Outward Darkness. It is worthy of remark that the serpent, whenever introduced, is a thing of evil—a sure indication that the book is under the influence of the Kabbala. The same conclusion is deducible from the malignity pervading the entire dispensation which it pictures; and the evident delight it takes in creating and parcelling out the various punishments, of which heretics naturally get the largest share. The philosophic Gnostic schemes have no severer penalty for those who do not listen to them than the want of *Knowledge*, and the subjection to *Matter*. After purgation in these prisons the souls are put into new bodies, and begin a new probation upon earth.

The judge of souls is the Virgin of Light, attended by her seven handmaids. Certain sins, but few in number, are punished by annihilation, and admit of neither expiation nor atonement. But for all the rest instant remission is procurable, if the friends of the deceased celebrate on his behalf the "Mystery (or, Sacrament) of the Ineffable One." This must be

the very earliest notice extant of the belief in the efficacy of the offering up of a *sacrament* for the redemption of souls. There is a singular provision made for the salvation of a perfectly righteous man, but who in his life-time has not enjoyed the opportunity of being converted. The angels take his departed soul, and carry it through all the realms of punishment with the utmost rapidity, and then conduct him before the Virgin of Light, who clothes it in a new body to recommence its earthly career, to obtain there the advantage of the mysteries and so become an heir of Light. The nature of the particular Mystery, so perpetually alluded to in this work, is in no place explained; it is, however, the highest of the Four and Twenty: for such is the number of the Mysteries here mentioned, one for each of the grades in its celestial hierarchy, for the *Five Marks*, for the *Seven Vowels*, for the *Five Trees* and for the *Seven Amens*. Throughout are interspersed frequent allusions to the seals, and the *numbers* of the Mysteries, courses, and divine personages, borrowed partly from the usages of the Temple, partly from those of the old Egyptian worship. They are repeated and involved in a multitudinous, inextricable sequence, that to one not having the key thereto belonging, strongly calls to mind the numerical vagaries that flit before the mind when slightly delirious: and which even the plodding German editor confesses, in his preface, often made his brain whirl as he attempted to transcribe them.

Lastly comes a long fragment (§ 358), headed "a Portion of the Prayers of Jesus," which tells more directly upon the subject of these researches than anything that has fallen in my way. The Saviour, attended by his disciples, standing sometimes on a mountain, sometimes by the sea, and sometimes in mid-air, addresses prayers to the Father, prefaced with long formulae of the same character, and often in the same words, as those covering the more important Gnostic monuments. Some of these opening invocations are expounded, and seemingly paraphrased, in the prayers following them, though not in a very satisfactory manner. Also Jesus celebrates, with many singular formalities, a sacrifice of wine and water, which, there is reason to believe, is the grand Mystery or Sacrament so often lauded in the foregoing chapters. The whole closes with a

long exposition by him of the influence of the Æons of the Zodiac upon the soul of the infant born under each, and of the fortunate or malign intervention of the planets in such cases. Of the latter the *sacred* names are communicated apparently as used by the Magi. A few Egyptian deities, *e.g.* Bubastes and Typhon, are named here, and the Syrian Barbelo is frequently introduced, as a personage of the very highest importance, being no less than the *heavenly* mother of the Saviour himself. His earthly Mother is indeed represented as attending at these revelations, but she plays a very secondary part therein to the Magdalene and even to Salome. The last thing to be noticed in this most remarkable fruit of a crazy, mystic imagination—it is hard to say whether more Kabbalist, or Magian, or Christian—is the opposed dualism of many of the Powers introduced as agents in the economy of the universe: for example, there is an obedient and a rebellious Adamas (that highest name with the earlier Naaseni), a great and a little Sabaoth, and similar antitheses to be met with also in the later Ophite schemes.

#### THE BOOK OF ENOCH.

This most ancient (as it professes) of the Hebrew Scriptures being so frequently referred to as the highest authority by the Æon Pistis-Sophia, a brief summary of its doctrine seems to form the necessary complement to the preceding section. The Book of Enoch, though often quoted by the Fathers, had been lost ever since the eighth century (with the exception of a few chapters of a Greek version preserved by Georgius Syncellus), until Bruce brought back three copies of it from Abyssinia. In the canon of that Church it takes its place in the Old Testament immediately before the Book of Job.\*

\* An English translation was made by Dr. Lawrence, Bishop of Cashel, of which the third edition, with notes, was published in 1837.

The best German translation is that of Dillmann, 1857. Cf. Schodde *Book of Enoch*, 1882.

This book is divided into ninety chapters, and begins with the preface: "In the Name of God, the merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great mercy, and holiness. This Book is the Book of Enoch the prophet. May blessing and help be with him who loves Him, for ever and ever. Amen. Chapter I. This word is the blessing of Enoch with which he blessed the chosen and the righteous that were of old. And Enoch lifted up his voice and spoke, a holy man of God, while his eyes were open, and he saw a holy vision in the heavens, which the angels revealed to him. And I heard from them everything, and I understood what I saw." After this follows the history of the angels, of their having descended from heaven, and produced giants with the daughters of men; of their having instructed them in the arts of war, and peace, and luxury. The names of the leading angels are mentioned, which appear to be of Hebrew origin, but corrupted by Greek pronunciation. The resolution of God to destroy these is then revealed to Enoch. These topics occupy about eighteen chapters. From the eighteenth to the fiftieth chapter Enoch is led by the angels Uriel and Raphael through a series of visions not much connected with the preceding. He saw the Burning Valley of the fallen angels, the Paradise of the saints, the utmost ends of the earth, the treasures of the thunder and lightning, winds, rain, dew, and the angels who presided over these. He was led into the place of the General Judgment, saw the Ancient of Days on his throne, and all the kings of the earth before him. At the fifty-second chapter, Noah is said to have been alarmed at the enormous wickedness of mankind, and, fearing vengeance, to have implored the advice of his great-grandfather. Enoch told him that a flood of water should destroy the whole race of man, and a flood of fire punish the angels whom the deluge could not affect. In Chapter LIX. the subject of the angels is resumed, Semeiza, Artukaru, Arimeon, Kakabael, Tusael, Ramiel, Damdal, and others to the number of twenty, appear at the head of the fallen spirits, and give fresh instances of their rebellious dispositions. At Chapter LXII. Enoch gives his son Methuselah a long account of the sun, moon, stars, the year, the months, the winds, and the like physical phenomena. This takes up

eight chapters, after which the Patriarch makes a recapitulation of the former pages. The remaining twenty chapters are employed on the history of the Deluge, Noah's preparations for it, and the success which attended them. The destruction of all flesh excepting his family, and the execution of divine vengeance on the angels, conclude the work.



FIG. 1.

## GNOSTICISM IN ITS BEGINNING.

To begin with the received account of the RISE AND PROGRESS of the Gnostic *philosophy*, for that is its proper appellation, *heresy* being properly restricted to differences of opinion between members of one regularly established community, we find that as early as the year A.D. 35, the Samaritans were regarding Simon Magus, as "the Great Power of God," and he and his disciple Cerinthus, are represented by the Christian Fathers as the actual founders of Gnosticism, under that accepted name. ✓

Of the former, Hippolytus gives a history which there is no reason for not accepting as correct in the main particulars. He was a native of Gittah, in the province of Samaria, and commenced his career, and soon acquired great influence amongst his countrymen, by practising magic after the "Thrasymedian method" (*i.e.* jugglery, as previously described by Hippolytus), nay more, by working miracles "through the agency of devils." Having fallen in love with a beautiful courtesan at Tyre, he bought her from her owner, and always carried her about with him, declaring that she was the "Intelligence" ("Ερνοια) that of old was imprisoned in the body of the Grecian Helen, then of the Lost Sheep, but now was restored to him for the salvation of the world. Even *before* the preaching of Christianity he had set up for a teacher of a new religion, plagiarised from Moses and Heraclitus the "Obscure," based upon the axiom that *Fire* was the First Principle of all things, subordinate to which were the "Six Radicals": a curiously compounded mixture of Judaism and Magism, of which Hippolytus gives a full though not very intelligible summary. ✓ "This Simon, after he had ransomed Helen, granted salvation unto men by means of his own *knowledge*. For inasmuch as the angels had governed the world ill by reason of their own ambitiousness, he pretended that he was come to set all things right; and having changed his form and made himself like to the Principalities, the Powers, and the

Angels, wherefore it was that he showed himself in the form of man although *not a man* at all, and had suffered the Passion in Judæa, although he had not really suffered it; moreover, that he had manifested himself to the Jews as the Son, in Samaria as the Father, and amongst the Gentiles in other parts as the Holy Ghost; but he submitted to be called by whatsoever name they pleased. The Prophets were inspired by the Angels, creators of the world, when they delivered their prophecies; on which account they that believe in Simon and Helen pay no regard to them (the Prophets) even in our times: and they do whatever they please, pretending that they are redeemed through *his* grace." . . . "Now this same Simon, when he was by his magic arts deceiving many in Samaria, was confuted by the Apostles, and having been cursed by them, he afterwards fell from his reputation and invented these fables. At last, having travelled to Rome, he again ran against the Apostles, and Peter had many encounters with him when he was *seducing multitudes* through his magical practices. Finally, having gone into the land of Persia, he took up his abode under a plane-tree, and there preached his doctrine. But at last, when he was on the point of being convicted for an impostor, in consequence of his making too long a stay in the same place, he gave out that, if he were buried alive, he would rise again on the third day. And in truth, having caused a pit to be dug by his disciples, he commanded himself to be covered over with earth. They therefore did what he commanded them, but he never came back unto this day, inasmuch as he was not a Christ. Now this is the story told concerning Simon, from whom Valentinus borrowed his first ideas, but called them by different names. For 'Mind,' and 'Truth,' and 'the Word,' and 'Life,' and 'the Church,' and 'Man,' the *Æons* of Valentinus, are confessedly the *Six Radicals* of Simon, namely, 'Mind, Intelligence, Voice, Name, Reason, and Thought.'"

But to go on with the series of teachers—this counter-apostolical succession—Simon was followed by Menander, he by Basilides at Alexandria, who, dying about A.D. 138, was replaced by Valentinus, born of Jewish parentage in the same city. This last is styled by Irenæus "Chief of the Gnostics," on account

of the importance and wide diffusion of his doctrines even during his own lifetime. In Syria other sects were being founded contemporaneously with these, taking their names from Marcion and Bardesanes, both of whom tradition represents as Persians by origin, and consequently *Magians* by religious training. The latter is by some called a native of Pontus, a circumstance, however, making no difference as to the source of his opinions, that region being confessedly the seat of Mithraicism, and ruled over by a line claiming descent from the first Darius, or a satrap of his. It is needless to enumerate here the founders of less important sects, until we come to the uprising of Manes, author of the most daring and most permanent theosophy of them all, which fought twice over so long and obstinate a battle with the Catholic faith. This sect, its origin, and tenets, on account of the curiosity of its doctrines, and the immense influence that they exerted over the ancient and mediæval world, will be considered at length in another chapter; as will also the *Ophites* whose name figures so conspicuously in the history of the primitive Church.

What has been mentioned above with respect to the countries producing the founders of all these sects—Egypt, Syria, or Persia—leads us to expect to find one common principle pervading the systems of all, and such is most probably the case. The fundamental doctrine held in common by all the chiefs of the Gnosis was, that the whole creation was not the work of the Supreme Deity, but of the Demiurgus, a simple *Emanation*, and several degrees removed from the highest power. To the latter, indeed, styled by them the “Unknown Father” (or as Simon first designated him “The Boundless Power,” and “The Root of all Things”), they attributed the creation of the *intellectual* world—that is, the Intelligences, the *Æons*, and the Angels—whilst, to the Demiurgus they referred the creation of the *World of Matter*, subject to imperfection from its very nature. But in order clearly to understand the grand principles underlying these doctrines, it is absolutely necessary to possess the main features of the older systems from which these same doctrines were principally borrowed; these systems being that of the *Zendavesta*, of the *Kabbala* (which is little more than a

translation of the same), and of the reformed Brahminical religion as taught by the Buddhist missionaries in the dominions of the Syro-Macedonians, or picked up in India by Alexandrian merchants visiting the emporia of Guzerat for the sake of trade.

Although to express their ideas visibly upon their *monuments* (the elucidation of which is the special object of this treatise) the Gnostics largely borrowed the images and symbols of the ancient Egyptian mythology (especially those connected with the Agathodaemon, the Solar god Iao, and the guide of souls, the jackal-headed Anubis), yet these figures were employed in a new sense, unless indeed we suppose (what is probable enough) that their *esoteric* meaning had been from the very beginning similar to that published by the teachers of the new faith. This last explanation was in fact the perpetual boast of Valentinus, and runs through every article of his theosophy as we read it in the interesting summary given by Hippolytus; and again, it must never be forgotten, for it is the key to many of the seeming contradictions in the different systems about to be passed in review, that Greek and Jew carried with them their ancient quarrel into the new field of the Gnosis. The former exalts the Bacchic *Serpent*, whilst he makes *Sabaoth* little better than a demon; the latter continues to abominate the Serpent as the impersonation of Satan, but his Sabaoth is the "Great and Good" (as Pistis-Sophia perpetually entitles him), the defender of the believer's soul against the malignant "Æons of the Sphere," and the influence of Judaism radiating from its second focus, the school of Alexandria, was so much more powerful than ordinary readers of history have ever suspected, that a few remarks upon this very curious subject will form a useful introduction to our consideration of its later philosophy.

#### INFLUENCE OF JUDAISM ON THE ANCIENT WORLD.

People in these times are still so influenced by the ideas engendered by the fifteen centuries of ecclesiastical *régime*, during which hatred and contempt for the Jewish race formed an

important Christian virtue, that they entirely overlook the influence exercised by Judaism over the minds of the heathen world so long as the Temple stood, and the national worship was celebrated there in all its glory. When the Romans, by their conquest of Syria, and soon after of Egypt, came into direct contact with the Jewish nation, although they disliked them individually, yet they conceived an intense admiration for their ancient, mysterious, and solemn worship. But, in fact, every institution, hallowed by the stamp of antiquity, immediately commanded the respect of the genuine old Roman. The Emperors lost no time in gaining a new patron, of mighty and undefined power, in *Jehovah*, by instituting a daily sacrifice to be ever offered at their own cost on behalf of themselves and empire. The discontinuance of this sacrifice, by the faction of the Zealots which had taken possession of the Temple, is noted by Josephus as the consummating act of the great revolt and attempt to re-establish independence, which brought down final destruction upon Zion. To give a few examples of the hold Judaism had taken upon the imaginations of the highest classes in Rome, whence its vastly magnified power over the minds of the vulgar, may be calculated according to the well-known rule of proportion in such matters. To mark Augustus' freedom from superstition, Suetonius quotes the circumstance of his highly commending the conduct of his grandson Caius, his heir apparent, because—during his visit to Egypt and Palestine—he had forborne to visit Apis in the one and the Temple in the other country. Putting the two religions in this way upon an equality, of itself demonstrates the high place then held by the Jewish in popular estimation; for by that time the Egyptian, as the chapter upon the Serapis-worship will show, had to a great extent superseded the worship of the national deities of Rome. Fuscus Aristius, a friend of Horace's, and therefore to be supposed a person of consequence and of education, makes it his excuse for not attending to a business-matter, that the day happened to be the Sabbath, and that "he was a little superstitious, like many others."

The influence and numbers of the Jews actually residing at Rome under the Republic is strikingly exhibited by some

observations of Cicero in his oration in defence of Flaccus. Flaccus, when commanding in Asia, had prohibited the sending of money to Jerusalem. This money can only mean the tribute paid by each adult Jew to the Temple, of half a shekel, or two drachmæ a head. Flaccus seized the money that had been collected for the purpose in defiance of his edict, amounting at Apamea to nearly one hundred pounds weight of gold, at Laodicea to twenty. The only gold piece of the age being the *stater*, current for twenty-five drachmæ, and of the weight of fifty to the pound, these collections would give us fifty thousand tribute-payers at the former city, and ten thousand at the other. The orator considers this "*auri Judaici invidia*" so damaging to his cause, that he explains the circumstances in a whisper to the jurymen, in order not to excite the indignation of the Jews amongst his audience. He actually declares that Flaccus's enemies had managed that his cause should be tried in that particular court in order to have the aid of the Jews domiciled in that quarter of Rome, to intimidate the jury, and so gain a verdict against him. "*Sequitur auri illa invidia Judaici. Hoc nimirum est illud, quod non longe a gradibus Aureliis hæc causa dicitur. Ob hoc crimen hic locus abs te, Laeli, atque illa turba quæsitæ est. Scis quanta sit manus, quanta concordia, quantum valeat in concionibus. Submissa voce agam, tantum ut iudices audiant. Neque enim desunt qui istos in me atque in optimum quemque incitent, quos ego quo id facilius faciant non adjuvabo.*" (Chapter XXVIII.) And what is still more surprising this influence continued to work even after the fall of Jerusalem, and the extinction of the people as a nation. Spartianus mentions that Severus in his tour of investigation throughout Asia, when he forbade people to turn Christians, extended the same interdict to the Jewish religion also. Again, to show the natural good-heartedness of Caracalla, he instances his indignation on account of the severe flogging which a boy, his playfellow, had received from his father, with the emperor's approbation, on the score of his Judaizing. The circumstances of the friendship point out that the boy thus made a "confessor" must have belonged to one of the best families of Rome. Such a position yet retained by the religion of Abraham is almost inconceivable

at that late period, when it had, besides the vigorous and ever-increasing growth of Christianity, to contend with the varieties of the Gnosis which suited themselves to every taste, and in many instances had sprung immediately out of herself (not out of her hated daughter and rival), and by their union with heathen philosophy, were naturally more attractive to the Gentiles than the original parent. Even at the time when one would have expected the prejudice against anything belonging to that nation to have been the most violent amongst the Romans, we find Vespasian, the actual destroyer of their national existence, erecting a statue in the most honourable of all situations, to an Alexandrian Jew, Tiberius, who had assisted him in his attempt to gain the empire, in some manner not recorded, but possibly in his capacity of the Rothschild of the age by an opportune loan. It is true that Juvenal cannot repress his indignation of all this prostitution to a foreigner of an honour before confined to the most eminent of his countrymen, and hints it to be the duty of every true Roman to express his sense of the injury by committing nuisances under the very nose of the statue.

“Atque triumphales, inter quos ausus habere  
Nescio quis titulos Ægyptius atque Alabarches,  
Cujus ad effigiem *non tantum* meiere fas est.”—I. 130.

In the third century we find the model emperor, Severus Alexander, setting up the image of *Abraham* by the side of Christ and Orpheus, all considered as the divinely-inspired founders of the several schools of mystery (or to go to the probable root of the belief, as so many different *Buddhas*), in the most holy recess of his domestic chapel. A little research amongst the annals of the later emperors would no doubt, furnish many other examples of the hold taken by various particulars of the Jewish creed, in its Babylonian and Alexandrian phases, upon the religious notions of the Romans. The fact is easily accounted for, when men's ideas upon the nature of the soul, of God's Government, and of a future state, are entirely vague, as were those of the educated heathen of those times, when (old traditions being discarded as mere unsatisfying poetical fables) they attempted to build up systems

that should explain every difficulty by the help of reason and philosophy alone, although destitute of any solid grounds upon which to lay the first foundation of the fabric. Things being in this state, a religion venerable by its *antiquity* (itself an impenetrable shield against the shafts of infidelity, as even Tacitus concedes: "Hi ritus, quoquo modo inducti, antiquitate defenduntur" *Hist.* v. 5), possessing a complete system that solved every problem by a professedly divine revelation, totally setting itself above reason and human experience, but proclaiming unquestioning credence as the most meritorious of virtues, such a religion could not but gain the victory over its disorderly and discordant competitors, which had nothing but arguments deduced from probabilities and analogies wherewith to oppose it. The same contest we behold passing under our own eyes; Roman Catholicism with its doctrines overthrown, exploded, rejected by reason, learning, and philosophy, for the space of three centuries, is again rapidly bringing back into her fold her lost sheep, which, having wandered through the tempting ways of Protestantism, and of philosophy or infidelity, however people choose to call it, and unable to discover any reason that will bear the test for standing fast at any ultimate point as the absolute truth, at last return weary and disappointed to whence they started, and find it conducive to peace of mind to accept assertion for demonstration, and the age of a tenet as equivalent to its truth.

There is yet another consideration that is of great importance in the present inquiry, which is the close affinity between the Judaism of this period and Magism, the extent of which will be pointed out in the following sections when we come to speak of the Talmud. Remembering how much of the machinery of the one was borrowed from the other, there is little cause for astonishment at discovering that what are generally considered peculiarly Jewish titles of Deity upon relics, may rather be attributed to a Magian source.

The three circumstances thus briefly adduced—namely, the direct influence of the religion of Zion as a "mystery" of the most venerable antiquity, vying with those of Egypt and of Babylon; its subsequent indirect influence through its offshoots

(which left its visible impress upon things tangible); the virtue of its connection with the creed of the Magi, the secret priesthood, or rather, freemasons of the ancient world; these are the things solving the difficulty that must have struck any inquiring mind when beginning to study the so-called Gnostic remains. From the foregoing considerations, at least a plausible reason may be gathered for the fact of the Hebrew names of the Deity, and of his angels, and of the patriarchs, so perpetually being repeated on works presenting the figures of genii and of astral spirits—forms of idol-monsters the most repugnant, one would have thought, to the feelings of the worshippers of those sacred names, profaned by such union; and imagery, from beholding which the true follower of Moses must certainly have recoiled in horror.

#### THE ZENDAVESTA.

The Zendavesta, literally "text and comment," is the doctrine of Zoroaster (*Zarathrustra*), comprised in eight parts, written at different periods, but of which the earliest have been assigned to the date of B.C. 1200–1000. In its present form it was collected by Ardeshir, the founder of the Sassanian dynasty, from oral tradition, at the time when he re-established the ancient religion of Persia.

In this revelation the Supreme Being is called "Boundless Time" (*Zarvana Akarana*), because to him no beginning can be assigned; he is so surrounded by his own glory, and so far exalted beyond all human comprehension, that he can only be the object of silent veneration. The beginning of creation was made by means of *Emanations*. The first emanation of the Eternal One was Light, whence issued Ormuzd (*Ahuramazda*), the King of Light. Ormuzd is styled the Firstborn of Boundless Time; and the "Ferouer" of him, or Pre-existing Soul (type or idea in Platonic phrase), had existed from all eternity within the primitive Light. By means of his "Word," Ormuzd created the pure world of which he is the preserver and the

judge. Next, he created in his own image the six *Amshaspands*, who stand about his throne, and are his agents with the lower spirits, and with mankind, whose prayers they offer up to him, and to whom they serve for models of perfection. These Amshaspands, of whom Ormuzd is the first, thus making up the mystic number *seven*, are of both sexes, and the Gnostics adopted them, as we shall see further on, into their own systems, with the same distinction of sex. The next series of emanations were the *Izeds*, twenty-eight in number, of whom Mithras is the chief. Like the superior order, they watch over the purity and happiness of the world, of which they are the genii and guardians. The principal names amongst them are Vohu-mano, Mazda, Asha, Vayu (Ventus), Geusurvi (Soul of the Earth), Sraosha (who exactly answers, in point of duties, to the Grecian Hermes and Jewish Gabriel, for he carries the mandates of Ormuzd, and conveys up to him the souls of the righteous).

The third series, the *Ferouers*, are in number infinite. These are the Thoughts or "Ideas" conceived in the mind of Ormuzd before he proceeded to the creation of things. They are the protectors of mankind during this mortal life, and will purify their souls on the Day of the Resurrection.

The creation of these chiefs, with their angelic hosts, had become necessary. Ahriman, the Second-born of the Eternal One—like Ormuzd, an emanation from the Primal Light, and equally pure, but ambitious and full of pride—had become jealous of the Firstborn. On this account the Supreme Being condemned him to inhabit for twelve thousand years the space that is illumined by no ray of light—the black empire of Darkness. This interval will suffice to decide the struggle between Light and Darkness, between Good and Evil. Ahriman, in order to oppose his rival, created in his turn three series of evil spirits, corresponding in number, and antagonistic in office, to each one of the good, and, like them, male and female. The first series is that of the *Arch-Devs*, chained each one to his respective planet, and of whom the chief is Astomogt, "the two-footed Serpent of lies." These Devs are the authors of all evil, both physical and moral, throughout the universe.

Ormuzd, after a reign of three thousand years, then created

the Animal World in six periods, creating first light—a faint image of the Light celestial—then water, earth, plants, beasts, and lastly, man. Ahriman had concurred in the creation of earth and water, for *Darkness* being already inherent in these two elements, Ormuzd was unable to exclude its nature from them.

Ormuzd had produced by his *Word* a being the type and source of universal life for all creation; this being was called *Life*, or the *Bull* (the same word in Zend stands for both). This creature Ahriman contrived to destroy, but out of its scattered seed Ormuzd, through the agency of the Amshaspand Saphandomad (*Wisdom*), formed the first human pair, Meschia and Meschiane. This couple Ahriman, by a bribe of fruits and milk, succeeded in corrupting, having gained over the female first. Then, to all the good animals made by Ormuzd, he opposed, by his own creation, as many mischievous and venomous ones. The struggle still goes on; the Power of Darkness often is the superior, but the pure souls are assisted and defended by the good genii, and will ultimately triumph. For when things shall seem at their worst, and Evil all-powerful in the creation, three prophets shall appear and restore the lost Light. One of these, Sosioch, shall regenerate the world and restore it to its pristine excellence. Then comes the general Resurrection, when the good shall immediately enter into this happy abode—the regenerated earth, and Ahriman, together with his angels and the wicked, be purified by immersion in a lake of molten metal, so as to render them fitting members of the new kingdom. Thenceforth all will enjoy unchangeable happiness, and, headed by Sosioch, ever sing the praises of the Eternal One.

The religion of Zoroaster was a reformed version of the ancient creed held by the inhabitants of Eritene in Bactria. For it is probable that the first gods of the Aryan race before it split into Indian and Zend, were the powers of Nature, *Indra*, thunder, *Mithra*, sunlight, *Vayu*, wind, *Agni*, fire, *Armaiti*, earth, *Soma*, intoxication. The worship of the last may have been the source of the Dionysia, introduced from India, as the Greeks themselves always asserted. These powers were called *Ahuras* and *Devas* indifferently; but Zoroaster reduced all these

powers to the secondary rank of angels, and used the name *Devas* in a bad sense only. The Zoroastrian was the established religion of the Persians at the time when they conquered Assyria; and to a great extent it superseded the material idolatry of the Babylonians, whose gods Darius and Xerxes melted down without any scruple. But Matter is of opinion that the College of Magi, established long before the Persian conquest of Babylon, accepted the new religion upon the change of masters, retaining nothing of the old besides Astrology and Divination.

It must not be forgotten how large a portion of the Jewish captivity remained permanently in Assyria—only two tribes, Judah and Levi, having been sent back to Jerusalem by Cyrus; and Babylon long continued the seat of a most flourishing Rabbinical school, whilst Judea itself, down to the time of the Macedonian conquest, remained a province of the Persian Empire. How important a part of the Persian population at a much later period were either Jews, or under Jewish influence, appears from the very remarkable assertion of Josephus, “that his nation were encouraged to brave all extremities in their final struggle against the power of Rome by the confident expectation of aid from their brethren beyond the Euphrates.” And three centuries later Ammianus notices that Julian’s invading army came upon a city entirely inhabited by Jews in the very centre of Persia. After the captivity, the principal literary establishments of the Jews appear to have been seated in central Asia. The schools of Nahardea, of Sora, of Pumbeditha, were at least as famous as the schools of Palestine (cf. Jos. Ant. xviii. 12). The latter even appear to have paid a sort of filial deference to these foundations: the Chaldee version of the Pentateuch, made by Onkelos of Babylon, was accepted as the authorised version by all the Jews living in Palestine; and the Rabbi Hillel, coming from that capital to Jerusalem, was received by the doctors of the Holy City as an ornament of the same national school, and this only a few years before the birth of Christ. From all these circumstances it is easy to perceive how much of the Zoroastrian element may have pervaded the Jewish religion at the time of the promulgation of Christianity, when its principal teachers

were the Pharisees or "separatists," if, indeed, their doctors did not actually get their appellation from the word *Pharsi*, "Persian"—an etymology that has something to recommend it. These doctrines, as then taught, are set forth in the *Kabbala*, or "Traditions," so called from *Kabbal*, "to receive"—the main features of which shall be sketched in the following sections.

### THE KABBALA AND THE TALMUD.

The origin of the *Kabbala* is placed by most authors much later than that of Christianity; and, indeed, it is not impossible that its doctrines may have received great developments *after* that epoch; \* nevertheless, the elements of them go back to a much more remote antiquity. The Book of Daniel bears the most conspicuous traces of this antiquity, and to the attestation of this record are added other proofs no less convincing. The idea of *Emanation* is, so to speak, the *soul*, the essential element of the *Kabbala*; it is likewise, as we have already seen, the essential character of Zoroastrism. We may therefore consider that it was through their very intimate connection with Persia that the Jews imbibed that idea.

According to the *Kabbala*, as according to the *Zendavesta*, all that exists has emanated from the source of the Infinite Light.

Before all things existed the Primal Being, the "Ancient of Days," the eternal King of Light. This King of Light is the *All*; he is the real cause of all existence; he is the Infinite (*En Soph*); he alone is *He*, there is in him no *Thou*; but he cannot be known, "he is a closed Eye."

The universe is the revelation of the King of Light, and only subsists in Him. His *qualities* are manifested in it, variously modified and in different degrees; it is therefore his "Holy

\* The tradition is that it was first committed to writing by Simon Ben Jochai, who, being proscribed by Titus, concealed himself in a cavern for the space of eleven years, the whole of which he devoted to this work, in which he was assisted by the prophet Elias.

Splendour"—the *mantle*, as it were, wherewith he must be clothed in silence. All is an emanation from this Being; the nearer therefore that any approaches to him, the more perfect is it, and the less so does it become as it recedes from him: this idea of *gradation* is eminently Persian. Before the creation of the world, the Primal Light filled all, so that there was no void at all; but when the Supreme Being, residing within this Light, resolved to display and manifest his perfection, he retired within himself, and formed around him a void space. Into this void he let fall his first emanation—a ray of the Light, which is the cause and principle of all existence, uniting in itself the generative and conceptive forces; being both father and mother in the sublimest sense, pervading all, and without which nothing can for an instant subsist.

From this Double Force, designated by the first two letters of the name Jehovah (*Yod, He* \*), emanated the First-born of God, the *Tikkun*, or "Universal Type" (Platonic *Idea*), and the general container of all beings, united within himself by means of the Primal Ray. He is the creator, preserver, and prime animator of the world. He is the "Light of light," possessing the three primitive forces of the Godhead: the light, the spirit, and the life. Inasmuch as he has *received* what he *gives*, the light and the life, he is considered as equally a generative and conceptive principle as the "Primitive Man," *Adam-Kadmon*; and as man himself is called the "little world," or the microcosm, so this Being, his Type, is properly designated the "great world," or Macrocosm. In this their Adam-Kadmon, the principle of light and life, the Kabbalists have united the attributes of the same principles amongst the Persians.

Adam-Kadmon has manifested himself in ten emanations, which are not indeed actual beings, but sources of life, vessels of the Almighty Power, types of all the creation. Their names are: the Crown, Wisdom, Prudence, Magnificence, Severity, Beauty, Victory, Glory, Foundation, Empire. To Wisdom they gave the title *Jah*; to Prudence *Jehovah*; to Magnificence *El*;

\* The I. H. so conspicuously placed on some Gnostic stones probably expresses this name; as being the nearest equivalents the Greek alphabet could furnish for the Hebrew letters.

to Severity *Elohim* ; to Victory and Glory *Sabaoth* ; to Empire *Adonai*.

These are all attributes of the Supreme, as displayed in his works, through which alone it is possible for the human mind to conceive him. To the same emanations the Kabbalists give other titles, which constantly present themselves in Gnostic inscriptions. For example, the *Crown* (Parmenides also calls the Godhead *Στέφανος*) has the synonym of *Or*, "Light," (possibly the same with *Our*, the name of a Sabeian genius). *Wisdom* is called *Nous* and *Logos*, and is equivalent to the *Sophia* of Gnosticism ; she has also the names of *Fear*, *Depth of thought*, *Eden*, according to the several passions that animate her. *Prudence* is the "river flowing out of Paradise, the fountain of the oil of unction." *Magnificence* has for symbol a lion's head ; *Severity*, a red and black fire ; *Beauty*, the colours green and yellow ; the symbol of *Beauty* is an illuminating mirror ; *Victory* is Jehovah Sabaoth, having for symbol the pillar on the right hand, called *Jachin* ; *Glory* has the left pillar *Boaz*, called likewise the "Old Serpent," and sometimes "Cherubim and Seraphim ;" this principle answers to the genius *Ophis* of the Gnostic systems. "Jachin" and "Boaz" signify Strength and Power : they figure conspicuously in the symbolism of the secret societies of modern times ; and naturally so, for these *illuminati* have borrowed (probably without understanding it) all the terminology of the Valentinians and the Kabbalists. "Foundation" becomes the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil : also Noah, Solomon, and the Messiah—all which titles merely express the eternal alliance existing between the Supreme and all that emanates from him, and in virtue whereof he brings back into himself all the souls that have lost their original purity. "Empire" is the Consuming Fire, the wife of the Church—all three titles being also employed in the Valentinian system.

The relationship of the "Sephiroth," or Æons, to one another the Kabbalists represent by a number of *circles* intersecting in a mysterious manner *ad infinitum* ; or again, by the figure of a *Man*, or of a *Tree*, made up of such circles. The figure of the *Man*, *Seir-Anpin*, consists of two hundred and forty-three numbers,

bers, being the numerical value of the letters in the name *Abram*, and signifying the different orders in the celestial hierarchy. The first idea of this type was possibly borrowed from the Hindoo figure of Brahma and the several types typified by the different parts of his body, to which mystical values are still attached by the Hindoos.

The ten Sephiroth served as *types* or models for the visible Creation; and from them emanated the Four Worlds, *Aziluth*, *B'riah*, *Jezirah*, and *Asiah*; each world successively proceeding out of the one above it, and each in succession *enveloping* its superior. A theory this, possibly borrowed from Plato's description of the arrangement of the seven spheres, as given in the "Vision of Er," at the end of his "Republic," where he compares them to a set of the hemispherical bowls used by jugglers, fitting into, and moving loosely within, each other (lib. x. 614B, *seq.*).

These Four Worlds become less pure as they descend in the series; the least pure of all being the *material* world. But nothing is entirely *material*, for all subsists through God, the ray of his light penetrating through all creation being the Life of the life, and consequently "all is God." This universal *All* is divided into thirty-two "Gates," the elements or energies out of which all beings are formed.

The world *Aziluth* is inhabited by the *Parsuphaim*, the purest emanations of the Deity, having nothing material in their composition. *B'riah* is possessed by an inferior order, who are the servants of *Aziluth*, although still immaterial creatures. Still lower are the inhabitants of *Jezirah*, to which world belong the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Elohim and the Bené-Elohim. But *Asiah* is peopled by gross material existences of both sexes, the *Klippoth* delighting in evil, whose chief is Belial. These last beings are full of ambition, and ever at war with the pure spirits of the superior worlds, whose empire they unceasingly endeavour to usurp.

The three superior orders just described answer to the *Amshaspands*, *Izeds*, and *Fravashis*, of Zoroaster; as do the *Klippoth*, in their vast numbers and malicious nature, to his *Devs*. This discord did not exist in the beginning, it was the

result of a revolution in heaven, called the "Fall of the Seven Kings," from whom\* the Creator, as a punishment, extracted the principle of good and light, and bestowed it upon the inhabitants of the three superior spheres.

This last notion is common to many forms of Gnosticism. The Ophites make Achamoth extract from Ildabaoth and his six sons the inherent ray of Divine Light, in order to bestow it upon Man. Again, the Pistis-Sophia represents two great angels, Melchisedech and Zorocthora (*gatherer of light*) making their annual rounds through the rebellious "Æons of the sphere" (zodiacal signs), and *squeezing* out of them all the rays of Divine Light that are still left in their composition, which having been all extracted, the fulness of time and the kingdom of heaven are come; and so, according to the Kabbala, when the contest shall have endured for the space ordained from the beginning of the world, the Supreme shall deliver the spirits in Asiah from their material envelope, shall strengthen the feeble ray of his light that is within them, and shall establish its pristine harmony throughout all Creation.

The *Human Soul* is composed of all parts borrowed from each of these four worlds. From Asiah it gets the *Nephesh*, or seat of the physical appetites; from Jezirah the *Ruach*, or seat of the passions, from Briah the *Neshamah* or reason, and from Aziluth it obtains the *Chaiah*, or principle of spiritual life. This looks like an adaptation of the Platonic theory of the soul's obtaining its respective faculties from the Planets in its downward progress through their spheres. But the Pistis-Sophia, with its accustomed boldness, puts this theory into a much more poetical

\* The author of the Book of Enoch alludes to the same legend: "Over these fountains also I perceived a place which had neither the firmament of heaven above it, nor the solid ground underneath it; neither was there water above it, nor any thing on wing, but the spot was desolate. And then I beheld *seven stars* like great blazing mountains, and like spirits entreating me. Then the Angel said, this place until the

consummation of heaven and earth will be the prison of the stars and the host of heaven. The stars which roll over fire are those who transgressed the commandments of God before their time arrived, for they came not in their proper season. Therefore was he offended with them, and bound them until the consummation of their crimes in the secret year."—Chap. xviii.

shape (§ 282). The *Inner Man* is similarly made up of *four* constituents, but these are supplied by the rebellious *Æons* of the Sphere, being the *Power* (a particle of the Divine light ("Divinæ particula auræ") yet left in themselves); the *Soul* "formed out of the tears of their eyes, and the sweat of their torments"; the Ἀντιμίμον Πνεύματος *Counterfeit of the Spirit* (seemingly answering to our *Conscience*); and lastly the Μοῖρα *Fate*, whose business it is to lead the man to the end appointed for him; "if he hath to die by the fire, to lead him into the fire; if he hath to die by a wild beast, to lead him unto the wild beast, &c." But in truth the entire system of this most wondrous Gospel is a mixture of the Kabbala with the ideas of Magian astrology, clouded under the terminology of the old Egyptian creed, to which belong its "Triple Powers," "Invisible Gods," and "the Proper Forms" assigned by it to the different *Æons*.

All the human race having sinned in the *First Man*, that is as regards their *souls*, all which were necessarily *contained within* his soul at the time of the Fall, these souls are exiled hither into prisons of Matter, called bodies, in order to expiate their sin, and to exercise themselves in good during their residence on earth. Such as upon quitting the body are not found sufficiently purified for entrance into Aziluth, have to recommence their penance in this world. Hence the question of the Disciples whether a man's being *born* blind were the punishment for his *own* sins, which on this supposition must have been committed by him in a *previous* life. This penitential transmigration of souls forms a very conspicuous feature in the doctrine set forth in the Pistis-Sophia. The wicked, after undergoing torment for periods nicely apportioned to their deserts, in prisons belonging to the several Infernal Powers, are sent into this world again to inhabit human bodies afflicted in different ways—lame, blind, or sunk in abject poverty. Similarly the righteous, but *unregenerate*, man is provided with a fresh body wherein to avail himself of the *sacraments* of the new religion; which in his former life he had neglected through ignorance, and not wilfully.

The nature of God, and of Man, is therefore the subject of the Kabbala; the Government of the Creation is set forth in the

*Talmud*, the doctrine of which concerning the *Nature of the Angels* is extremely important for the understanding of much in Gnosticism. The whole system in this particular is borrowed from the *Zendavesta*; and could not have originated *before*, or indeed *without* the Captivity, so opposite is the spirit pervading it to the genius of the Mosaic Law. According to it, the government of all things is entrusted to the Angels, of whom there are seventy Princes, watching over each element, nation, and language. Thus, Jehuel is the Prince of *Fire*, and has under him seven subordinates: Seraphiel, Gabriel, Uriel, Temanael, Shimsael, Hadranael, and Samiel. Again, Michael is Prince of *Water*, and similarly attended by seven inferior spirits. Moreover, there are an infinity of Angels yet lower in degree, guardians of the various animals, plants, heat, winds, rains, &c. There also are others presiding over the passions of the soul, fear, grace, favour, love, and so on. Hence it is not to be wondered at, that the Angel who directs the course of the sun should have under him no less than two hundred and ninety-six hosts, whose sum is expressed by the numerical letters in the word *Haaretz* "the earth." The head of them is Metatron, the "number of his name" being three hundred and fourteen, and therefore equivalent to that of *Shaddai*, "the Almighty." Metatron is the Persian Mithras; the names of the others are all compounded with *El* "God," and contain his titles, or invocations to him.\* All this celestial roll-call fully explains St. Paul's warning to his flock at Colossae against being reduced into a "voluntary (that is, an uncalled for) humility, and the worshipping of Angels," whilst the copious appearance of their names upon talismans strongly testifies to the veneration in which their power was held.

This last circumstance was a necessity of the case, for all these monuments proceed from two sources—the two great schools of Magi mentioned by Pliny, the most ancient, the

\* The Book of Enoch thus states the names and offices of the "Angels who watch": Uriel presides over clamour and terror; Raphael over the spirits of men; Ragiel inflicts punishment on the world and the luminaries; Michael, who presides over human virtue, commands the nations. Sarakiel over the spirits of the children of men who transgress; Gabriel over Iksat, over Paradise, and over the Cherubim.

Chaldean, founded by Zoroaster and Orphanes, the *modern* of his own day, by Moses and Jambres. So Juvenal, after bringing in the proud and pompous Chaldean, the maker of emperors—

“Cujus amicitia conducendaque tabella  
Magnus civis obit, et formidatus Othoni,” (vi. 557-8.)

makes the poor trembling Jewess fortune-teller steal in with whispers for the lady's private ear—her profession going no further than the interpreting or the vending of dreams—“Qualiacunque voles Judæi somnia vendent.” Such nocturnal revelations, we are told, were to be procured by sleeping with the proper talisman put under one's pillow. Thus, a writer on magic quoted by Camillo di Leonardo, lays down that “a woman with her hair hanging down loose, and a man approaching her making a gesture of love, engraved upon a crystal, or jacinth, being placed under the head upon going to sleep, will make one see in a dream whatsoever one desires.”\*

Such being the nature of the case, the existing productions of Gnosticism will be most appropriately investigated in the present Treatise by considering the nature of the various sources from which they emanated. The series commences with the *Mithraic*, as being the most ancient in origin, and in which the Magian and the Jewish Kabbalistic ideas are found the most frequently united. To this class succeed the *Abrahas-gems*, properly so-called, in which the Magian ground-work is modified by the refinements of Basilides, introducing a strong tincture of the primitive Egyptian theology. To Egypt herself more properly belong the *Agathodæmon* talismans bearing the figure of the good serpent, Chnuphis—an emblem which gave its name to that very wide-spreading and clearly defined sect, the *Ophites*. Last of all come the innumerable relics of the

\* And again, the “sigil of a man having a long face and beard, and eyebrows raised, seated upon a plough, and holding a fox and vulture, with four men lying upon his neck; such a gem being placed under your head when asleep, makes you dream of treasures, and of the right manner of finding them.” Also, “Cepheus, a

man girt with a sword, having his hands and legs extended, is held by Aries, and placed in the north. It is of the nature of Saturn and Jupiter, makes the wearer cautious and prudent; and put under the head of a sleeping person makes him see delightful visions.”

worship of *Serapis*, that most recent of all the gods in the Egyptian Pantheon, and in which the Brahminical influence is most distinctly to be traced. This last subject, so curious in itself, shall be the subject of the following section, where the numerous facts brought forward may perhaps serve to remove some of the incredulity with which such a thesis will naturally at first be regarded.



FIG. 2.

## INDIAN SOURCES OF GNOSTICISM.—MANES.

The *Persian* origin of so considerable a portion of the Gnosis having been set forth in the foregoing pages, it remains to show what portion is due to a purely *Indian* source, and to indicate the channels through which a direct intercourse was carried on between the farthest east and the foci of Gnosticism, Alexandria and Ephesus. For the Christian Gnosis was indirectly the daughter of the Hindoo Gnosis, such as it was taught in the various mysteries; possibly in the Eleusinian and the Phrygian. For universal tradition made the first founder of mysteries, Bacchus, bring them direct from India; and Jove's *μητρος*, the fabled birth-place of the god, may have been no other than Mount *Meru*, the Olympus of the Hindoo Pantheon.\*

Certain Gnostic tenets concerning the duality of the Divine emanations, absorption into the god-head, asceticism, penance, and self-collection, are identical with the Buddhistic teaching upon the same points; of which agreement several remarkable examples will be adduced in their fitting place. But we are not left to mere conjecture on this point, for the actual circumstances of their importation from India are minutely detailed, in one case that doubtless had many parallels, by the laborious Epiphanius in his "Life of Manes," (Hæres. lxxv.).†

This celebrated heresiarch, equally abhorrent to Zoroastrian and Christian orthodoxy, was by birth a Persian, named Cubricus; but who upon commencing his mission assumed the title of *Manes*, signifying in the Babylonian tongue "The Vessel," for the same reason, we may suppose, that Dante gives to St. Paul the epithet "Vas Electionis." This Cubricus had

\* The bearer of the phallus (lingam) in the grand Dionysian procession celebrated by Ptolemy Philadelphus was blackened all over with soot, doubtless to indicate the native country of that very equivocal symbol.

† The earliest authority, however,

(drawn upon by Epiphanius also), is the "Disputation of Archelaus and Manes," held at Charræ in A.D. 275-9. This book was written in Syriac, but is only extant in a Latin version.

been slave, and subsequently sole heir, to a certain wealthy widow who had inherited all the effects belonging to one Terminus, surnamed in *Assyrian* "Buddas." This Terminus had similarly been the slave of a rich Saracen merchant, Scythicus, who had studied the Greek language and literature in some place on the borders of Palestine (perhaps the school of Palmyra), and who "had there attained to eminence in the empty learning of this world." By constant journeys between his home and *India*, this Scythicus had amassed a large fortune. With this he settled down in Hypsele in the Thebaid, where he married a beautiful courtesan, whom he had bought and emancipated. "Here, out of sheer idleness and licentiousness, he set up to preach new doctrines, not derived from Scripture but from mere human reason."

These doctrines, from the nature of the case, can hardly have been of his own concoction, but, in all probability, things that he had picked up in India, where all the ancient emporia lay on the Guzerat Coast, the seat of the powerful Jaina (Buddhist) monarchy. A mere Eastern trader, a common Arab merchant who, after making his fortune by long and dangerous travels in the East, who could afterwards in advanced life set himself down to study, nay more, to attain *proficiency* in the Greek philosophy, must have been a man of no ordinary intellect. Assuredly it was not the mere want of anything better to do, (as his malicious biographer asserts), that made him turn preacher of a new religion. His marriage with the enfranchised courtesan looks like a theological addition, added to the portrait for the sake of so completing his resemblance to Simon Magus. The nature of the doctrines he was likely to imbibe in the great Indian marts, Baroche, Barcellore, Pultaneh, or in the semi-Grecian cities of Bactria, is attested to this day by the innumerable *Buddhist* temples and topes, with their deposit of relics yet studding the provinces this side of the Indus; and whose contents declare the flourishing state of that religion even when the country had passed under the rule of the Sassanian Kings of Persia.

But to return to Scythicus in his retirement: "Taking Pythagoras for guide, he composed four books, namely, 'The

Mysteries,' 'The Summary,' 'The Gospel,' and 'The Treasuries.'" (Pythagoras was then universally believed to have visited India, and there to have obtained the elements of his philosophy, which has a certain Brahminical character.) "After this, Scythicus made a journey to Jerusalem in the very times of the Apostles, and held conferences with the elders of the church upon the Origin of Evil, and such like points. But not being satisfied by their explanations; he took to preaching magic, the knowledge of which he had gotten along with his other wares from the *Indians* and *Egyptians*. But as he was showing off a miracle upon the roof of his house, he fell down and was killed. Upon this, his servant and sole disciple, Terminusus, instead of returning to his mistress at Hypsele, ran off with his money into Persia, where, in order to escape detection, he assumed the name of *Buddas*, which signifies "Wise." (This last fact proves incontestably the nature of the doctrines he and his master had been gathering up in their Indian travels; and the truth lying at the bottom of this story seems to be that he gave himself out for a *fresh incarnation* of Buddha, of which there had been *seven*\* before his date.)

"This Terminusus was himself a man of learning and conversant with his master's four treatises. He lodged in the house of a widow, where he used to hold conferences with the priests of Mithras, especially with two, Parcus and Labdacus, upon the Two Principles, and similar subjects. He, too, having been killed by *accident*, like his master, his landlady kept possession of all his baggage, religious books included; and in her turn bequeathed them to her servant Cubricus, the afterwards so celebrated Manes."

It is necessary here to point out a certain violent anachronism in the story as told by Epiphanius. If Scythicus visited Jerusalem at all, he must have done so *before* the year of its destruction, A.D. 70. His disciple, Terminusus, could therefore not have survived far into the second century. The landlady of the latter could for this reason have hardly had for slave Manes, who flourished about two hundred years later. It is,

\* The seventh having been that Sakya<sup>λ</sup> who, from Benares, diffused Buddhism all over the peninsula.

however, possible that the works plagiarised by Manes had been preserved in her *family* down to the period of his service in it.

In this history of Scythicus, however disguised by tradition, we have at one view the complete history of the rise and progress of Gnosticism. We find an Arab merchant of a subtle and inquiring mind, occupying himself during his long and frequent sojourns at the Indian marts in studying the philosophy of these prevailing religionists, the speculations of the Buddhist monks, and equally investigating the secrets of the "wisdom of Egypt," when detained at the other headquarters of the Eastern trade. Then retiring from business, he goes to Palmyra for the purpose of studying Grecian philosophy, as then taught in its school, which philosophy would be no other than Neo-Platonism; thence returning home, he occupies his leisure in reducing to one harmonious system the numerous conflicting theories upon subjects too high for human knowledge, which he had so laboriously collected from the three great fountains of philosophy—India, Egypt, and Athens.

Finally attracted by the fame of a new religion that professed to throw the clearest light upon all things relating to God and Man, being preached at Jerusalem, he immediately starts for the *focus* of this new light, leaving behind him wife and property, only accompanied by one servant, himself an educated man, and his own treasured theological speculations. On his arriving at the Holy City, we find him (as might be expected from his previous training) grievously disappointed in his hopes of at last obtaining the solution of all the problems that had so long occupied his thoughts—for on subjects of that kind the Christian Presbyters could tell no more than what he had learnt already from the *Rabbis* of Alexandria, or the Jaina monks of Guzerat. Thus disappointed, he appears to have set up himself for a teacher of a new and higher doctrine, supporting his pretensions (after the customary fashion of the times) by miracle-working; and as a matter of course getting his career speedily cut short, for Jerusalem was not the place where a new religion would be promulgated with impunity by a single indi-

vidual, and that too an *Arabian*. His disciple, Terminus, taking warning by his fate, resolves to try another school of profound wisdom, formed from time immemorial, but as yet unvisited by his master, and proceeds to hold discussion with the Wise Men of the East at their head college in Babylon, seeking for the final solution of his difficulties in the doctrine of Zoroaster. It is very probable that he, as the result of this study, engrafted upon the system of Scythicus whatever features of the Zendavesta appeared to him the most satisfactory, and consistent best with his preconceived ideas of the truth. It would be interesting to know whether he shaped all these fresh acquisitions into conformity with the original Indian groundwork of his master's system. As already observed, such appears to have been his course from the title that he assumed, declaring himself an eighth "Buddha," successor to the famous Guatama, founder of the religion, and like him commissioned to teach a new way of salvation. Terminus, like his master, came to an untimely end. The Magi were not members of a powerful establishment who would suffer themselves to be puzzled and confuted by an over-wise foreigner, disputing so boldly—

"Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and Fate,  
Fixed Fate, freewill, foreknowledge absolute,"

still less to allow him to go off exulting in his victory, as his asserted follower Manes likewise found to his cost.

Manes himself appears to have belonged to the order of Magi (probably being admitted after gaining his freedom and changing his name), for he is reported to have been famous for his skill in astrology, medicine, magic, and *painting*! This last is curious; it shows that the Magi, like the mediæval monks, monopolised the arts as well as the sciences of their times. Whether he conceived the scheme from the accidental acquisition of the writings of Scythicus or not (M. Matter supposes him to have got his first inspiration from some Egyptian Basilidan who had found his way into Persia), certain it is that he first gave to these notions a definite shape, and constructed his system with such skill that it spread not merely all over the East but throughout Europe. In the latter region its im-

portance is evinced by the fact (mentioned incidentally by Ammianus) that Constantine himself, before finally changing his religion, following the Apostolical precept "Try all things, hold fast that which is good," carefully studied the Manichæan system under the guidance of the learned Musonianus, whom we must suppose to have been a great doctor of the sect.\* Nay more, this religion, after long seeming extinction from the pertinacious persecution of the Byzantine emperors, again blazed forth with extraordinary lustre in the Paulicianism of the Middle Ages.

The grand purpose of the scheme of Manes was the *reconciliation* of the two religions, which had by that time come to dispute the empire of the world—the flourishing, though still unrecognised Christianity of Rome, and the equally vigorous but newly revived Zoroastrism of Sassanian Persia. Calling himself the "Promised Paraclete," Manes accepted the gospel, but only after purifying it from all taint of Judaism, whilst he utterly rejected the Old Testament. But whilst Zoroaster makes all to *begin* in the *harmony*, and to *end* in the mutual reconciliation of the Two Principles, Manes declares these Two Principles immutable and existent from all eternity as they shall continue for ever to exist. His *Good* is Zoroaster's "Lord of Light"; but his *Bad* is Satan-Matter, deliverance from whose bondage is to be obtained only through the strictest asceticism. From the Christian Church he borrowed its institution of presbyters and deacons, being sensible how greatly that organisation had conduced to its rapid development, and in his own enterprise it met with almost equal success. Manes was a genuine Pantheist, teaching that God pervaded all things, even plants (of which tenet I subjoin a singular illustration from his once ardent follower, St. Augustine); he also adopted the entire theory of Emanations, exactly

\* "Constantinus enim cum limatius superstitionum quæreret sectas, Manichæorum et similium, nec interpres inveniretur idoneus, hunc sibi commendatum ut sufficientem elegit; quem officio functum perite Musonianum voluit appellari ante Strate-

gium dictitatum." Ammianus xv. 6. The sainted Emperor's eulogists have carefully hushed up this trait of an inquiring spirit, anxious to weigh the relative merits of the existing rivals of Catholicism.

as it was defined in the older Gnostic systems. St. Augustine's words are ('Confessions' iii. 10): "And I, not understanding this, used to mock at those holy servants and prophets of thine.\* And what was I doing when I mocked at them, except that I myself was mocked at by thee, being seduced gently and by degrees into such absurdities as to believe that the fig weeps when it is plucked, and likewise its parent tree, with tears of milk? Which same fig, however, should any holy man eat, that is to say, after it has been plucked through the *sin* of another, not by his own, he would mingle with his bowels, and breathe out of it *angels*, nay more, particles of God himself, in his sighs and eructations whilst praying, which same particles of the Supreme and True God would have been bound up in that fruit, had they not been set at liberty by the tooth and stomach of the chosen saint; and I, like a wretch, believed that greater compassion ought to be shown unto the fruits of the earth than to man, for whose sake they were created. For if any one not a Manichean, being an hungered, should ask for the same, it would have been thought a crime, worthy of capital punishment, if a single mouthful thereof were given to him." Compare the following rule of the Buddhist priesthood: "They will not kill any animal, neither root up nor cut any plant, because they think it has life." ('Ayeen Akbari,' p. 435.)

Manes invented a theory of salvation, so very whimsical that it ought to be inserted here, to recreate the wanderer in this dreary and dusky theological labyrinth. "When the Son came into the world to effect the redemption of mankind, he contrived a machine containing twelve bowls (*cadi*),† which being made to revolve by the motion of the spheres, attracts into itself the souls of the dying. These the *Great Luminary* (the sun) takes and purifies with his rays, and then transfers to the moon; and this is the method whereby the *disk*, as we call it, of the moon is replenished." Epiphanius triumphantly refutes this theory

\* Alluding to the Manichean rejection of the Old Testament as a divine revelation.

† In the notion of this machine may be traced the influence of the study of Plato in the school

of Palmyra, for it is unmistakably borrowed from the eight concentric basins set in motion, one inside the other, by the fingers of the Fates, so minutely described in the Vision of Er the Pamphylian.

by asking how the moon's disk was replenished during the nine hundred years that elapsed after the Creation before any deaths took place?

But the career of this inventive heresiarch was speedily brought to a close. The Persian king, Varanes I. (about the year 275), alarmed by the rapid spread of these new doctrines, convoked a General Council of the Magi to sit in judgment upon them; by whom the unlucky apostle was pronounced a heretic, and a traitor to his own brethren, and sentenced to be flayed alive.

### BUDDHISM.

For the sake of comparison with the above-described systems, all based upon the doctrine of successive *Emanations* from One First Principle, the means of escaping from the bondage of Matter, and the struggles of the souls towards ultimate absorption into its original source, I shall subjoin a very brief sketch of the principal features of the Buddhistic theosophy.\* Here also we find a First Buddha in his proper state of eternal repose (the *Indolentia* of Epicurus) corresponding to the Zoroastrian "Boundless Time," and the Valentinian "Bythos." While in this state termed "Nevriti," wishing to create the universe he produced the *Five* divine Buddhas, the makers of the Elements, who in their turn produced the Five Buddhasativas, and by their agency created the material world. The grand aim of this religion is to effect the release of the soul from its connection with *Matter*. All things, according to the Buddhists, exist only in *illusion*, consequently they can only return into non-existence or repose by means of *True Knowledge* (compare the *Gnosis* we

\* Buddhism was founded in the fifth century before our era, by Sakya Muni, son of the Raja of Kapila. At the age of twenty-nine he began to study religion, and by force of prayer became the embodiment of the Supreme Deity when thirty-five years old. He chose Benares for the centre of his mission, whence in the space of forty-five years his doctrines were diffused over the fairest districts of the Ganges from the Delta to Agra and Cawnpore. His death is placed by some writers in a.c. 477.

are considering).\* "Illusion" is the belief in the reality of the eternal world; the degradation of the soul towards Matter is the effect of a succession of acts; and therefore its release is effected by relinquishing the belief in the reality of external objects.

The Buddhists of Nepal, who have preserved the original doctrines of the religion in their greatest purity, teach the following cosmogony: Padnapani, one of the original Five Emanations, created Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, or the Principles of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction. Adi-Buddha first created thirteen mansions for his own eternal abode, and for the dwelling-place after death of Buddha's followers. Below these are eighteen mansions made by Brahma; lower yet are six made by Vishnu; and lowest of all—three, the work of Siva. These three series of abodes receive the souls of the followers of their respective creators.

Below all these lie the mansions of the Planetary gods, Indra and Chandra; and after these there comes the Earth floating upon the face of the waters like a boat. Below these waters are the Seven Patala, or regions of Hell, the abode of evil spirits and the damned. This arrangement presents the most striking resemblance to the construction of the Ophite Diagramma (to be given further on), which Origen has described from the original, and which M. Matter has reconstructed from Origen's description to illustrate his treatise in his Plate X.

The promulgation of these Indian speculations from so remote a source—a difficulty at first sight insurmountable—may nevertheless be readily explained. The spirit of this religion was the spirit of proselytism; the Buddhists from the very beginning sent out their missionaries (some of whose narratives, full of interest, are extant and have been translated from the Chinese) with all the zeal of the old Propaganda. From the

\* The Buddhist "Confession of Faith," regularly set up in the temples, engraven on a stone tablet, runs thus: "Of all things proceeding from Cause their causes hath the Tathâgatha explained. The Great Sarmana hath likewise explained the

causes of the cessation of existence." The essence of the religion therefore is Perfect Knowledge; the object of Virgil's aspiration—

\* *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas* "

mainland they converted Ceylon, Japan, and the recesses of Tartary; and penetrated into regions where their former presence and tolerated existence are now little dreamed of.\* That Buddhism had been actually planted in the dominions of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies (Palestine belonging to the former) before the end of the fourth century, at least, before our era is shown by a clause in the Edicts of Asoka. This prince was grandson to Chandragupta (the Sandracottus of the Greeks, contemporary and friend of Seleucus I.), who, at the head of an army of 60,000 men, had conquered all India within the Ganges. Asoka, at first a licentious tyrant, had embraced the newly preached doctrines of Buddhism, a Brahminical Protestantism, and propagated them by persuasion and by force through the length and breadth of his immense kingdom, with all the usual zeal of a new convert.

The Edicts referred to are graven on a rock tablet at Girnur in Guzerat. To quote the words of the Indian Archæologist Prinsep, to whom the discovery is due, (article xvii. 'Indian Antiquities'). "I am now about to produce evidence that Asoka's acquaintance with geography was not limited to Asia, and that his expansive benevolence towards living creatures extended, at least in intention, to another quarter of the globe, that his religious ambition sought to *apostolize Egypt*, and that we must look hereafter for traces of the introduction of Buddhism into the fertile valley of the Nile, so productive of metaphysical discussions from the earliest ages. The line which I allude to is the fifth from the bottom. 'And the Greek King (Yoniraja) † besides, by whom the Chapta (Egyptian) Kings, Ptole-

\* Two Chinese pilgrims, Fa Hian and Hiouen Tshang, visited Benares at the beginning of the fifth, and at the middle of the seventh centuries of our era. These keen and sagacious observers have left records of their travels in India of the utmost importance to the historian and antiquary. Their narratives are, for the most part, plain matter-of-fact productions, free from the haze and uncertainty of Hindoo writings; and whenever they have been tested by extraneous evi-

dence, have been found to be to a large extent singularly correct. See 'Mémoires de Hiouen Tshang,' translated from the Chinese by Stanislas Julien.

† Asoka's zeal was so ardent that he sent his son and daughter, Mahendra and Saugamitra, as missionaries to Ceylon; who in a short time effected the conversion of the island to their new religion.

‡ The Persian envoy in Aristophanes' Acharnians used the same word, 'ταόραυ, for the Greek nation.

maios, and Gonkakenos (Antigonus Gonatas) have been induced to allow that both here and in *foreign countries everywhere* the people may follow the doctrine of the religion of Devanipya, wheresoever it reacheth." The "Essenes," so like to Buddhist Monks in many particulars (for which see the minute description of this ascetic rule as given by Josephus, 'Antiq. Jud.' xv. 10), had been established on the shores of the Dead Sea for "thousands of ages" before Pliny's time. "On the West its shores, so far as they are unhealthy, are shunned by the Esseni, a solitary race, and wonderful beyond all others on the globe; without woman, renouncing all usual enjoyment, without money, associates of the palm-trees, from day to day they are recruited by the flocks of new-comers: all those flocking in numerously whom the world drives from itself, all tempest-tossed by the waves of fortune. In this way, incredible to tell, the race wherein no birth ever takes place, has endured for thousands of years, so prolific for them is other people's disgust at the world" (Hist. Nat. v. 15). The great Naturalist's "thousands of years" must be allowed as one of his favourite oratorical tropes, but nevertheless serves for testimony to the belief in the great antiquity of the sect. Perhaps they may have been a continuation of those early ascetic associations known as the "Schools of the Prophets."

The influence of Jewish Essenism upon primitive Christianity (as to rules of life at least) is a thing that will not be disputed by any who have read, with a wish to *learn* the truth, not to *evade* it, the account of it given by Josephus. But over the semi-Christian Gnostics of Syria such long-established authority must have had a still stronger influence. It is easy to discover how the source of the slavish notions about the merits of asceticism, penances, and self-torture (of which Simon Stylites is the most conspicuous illustration), was the same one whence the Indian fakirs drew their practice—for even in their methods they were identical. Simon's celebrated life-penance (which gives him his title), undergone upon the summit of a lofty pillar, had been practised in the same regions many generations before his time. The pseudo-Lucian, in his amusing description of the famous Temple of the "Syrian

Goddess" at Emesa ('De Dea Syria'), particularly notices the phallus or obelisk, 300 feet high, planted in front of the edifice, upon the apex of which the devotee sat without sleep for one and twenty days and nights, keeping himself awake by constantly ringing a handbell. Ideas like these pervade the Christianity of the Lower Empire, nay, they constitute the very essence of the religion. Neither is it difficult to see upon how many points Manes, with his rigid Buddhistic tenets, came into collision with the humane and rational law of Zoroaster (the brightest system of natural religion ever promulgated), and what good causes Varanes, with his spiritual advisers, had for condemning his heresy.

In our investigation of this particular subject it must never be forgotten that so long as *philosophy* was cultivated in Greece, (even from the times of the Samian sage, inventor of the name), India was often regarded as the ultimate and purest source of the "True Wisdom," the knowledge of things divine. Even so late as Lucian's time, the middle of the second century, that author concludes his evidently true history of Antiphilus and Demetrius, by making the latter, a cynic philosopher by profession, resign all his property to his friend, and depart for India, there to end his life amongst the Brachmanes, ('Toxaris,' 34). In the same century the well-known pilgrimage of Apollonius of Tyana, and his deep conference with the Indian philosophers, as recorded by his companion Damis, go to prove the same thing; and although the meagre journal of the sage's travelling companion may have been largely supplemented and embellished by the fancy of his editor, Philostratus,\* the main features of the narrative are doubtless authentic. The great thaumaturgist's proceedings, as there detailed, show how the apparent difficulty of such a pilgrimage vanishes upon a better knowledge of the circumstances. Apollonius presents himself, first of all, to the Parthian King, Bardanes (a "Philhellene" as he yet boasts himself upon his coinage), and as warm an admirer of Grecian *savants* as any of his Achæmenian pre-

\* Who composed his very interesting 'Life of Apollonius' at the request of the Empress Julia, about

a century after the death of the philosopher.

decessors, from whom he obtains a *firman* securing to him protection and entertainment, everywhere within the limits of his rule, which extended then, probably, as far as the Indus. Thenceforward his letters of recommendation from the "King of Kings" to the various native princes his allies, secure to the traveller an equally favourable reception. A safe and regular communication between the extreme points of the Persian Empire had been from the beginning the great care of its mighty rulers (the first institutors of highways, posting-stages, and post-horses), passing through what was not, as now, a series of deserts infested by robber-tribes, but a populous and well-cultivated country; so favoured, with a passport from the sovereign, the pilgrim would find his journey both expeditious and agreeable.

The same facilities were necessarily made use of by the natives of Hindustan. It is curious to observe how the occasional "Brachman" who found his way into Greece was received as a model philosopher—like that Zarmanes Chagan, who, coming from Bargose (*Baroche*), finally burnt himself alive upon a pyre at Athens, in the reign of Augustus; of which edifying spectacle Nicolaus Damascenus was eye-witness (Strabo XV.). Before him, we have Calanas the "gymnosophist" (a happy Greek expression for *ἰακίρ*) in high repute at Alexander's court, and who similarly chose to leave earth in a "chariot of fire." Their example was followed by the "Peregrinus Proteus," so happily ridiculed by Lucian in his book thus entitled; Proteus, to give his apotheosis as much celebrity as possible, chose for its scene the occasion of the Olympic games. This last worthy had been a philosopher, then a Christian teacher, and lastly had started a new religion of his own invention. That the sect so celebrated by the ancients under the name of "Brachmanes" was *Buddhistic*, not *Brahminical*, may be inferred from their locality, Bactria; and yet more from a circumstance mentioned by Strabo (Book XV.). He speaks of their devoting thirty years to the study of Theology, living in a community (a *vihar* or monastery), sequestered from the world in the midst of forests in the neighbourhood of the different cities, and totally abstaining from sexual intercourse,

and all animal food; on the contrary, the Brahmins hold that to leave children behind them is a most sacred duty, and one upon which their admission into heaven depends. Whether the Buddhists be the true representatives of the primal religion\* of their country, or only the *Reformers* of the more ancient Brahminical Church, it is the natural weapon of all dissenters from an established creed, to ridicule and even to pronounce damnable, the favourite tenets of their adversaries. Witness Martin Luther with his invectives against vows of virginity, and his well-known motto

“Wer nicht liebt Weib, Wein und Gesang,  
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Leben lang.”

Similarly we find the Essenes running counter to the ancient prejudices of their nation, and spontaneously embracing what the Mosaic Law had denounced as the greatest of curses—the leaving no offspring behind to keep up their name in Israel.

To exemplify the severe discipline maintained in the Brahman communities, Strabo mentions that the mere act of blowing the nose, or spitting, caused the offender to be excluded for that day, as *incontinent*, from the society of his fellow-recluses. Similarly Josephus particularises, amongst other Essenian rules, the obligation of abstaining from all natural evacuations upon the Sabbath day. But even *their* rigour is surpassed, and in our day too, by a certain sect of Indian Yogis, who profess to have completely emancipated themselves from all such defiling necessities of nature. This they effect by living entirely upon milk, which, after retaining a short time in the stomach, they throw up again by swallowing a ball fastened to a string; and maintain the animal expenditure solely through the nutriment imbibed by the system during the continuance of the liquid in the stomach; and which consequently leaves no residuum to descend into the lower bowels. A doctrine this, the finest

\* Which of course their theologians claim to be, and treat the Brahmins as corrupters of the true faith. For example Hiouen Tsaung: “They reckon (in the kingdom of Benares) a hundred temples of gods, inhabited by about ten thousand *heretics*, who

for the most part are worshippers of Siva.” And yet he candidly owns that the Buddhists possessed no more than thirty monasteries, numbering only three thousand members, in the same place.

possible *reductio ad absurdum* of the notion of meritorious continence, and exhibiting on the ludicrous side the mischief of being too logical in matters of religion.

As for the profundity of the philosophical speculations of the Orientals, even at a very late period, the Byzantine Agathias quotes a very remarkable example. Chosroes (better known to us as Nushirwan the Just), besides giving an asylum, as to his brethren, to the last Athenian philosophers, when expelled from their chairs by the stupid bigot Justinian, caused all Plato's works to be translated into Persian, and professed to be himself able to comprehend even the mysteries of the 'Timæus.' The Greek sophist is naturally indignant at the impudence of the foreigner who could pretend that "his own barbarous and rustic language" was capable of expressing the divine thoughts of the Athenian sage; for he little suspected that the great King, or at any rate the Magi and "Sufis" about him, were masters of the sources whence Plato may have ultimately drawn his inspiration whilst planning that inscrutable composition. The religious instruction of the Persian princes had from the beginning been carefully attended to, and proficiency therein was a matter of pride: thus Cyrus the younger puts forward his superior knowledge of Theology (in his manifesto upon claiming the kingdom) as a just cause why he should be preferred to his elder brother.

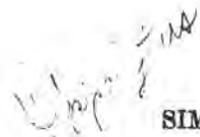
Leaving out of the question the now received theory as to the immigration of the "Indo-Germanic" race into the farthest recesses of Europe, modern history furnishes the example of extensive migration, effected under infinitely greater difficulties, by the hordes of low-caste Hindoos, who, flying from the invasion of Tamerlane, spread themselves all over Europe as Gipsies, still retaining their native language and habits, and to the present day claiming "Sind" or "Sindha" for their national name.

The facts adduced in the foregoing sketch will suffice to indicate the manner in which the germs of the various Gnostic doctrines were imported from the East, how they were engrafted upon previously existing notions, and how vigorously they flourished when transplanted into the kindly soil of Alexandria and Ephesus. To complete the general view of the subject,

before proceeding to consider the tangible monuments left us by these ideas, it will be necessary to give some account of the forms in which they attained to their fullest development. For this purpose I shall select the three principal systems, represented by historians as the parents of all the rest, those of *Simon Magus*, *Basilides*, and the *Ophites*; the most satisfactory manner of doing which will be to transcribe the exact words of the well-informed and impartial Hippolytus.



FIG. 3.


  
 SIMONIANISM.

“It is my intention here to exhibit the system of Simon Magus, a native of Gitteh in Samaria, and I will prove that from him all those that come after have derived the elements of their doctrines, and impudently attempted the same things under different appellations. This Simon was skilled in magic and had imposed upon great numbers, partly by practising the art of Thrasymedes after the manner which I have already exposed (in the Book upon ‘Magicians’), and partly by miracle-working through the agency of demons. He attempted to set up for a god, being a thorough impostor and altogether unscrupulous and daring; for he was that one whom the Apostles confuted, as is recorded in the Acts.

“Much more wisely therefore and sensibly than Simon did that Apsethus act, when he aimed at being accounted a god, who went to work in Libya; whose story, not being very dissimilar to the scheme of our foolish Simon, it were fitting here to quote, inasmuch as it is quite of a piece with the procedure of the latter.

“Apsethus the Libyan was very desirous of making himself a god, but when, after long labouring, he had failed in his endeavours, he wanted, as the next best thing, to be *supposed* to have made himself a god; and in fact for a considerable time he did enjoy such a reputation. For the simple Libyans used to sacrifice to him as to a Divine Power, in the belief that they were obeying a voice sent forth out of Heaven. He had got together and confined several parrots in one and the same little room, for parrots are plentiful all over Libya, and they distinctly mimic the human voice; and having kept these birds for some time, he taught them to say ‘Apsethus is a god.’ And when the birds in course of time were taught, and could speak that sentence which he supposed, when spoken, would cause him to pass for a god, then he opened their place of confinement,

and allowed the parrots to escape in different directions. And as the birds flew about, the sound was carried all over Libya, and the words travelled as far as the Greek territory (Cyrene); and thus the Libyans, being struck with amazement at the voice of the birds, and not suspecting the trick played them by Apsethus, accounted him a god. But one of the Greeks having clearly detected the contrivance of the supposed deity, did, by means of the self-same parrots, not merely confute, but also extinguish that vain-glorious and impudent fellow. This Greek caged several of the same parrots, and taught them to utter a contrary strain, 'Apsethus shut us up, and forced us to say *Apsethus is a god.*' But when the Libyans heard this recantation of the parrots, they all came together with one accord, and burnt Apsethus alive.

"In this light we ought to regard the magician Simon, and compare him to this Libyan, a man who made himself a god in that very expeditious manner; for in truth the comparison holds good in all particulars, and the sorcerer met with a fate not unlike that of Apsethus. I will therefore endeavour to *un-teach Simon's parrots* by showing that Simon was not the Christ 'Who hath stood, standeth, and shall stand,' but a man, mortal, generated from the seed of woman, begotten from blood and carnal concupiscence like the rest of mankind: and that such was the fact I shall clearly demonstrate in the course of my narrative. For Simon speaks, when interpreting the Law of Moses, in an impudent and fraudulent fashion, for whenever Moses says 'Our God is a burning and a consuming fire,' Simon, taking what Moses has said in a false sense, maintains that *Fire* is the Principle of all things. He does not perceive the true meaning that God is not 'a fire,' but 'a burning and a consuming fire,' and so not only mutilates the Law of Moses, but plagiarises from Heraclitus, surnamed 'the Obscure.' For Simon designates the Principle of all things 'Boundless Power' in the following words: 'This is the Book of the Declaration of the Voice, and of the Name, from the inspiration of the Great, the Boundless Power. Wherefore the same is sealed, hidden, wrapped up, stored in the dwelling wherein the Root of all things is established.' This *dwelling*

he says, signifies *Man* here below, who is born of blood, and also signifies that there dwells within him that 'Boundless Power' which he asserts is the Root of all things. But this Boundless Power (or *Fire*, according to Simon) is not a simple substance, in the same way as most people who call the Elements 'simple' account Fire likewise as simple: on the contrary, he maintains that the nature of Fire is, as it were, *double*; and of this double number he terms one part the *Insensible*, the other the *Visible*; asserting that the insensible are contained within the visible parts of the Fire, and that the visible parts are generated by the invisible. (This is the same thing that Aristotle expresses by his 'Force' and 'Energy'; and Plato by his 'Intelligible' and 'Sensible'.)

"Again the *Visible* part of Fire contains within itself all things whatsoever one can perceive, or even *fail* to perceive, of things visible. The *Invisible*, on the other hand, is whatsoever one can conceive as an object of thought, but which escapes the sense, or even what one *fails* to comprehend by the thought. And to sum up, it may be said that of all things that exist, whether objects of sense or of thought, or, as Simon terms them, Visible and Invisible, the store-house is the Great Fire that is above the heavens: 'As it were a great Tree, like to that seen in his dream by Nabuchadonosor, from the which all flesh was fed.' And the *Visible* he considers to be the *trunk* of the Tree and the branches, and the leaves, and the bark surrounding the same on the outside. All these parts of the great Tree, says he, are kindled from the all-devouring flame of the Fire, and are destroyed. But the *Fruit* of the Tree, if it takes a shape and assumes a proper form, is laid up in a storehouse, and not cast into the fire. For the fruit is made in order that it may be laid up in the storehouse, but the *husk* that it may be committed to the fire; which same is the trunk, ordained not for the sake of the husk but of the fruit.

"And this, according to Simon, is what is written in the Scripture: 'The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the House of Israel, and a man of Judah the well-beloved branch thereof.' Now, if a man of Judah be the 'well-beloved branch,' it is a proof that the *wood* can be nothing else than a *man*. But as

regards the *excretion* and the *dispersion* from the same, the Scripture hath spoken fully and sufficiently for the instruction of all such as be brought to their perfect form: according to the saying, 'All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the grass; the grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.' Now this Word of the Lord, says Simon, is the word that is produced in the mouth, that is, Speech; for the place of its birth is nowhere else.

"To be brief therefore: since, according to Simon, the Fire is of the aforesaid nature, and all things that be, both visible and invisible, and vocal and voiceless, and numbered and unnumbered, are this Fire, therefore in his 'Great Revelation' he terms this the Fountain-head of all, the *Great Intellectual*, as constituting each individual of all things in their infinite order, which are capable of being conceived in the mind, and likewise of speaking, of thinking, and of acting. As Empedocles hath it—

"Through Earth, the Earth perceive, through Water, Water;  
Through Air scan Air; through Fire the hidden Fire;  
Through Love view Love; through Discord, hateful Discord."

"For Simon held that all the members of this Fire, both the Visible and the Invisible, possessed *intelligence* and a portion of *mind*. The world that is created, consequently, according to him, comes from the uncreated Fire. The commencement of its creation was in this wise: six 'Radicals' (*lit.* Roots), the First Principles of the beginning of Creation, were taken by the Begotten One out of the Principle of that Fire; for he asserts that these Six Radicals emanated by *pairs* out of the Fire. These Six Radicals he names, 'Mind and Intelligence, Voice and Name, Reason and Thought.' And there exists in these Radicals taken together the whole of the 'Boundless Power,' but existing in *potentiality*, not in *activity*. And this Boundless Power Simon calls 'He who standeth, hath stood, and shall stand;' who, if he shall be *figured* (invested with form) when he is in those Six Powers, shall be in reality, force, power and perfection, the one and the same with the Unbegotten Boundless Power. But if he shall abide in *potentiality*

alone in those Six Powers, and not assume a *form*, he vanishes and perishes, as does a grammatical or a geometrical power in a man's mind. For potentiality, when it has gotten *art*, becomes the light of things generated; but when it has not gotten art (execution) it remains in inertness and darkness, and exactly as when it did not exist at all, and dies with the man upon his death.

“Now of these Six Powers, and of the Seventh which goes along with them, the *First Thought* Simon terms ‘Mind and Intellect,’ ‘Heaven and Earth’; teaching that the one of the male sex looks down upon and takes care of his consort; whilst the Earth below receives from Heaven the ‘Intellect,’ and fruits of the same nature with the Earth, which are poured down from above. For this cause, says Simon, the Word, often looking down upon the things that spring out of Mind and Intellect, says, ‘Hear, O Heavens, and receive with thine ears, O Earth! for the Lord hath spoken: I have begotten and brought up sons, but they have despised me.’ He that saith this is the *Seventh Power*, ‘He who standeth, hath stood, and shall stand;’ for He is the author of those good things which Moses commended, saying that they were very good.

‘Voice and name are the Sun and Moon; ‘Reason and Thought’ are air and water. But with all of these is mingled and combined that Boundless Power, ‘He who standeth,’ as I have already mentioned.

“Therefore when Moses says, ‘In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested from all his works,’ Simon, distorting the passage after the aforesaid fashion, makes himself out to be God. When therefore, the Simonians say that there were three days before the Sun and the Moon were made, they understand by it Mind and Intelligence, or Heaven and Earth, and also that ‘Boundless Power’ of theirs. For these three Powers were made before all the rest. Again, where it is said: ‘Before all the world he hath begotten me,’ these words, as they pretend, refer to the Seventh Power. Now this Seventh Power, who was a Power existing *within* the Boundless Power, and who was made before all the world, *this*, as Simon teaches, is that Seventh Power of whom Moses spake:

‘And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,’ that is to say, the Spirit containing all things within itself, the Image of the Boundless Power, concerning which Simon saith, ‘the *image* is the incorruptible Power governing all things by himself!’

“Now the creation of the world having been after this or a similar fashion, God, says he, made Man out of clay taken from the earth; and he made them not single, but double, both as regards the *image*, and the *likeness*. For the *image* is the Spirit moving upon the face of the waters, who, if he be not clothed with form will perish together with the world, inasmuch as he abode merely in potentiality, and was not made *concrete* by activity. For this is the meaning of the Scripture: ‘Lest we be condemned together with the world.’ But if it shall take a form, and spring out of an indivisible point, it is what is written in the Revelation: ‘The little shall become great.’ This ‘Great’ shall continue to all eternity, and unchangeable, inasmuch as it is no longer *to be made* (*i.e.*, no longer abstract).

“In what way therefore, and after what manner did God form man? In Paradise—for in this point Simon also agreed. But this ‘paradise’ must be the *womb* (according to him), and that such is the true explanation is proved by the Scripture, which saith, ‘I am he that formed thee in thy mother’s womb,’ for so he will have it to be written. The womb Moses called Paradise by an allegory, if we choose to listen to the word of God; for if God did form man in his mother’s womb, that is, in paradise then ‘Paradise’ must needs signify the womb. ‘Eden’ is that same region, and the river going forth out of Eden to water the garden, is the *navel*. This navel is divided into four heads; because from each part thereof proceed two arteries running side by side, channels for the breath; and also two veins, channels for the blood. When, therefore, this *navel* proceeding out of the region, Eden, is attached to the fetus at the lower belly which we commonly term the navel. . . [Here some words are evidently lost]. And the two veins through which the blood flows, and is carried out of the region Eden, through what are called ‘the gates of the liver’ which nourish

the embryo. Again, the two tubes which we have spoken of as the channels of the blood, embrace the bladder at each side of the pelvis, and touch the great artery which runs along the same, called the *aorta*; and thus the breath, passing through the veins into the heart, produces the motion of the embryo. For so long as the child is being formed in 'paradise,' it neither takes nourishment through the mouth, nor breathes through the nostrils; for, placed as it is in the midst of fluid, it would be instant death for it, were it to breathe, inasmuch as it would draw a fluid and be destroyed. Moreover, the child is conceived within an envelope, which is called the *aminium*; but it receives nourishment through the navel, and takes in the essence of the breath through the dorsal artery above described. The River, therefore, going forth out of Eden, is divided into four heads, namely, Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Touching and Tasting, for these are the only senses that the infant formed in Paradise is possessed of.

"This then, according to Simon, is the law which Moses gave and his Four Books are written in accordance with that law, as their own titles do manifest. For the first book is *Genesis*; the very title, he affirms, were sufficient for the understanding of the whole matter. For this 'Genesis' is the *Sight*, into which one section of the River branches off, because the whole outer world is perceived through the sight. Again, the title of the second book is *Exodus*, which signifies that it was necessary for the thing born to pass through the Red Sea (meaning by 'Red Sea,' the blood), and to enter into the wilderness, and to drink of the bitter water (*Marah*). Now this 'bitter water' which lies beyond the Red Sea, is the path of *knowledge* during life, which leads through places toilsome and unpleasant. But after it hath been changed by Moses, that is, by the Word, that same bitter water becometh *sweet*. And that such is the reality one may learn from everybody who exclaims in the words of the poet:—

"Black is the root, the flower as white as milk,  
Named Moly by the gods, full hard to find  
By mortals: but the gods all things can do."

"Even what is said by the Gentiles is sufficient for the under-

standing of the whole matter unto him that hath ears to hear. He that tasted of the fruit given by Circe\* was not only himself not changed into a beast, but by making use of the virtue of the self-same fruit, remodelled, reformed and recalled those already transformed by her into their own proper shape. For the Faithful Man, and the beloved by that sorceress, is found out by means of that divine and milky potion.

“In the like manner Leviticus is the Third Book (or River); which signifies the sense of *smell*, or the *respiration*; for the whole of that Book is concerning *sacrifices* and *oblations*. But wheresoever there is sacrifice, there also does a sweet smell of perfume arise up from the sacrifice; concerning which sweet odour the sense of smelling is the approver.

“‘Numbers,’ the Fourth of the Books, signifies the *Taste*, for then the speech is active, inasmuch as it is through the Speech that all objects are designated in *numerical* order.

“‘Deuteronomy,’ Simon makes out, is so named in reference to the child that has been formed for *Touching*. For as the Touch doth by feeling *reciprocate* and *confirm* the impressions received by the other senses; proving an object to be either hard, or hot, or slippery—in the like manner the Fifth Book of the Law is a *recapitulation* of the four preceding Books.

“All things, therefore (continues he), that are not created exist within us in *potentiality*, not in *activity*; like the science of grammar, or of geometry. In the case, therefore, where they shall have met with the proper training and instruction, there ‘shall the Bitter be turned into Sweet’; that is, ‘the spears shall be turned into reaping-hooks, and the swords into ploughshares;’ they shall be no longer chaff and sticks born for the fire, but the Perfect Fruit, like and equal, as already said, unto the Unbegotten and Boundless Power. But where the Tree shall stand alone, not bearing fruit, there, because it hath not received *form*, it shall be destroyed. ‘For now (saith he) the axe is nigh unto the root of the tree. Every tree therefore that beareth not good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.’

\* Simon has here forgotten his “Odyssey”; the antidote Moly having been given to Ulysses by Hermes.

“According to Simon, therefore, that blessed and inscrutable thing lies *hidden*, and *within* every man, but in potentiality alone, not in activity; the which is ‘He who standeth, hath stood, and shall stand’; who standeth *above* in the Unbegotten Power, who hath stood *below* in the ‘River of Waters’ when he was begotten in the *image*, and who shall stand *above* by the side of the Blessed and Boundless Power, provided that he shall have received *form*. For there are three that stand, and unless there be the three *Æons* that stand, ‘the Begotten One is not adorned,’ meaning Him, who, according to Simon’s teaching, moved upon the face of the waters; who hath been re-created after the image, perfect and heavenly; who likewise is in no degree lower than the Unbegotten Power.”

“This is a saying amongst the Simonians, ‘I and thou are one; thou before me, I after thee.’ ‘*This* is the One Power, divided into Above and Below, begetting itself, nourishing itself, seeking after itself, finding itself, being its own mother, its own father, its own sister, its own consort, its own daughter, son mother, father, inasmuch as it alone is the Root of all things.’

“That *Fire* is the origin of the generation of all things generated, Simon demonstrates after this fashion. ‘Of all things whatsoever that exist, being generated, the final cause of the desire for their generation proceeds out of Fire. For “to be set on fire” is the term used to designate the desire of the act of generation and propagation. Now this “Fire,” which is *one*, is changed into *two*. For in the male the blood which is hot and red, like Fire in a visible shape, is converted into seed; in the female this same blood is converted into milk. And this change in the male becomes the generation-faculty itself; whilst the change in the female becomes the instrument (efficient cause), of the thing begotten. This (according to Simon) is the “Flaming Sword,” which is brandished to keep the way unto the Tree of Life. For the blood is turned into seed and into milk; and this Power becomes both father and mother; the father of those that be born, and the nutriment of those that be nourished; standing in need of none other, sufficient unto itself. Moreover the Tree of Life, which is guarded by the brandished flaming sword is, as we have said, the Seventh Power, the self-begotten,

which comprehends all the others, and which is deposited within the other Six Powers. For if that Flaming Sword should not be brandished, then would that beautiful Tree be destroyed and perish; but when it is changed into the seed and the milk, then He that is stored up within them in potentiality, having obtained the necessary Logos (*Reason*) and the fitting place wherein that Logos may be generated, then, beginning as it were from the smallest spark, he shall wax great to perfection, and increase, and become a Power without end, and without change, being equal and like unto the infinite Æon, being no more begotten again to all eternity.'

"Now, on the strength of this theory, as all are agreed, Simon made himself out a god unto the ignorant, like that Libyan Apsethus above mentioned; 'being begotten and subject to passion so long as he is in potentiality, but not subject to passion after he shall have been begotten, and have received the image, and having been made perfect shall pass out of the dominion of the first two Powers, that is, of Heaven and Earth.' For Simon speaks expressly upon this point in his 'Revelation,' in the following manner. 'Unto you therefore I say what I say, and write what I write. The Writing is this. There are Two stocks of all the Æons put together, having neither beginning nor end, springing out of one Root, the which is *Silence*, invisible, inconceivable, of which Stocks, the one shows itself from above, the which is a great Power, *Mind* of the *all*, pervading all things, and of the *male* sex: the other, showing itself from below, is the Great *Intelligence*, and is of the *female* sex; generating all things. From thence they correspond with each other, and keep up a partnership, and illuminate the Middle Space lying between them (which is the air), inconceivable, having neither beginning nor end. In this Middle Space is the Father, who bears up all things and nourishes the things that have beginning and ending. This is "He who standeth, hath stood, and shall stand; being both male and female, a Power after the image of the pre-existing infinite Power, that hath neither beginning nor ending, existing in *Unity*." For the Intelligence in Unity proceeded out of this last and became Twain. Now He (the Father) is One, for whilst he contained that

Power within himself he was single; nevertheless he was not the *First*, although he was pre-existent, but when he was manifested to himself out of himself, he became *Second*, and neither was he named the "Father," before that Power called him Father. In the like manner therefore as the drawing-forth himself out of himself manifested unto himself his own *Intelligence*, so did this Intelligence also, when manifested, not *create*, but *contemplate* Him; and thereby stood-up the Father within herself, that is to say, the Power. And this Intelligence likewise is both a male and female Power; on which account they answer to one another, for the Power differs not at all from the Intelligence, being one and the same. From that which is above, indeed, is formed the Power; from that which is below, the Intelligence. Of the same kind therefore is the *Unity*, which is manifested out of them both; for being *one* it is found to be *Twain*; both male and female, containing within itself the female. In this manner the *Mind* exists within the Intelligence; which, when severed from each other, although they are One, are found to be Two.'

"Simon, therefore, by publishing these notions, did not merely distort and wrest to his own purpose the sayings of Moses, but equally those of the heathen poets. For he makes an allegory out of the Trojan Horse of wood, and the story of Helen with the torch, and much else, which he applies to his own fables concerning himself and his 'Intelligence.'\* Again he makes out the latter to be the Lost Sheep, which, always taking up her abode in the persons of women, doth cause trouble amongst all earthly Powers by reason of her incomparable beauty; wherefore the Trojan War came to pass because of her. For this 'Intelligence'\* of his took up her abode in Helen who was born just at that time; and so, when the Powers laid claim to her possession, strife and discord arose amongst all the nations to whom she manifested herself. At any rate, it was on this account that Stesichorus, for having reviled her in his verses, was deprived of sight; but afterwards, when he had repented,

\* That is his wife Helena. By a remarkable, though doubtless undesigned coincidence, Fra Dolcino of Novara also went about accompanied by a similar female "Intelligence."

and written his 'Recantation,' in which he sang her praises, he recovered the use of his eyes. Then, after she had been placed in another body by the Angels and the Powers below (who according to Simon were the creators of the world), she was standing upon a housetop\* in Tyre, a city of Phœnicia, where he found her on his landing. For he pretends to have gone thither expressly in quest of her, to deliver her out of bondage; and, after having ransomed her, he always carried her about with him, pretending that this was the Lost Sheep, and he himself was the Power that is over all. But the truth is, the impostor had become enamoured of this harlot, whose real name was Helena, so that he bought and kept her; but out of shame as regards his disciples, he invented the aforesaid fable. Furthermore, nowadays those that be the followers of this deceiver and magician, Simon, imitate his example, asserting that it is right to have intercourse with all women promiscuously, for they say 'All land is land, and it matters not where one sows his seed so long as he does sow it.' Nay more, they pride themselves upon this promiscuous intercourse, affirming that *this* is the 'Perfect Love,' and quote the text 'The Holy of holies shall be made holy.' For they hold that they are bound by no obligation as regards anything usually accounted wicked, inasmuch as they have been *redeemed*. In this way, Simon, after he had ransomed Helena, granted salvation unto men by means of his own *Knowledge* (or the *Gnosis*). For inasmuch as the Angels governed the world badly by reason of their own ambitiousness, Simon pretended that he was come to set all things right, having changed his form, and made himself like to the Principalities, the Powers, and the Angels; wherefore it was that he appeared in man's shape, though not a man at all, and had suffered the Passion in Judæa, although he had not suffered it; moreover that he had manifested himself to the Jews as the *Son*, in Samaria as the *Father*, and amongst the Gentiles elsewhere as the *Holy Ghost*, but that he submitted to be called by whatever name men pleased. The Prophets were inspired by the Angels, creators of the world, when they

\* A euphemism for "living in a which these ladies advertised themselves," such being the mode in selves.

delivered their prophecies; on which account those who believe in Simon and Helena pay no regard to them, even in our times; and they do whatever they please, affirming that they are redeemed through *his* grace. For nothing is the cause of damnation, supposing a man to act wickedly, for Evil is evil not through the nature of things but by *convention*. For the Angels who created the world ordained it to be so (as they assert), in order that they might keep in subjection, by means of such fictions, all men who should listen to them. Furthermore they explain the dissolution of the world as referring to the redemption of their own sect.

“The disciples, therefore, of this Simon, practise magic arts and incantation, and make philtres and seductive spells; they likewise send the so-called ‘dream-bringing’ demons to trouble whomsoever they choose. They likewise practise the rites of the gods named *Paredroi* (the Assessors); they have also an image of Simon in the guise of Jupiter, and likewise one of Helena in the figure of Minerva; and these they worship, calling one the ‘Master,’ the other the ‘Mistress.’”\*

So much for the system of the renowned Samaritan, in which, it will have been seen, the place of logical reasoning is supplied by quibbles upon words, taken absolutely without any reference to the context—a style of argument, however, for which it must be confessed that he had highly respectable authority. In strong contrast to this stands the next system, which displays much of the refinement and sound training (amidst its extravagance) of the Grecian mind.

#### BASILIDES.

Hippolytus, in accordance with his theses that all these “heresies” were mere plagiarisms from the more ancient philosophical systems, declares that Basilides stole the entire of his scheme from Aristotle, and proceeds to establish his charge by the following comparative analysis of the two.

“Aristotle divides all substance into the *Genus*, the *Species*,

\* Here follows the account of his career and end, already extracted (pp. 21, 22).

and the *Individual*. The Genus is, as it were, a heap composed of many and different seeds, from which heap all the Species are taken; and the genus is the sufficient cause to all things that exist. For example, 'Animal' is used absolutely, not signifying any particular animal. 'Animal' does not signify a horse, an ox, or a man, but simply 'animal.' From this abstract 'animal' all the species of animals universally derive their origin, and this 'animal' without species is the origin of all animals generated according to their species, and not any one thing of things generated. Thus, *Man* is an animal, deriving his origin from the 'animal,' and *Horse* is an animal in the same manner. Similarly all other animals are derived from that 'animal,' who yet in itself is none of them. If therefore that 'animal' is none of these, then, according to Aristotle, the substance of all things that are proceeds out of things that are non-existent, inasmuch as the 'animal,' out of which they all proceed individually, is not one thing (or 'is nothing at all'). And this, being Nothing, is the origin of all that *be*.

"Now substance being divided into three classes—the genus, the species, and the individual—we have defined the genus as 'animal,' 'man' as the species picked out of the heap of animals, but as yet undiscriminated, and not separated into the form of a particular being. But when I define by a special name, like Socrates, or Diogenes, a man taken from the species the genus, then that being is termed the 'individual.' Thus the genus is divided into species, the species into individual; but the individual once being defined by name cannot be divided any further. This is what Aristotle calls justly and properly 'Substance,' that which cannot be predicated 'of the subject,' nor 'in the subject.' By the term 'of the subject' he means such an idea as 'animal,' which can be predicated of all the subject animals individually—as a horse, an ox, a man—all being called by the same name, 'animal.' Hence, what can be predicated 'of the subject' is that which applies to many and different species indiscriminately. 'In the subject' means that which cannot be predicated without the previous existence of something else wherein it may exist, as 'white,' 'black,'

'just,' 'unjust;' which are the 'accidents' to substance, and therefore called 'qualities,' because expressing *what sort* of thing each thing is. But no one quality can exist in itself; there must be something else for it to exist in. If, therefore, neither the genus 'animal,' which is predicated *of* all animals existing individually, nor 'accident,' which is only to be found in things that exist, can either of them exist by themselves; and if individuals are made up of these two, namely genus and accident, then it follows that *substance*, which is made up of these three, and nothing besides, is made up of things that are *non-existent*.

"If, therefore, what is properly and primarily termed 'substance' (the *Individual*) is made up of these, it is, according to Aristotle, made up of things non-existent.

"Besides the terms Genus, Species, Individual, Substance is further designated as 'Matter' and 'Formation.' Upon this definition rests the Basilidan theory of the Universe. The Universe Basilides divides into several parts: That part which extends from the earth up to the moon is destitute of *foresight* and of *conduct*, and is content with its own nature. The part beyond the moon is constituted with foresight, reason, and conduct, up to the surface of heaven. This 'surface' is a *fifth* substance, free from all the elements out of which the world was created; this, therefore, is the 'fifth and supra-mundane substance.' These three divisions Aristotle has treated of in three separate works: his 'Physics,' 'Metaphysics,' and 'On the Fifth Substance.' Not merely his ideas, but his words and terminology have been borrowed by Basilides, and applied to the Scriptures. How, then, can his disciples, being in reality *heathens*, expect to be benefited by Christ?

"Basilides and his true son and disciple Isidorus, assert that Matthew (the Evangelist) revealed to them certain secret doctrines which had been specially communicated to himself by Christ. 'There was a time when there was Nothing; nay, not even that "Nothing" was anything of *being*, but barely and without reserve, and without any sophism, there was altogether *Nothing*. When I use the term "was," I do not mean to imply that this Nothing *was*, but in order to explain what I wish to set forth, I employ the expression "there *was* absolutely

Nothing." Now that which is called "Ineffable" is not absolutely ineffable, for we ourselves give it that name of ineffable; whereas that which is *not even* ineffable is not "ineffable," but infinitely above every name that can be named. Even for the Visible world, so multifarious are its divisions that we have not names enough; but we are reduced to conceive many of its properties from the names of the properties already named, these (other) properties being ineffable. For an identity of names occasions a disorder and confusion of ideas in the mind of the learner.' (This is a direct plagiarism from Aristotle's discussion of synonyms in his book 'On the Categories.')

"When therefore Nothing *was*—no substance, no non-substance, no simple, no compound, no incomprehensible, no sensible, no man, no angel, no God—when there was nothing whatever of what is called by name, perceived by sense, conceived by the mind, but all, and even in a more refined sense than this, being put out of the question—then this No-being God (Aristotle's 'thought of a thought,' which Basilides alters into his 'No-being'), without thought, without purpose, without counsel, without passion, without desire, willed to make the world. I use the word 'willed' merely to express my meaning, it being without thought, without sensation, without will, that this was done; and by 'world' I do not mean that world created afterwards and divided by latitude and longitude, but I understand by it 'the Seed of the World.' This 'Seed of the World' contained the *All* within itself, just as the germ of the mustard-seed contains the root, the stalk, the leaves, the grain, the last containing again the rudiments of others innumerable. Thus the No-being God created the No-being world out of No-being things, when he deposited the seed containing within itself the complete seeds of the universe. And to give an illustration of my meaning: the egg of any bird of diversified plumage—the peacock, for example—although itself single, yet includes within itself the many-coloured, multifarious forms of multifarious substances; so, in like manner, did this seed of the world deposited by the No-being God include within itself the multiform, multifarious seeds of the universe.

“This seed, then, contained all things that can be named; nay more, all things that can not be named, as yet hidden in futurity, and to come forth after their kind by accretion, and by growth, after the manner in which we see the new-born infant acquire his teeth, his flesh, his father’s form, and all his understanding, and all such things that come to the child as it grows up, not apparent in him at the beginning. Now, inasmuch as it is impossible to use the term ‘projection’ of the No-being God (in fact, Basilides is opposed to all schemes of creation by means of a ‘projection’), for we must not suppose *Matter* necessary to his operations in the same way as her threads are to the spider, or as timber and metal to man when he sets about any work; but ‘He spake and it was made’; and this is what Moses means by his ‘Let there be light, and there was light.’ Whence, then, was this light? Moses saith not *whence* it was, but that it was from the word of the speaker; but neither He that spoke *was*, neither *was* that which was made. The seed of the world was this word that was spoken, ‘Let there be light.’ And to this the evangelist refers by his ‘And that was the true Light which enlighteneth every man coming into the world.’ For man draws his beginning out of that seed, and is illuminated thereby.” (This “seed,” therefore, divided into infinite other seeds, is nothing else than Aristotle’s “genus,” which is divided into infinite other “species,” as “animal,” the genus, itself non-existent, is divided into “species,” as ox, horse, man, &c.)

“Having, therefore, got this seed for his starting-point, Basilides goes on thus: ‘Whatever I speak of as made after this, there is no need of inquiring *out of what* it was made, seeing that this seed comprehended within itself the principles of the All. Now let us examine what came out of this seed in the first, second, and third place. There was in the seed a *Sonship*, triple, of the same substance with the No-being God, and generated by him. In this triple Sonship one part was subtile, another gross, the third needing purification.\* Upon the first *projecting* (emitting) of the seed, the subtile element disengaged itself, ascending aloft “like a feather or a thought,”

\* Corresponding to “Immaterial, Material, and Mixed.”

and arrived at the No-being One. For Him all Nature desireth, by reason of the super-eminence of his beauty and perfection. The gross part endeavoured to imitate its example, but was weighed down by its coarser nature, and detained within the seed. To assist it, therefore, the Sonship equips it with a *wing*, such as Plato in his "Phaedrus" wings the soul withal. Now this wing is the Holy Ghost, which the grosser part putting on, is both advantaged itself, and advantages the other. For the wings of a bird are not able to fly if severed from the bird, neither can the soul fly if separated from her wings. Such, then, is the relationship borne by the Sonship to the Holy Ghost, and also by the Holy Ghost to the Sonship. Soaring aloft, therefore, upon its wings—that is, upon the Holy Ghost, this Soul Part carried its wings, the Holy Ghost, along with it up to the No-being God, and the Sensible Sonship, but was unable to comprehend the latter, because its own nature is not constituted of the same substance with Him. But in the same way as dry and pure air is repugnant to the nature of fishes, so the place, more ineffable than the Ineffable One, and more lofty than all names that can be named, the seat of the No-being God and of the Subtile Part, was contrary to the nature of the Holy Ghost. On this account, the Sonship left it *near* to that place which cannot be conceived by mind, nor described by words, though not altogether abandoned by himself, but retaining something of his power (or essence), just as a vessel once filled with a precious perfume ever retains traces of that perfume, however carefully it may have been emptied. And this is manifestly like the ointment upon the head "which ran down to Aaron's beard"—that is, the perfume of the Sonship, brought down by the Holy Ghost even into the impurity and degradation of mortality, out of which itself at the beginning had soared aloft, raised by the Sonship, as it were, on eagle's wings, being itself fastened upon his back. For all things struggle upwards from that which is below towards that which is above, from the "worse towards the better," whereas nothing of those above in the better place seeks to descend below.'

"The third part of the Sonship—namely, that requiring

purification, remained included within the infinite *head* (or sum) of infinite seeds, both giving and receiving benefit, in the manner hereafter to be explained. After the first and second ascensions of the Sonship, the Holy Ghost, which had been left above, became the 'firmament' between the world and the upper world. For Basilides divides all things that are into two great classes, the 'world' and the 'upper world'; the Spirit, therefore, occupying the interval between the two (namely, the Holy Ghost, which retains the odour of the Sonship) he terms the 'Boundary Spirit.' Now after this firmament above the world had been constituted, there broke forth out of the Seed of the World the 'Great Archon,' the Head of the World, or beauty, strength, magnitude indissoluble. More ineffable is he than the Ineffable, more powerful than the Powerful, wiser than the Wise, more beautiful than any beauty that can be named. As soon as he was born he soared upwards and reached the firmament, but *that* was the limit of his flight; for he knew not of the existence of anything *beyond* the firmament, and therefore he remained more beautiful, more powerful, more wise than any of the things subjacent, always excepting the Sonship—that is, the Third impurified Person—who still lay enclosed within the immense universal seed. Imagining himself, therefore, to be Lord and Ruler and *Intelligent Architect*, he set about the creation of the world. In the first place, not wishing to abide alone, he generated unto himself a son out of things subjacent (*mundane elements*), far wiser and more beautiful than himself, for *this* son was in truth the Third Person yet left enclosed within the seed. This thing had been predestinated by the No-being God from the beginning; as soon as he beheld this son he was enamoured of his perfect beauty, and bade him to sit down on his right hand. This they call the 'Ogdoad,' the abode of the Great Archon. The great and wise Demiurgus then made the entire *ætherial* creation, being inspired and empowered thereto by his own son, so far above himself in wisdom." (This idea is copied from Aristotle's "Entelechia" of the natural organic body; the *active soul* in the body being itself wiser, stronger, and better than the body. The theory, therefore, propounded originally by Aristotle con-

cerning the body and the soul, Basilides thus applies to the Great Archon and the Son whom he had created; for as the Archon creates the Son, so does Aristotle make the soul to be the work and effect of the natural organic body.) "All things, therefore, are ruled by the providence of the Great Archon" (or rather, by the "Entelechia" of himself and son)—"all things, that is to say, which lie *below* the moon, and *within* the æther—for the moon is the division between the æther and the air.

"The creation being finished, there arose out of the seed a 'Second Archon,' but greatly inferior to the first, yet similarly *ineffable*. This (Archon) is designated the 'Hebdomad.' He proceeded to create all things *below* the æther of which he is the Demiurgus; and he, in his turn, generated a son infinitely superior to himself. The intermediate space between the regions Ogdoad and Hebdomad is occupied by the universal seed, the heap of species, the particles whereof are guided by the intelligence implanted in them by the First Creator as to the *times*, the *natures*, and the *changes* in which they have to come forth, and possess no other guide, guardian, or creator.

"The whole creation was in this way completed, of the world and of the things above the world; but there was yet left within the seed the 'Third Sonship,' who, in his turn, had to be developed, revealed, and to ascend beyond the Boundary Spirit up to the Subtile Sonship and the No-being One. *This* is the interpretation (meaning) of the Scripture: 'The whole creation groaneth and is in labour, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.' These 'sons' are the *Spiritual Men* left here below to guide and to perfect the souls that from their nature belong to this place. 'From Adam unto Moses sin reigned'—that is to say, the Great Archon, who had dominion up to the firmament, and imagined that he alone was God, and that there was none other above him—for all above him was kept in the deepest silence. *This* is the 'mystery not revealed unto the Fathers'; the Great Archon, the Ogdoad, was, as he supposed, the Lord and Ruler of the universe. But of the 'interval,' or middle space, the Hebdomad was the ruler; now the Ogdoad is ineffable, but the Hebdomad may be uttered by speech. This ruler of the Hebdomad was He who spake unto Moses, saying,

'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Name of God I have not revealed unto them'—that is, He did not reveal to them the ineffable ruler of the Ogdoad. All the prophets who were before the Saviour's coming spoke through the inspiration of the Second Archon.

"When the time was come for the manifestation of the Sons of God, the Gospel came, penetrating through every power, dominion, and name that can be named, although the Sonship did not come down from his place upon the right hand of the Incomprehensible No-being One. But, like as Indian naphtha kindles at the mere sight of fire a long way off, so do powers fly up out of the seed to the Sonship that is beyond the firmament. The son of the Great Archon of the Ogdoad thus receives, like as naphtha catches the distant flame, the emanations of the Sonship who is beyond the firmament; and this last, the Boundary Spirit, serves for the communication of the thoughts from the one to the other.

"The Gospel thus came to the Great Archon through his own son, and he was converted, and troubled, and became wise, learning his own *ignorance* (or want of knowledge); and this is the interpretation of 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' For the Christ, sitting by him, instructed him concerning the Ineffable No-being One, concerning the Son who is beyond the firmament, and concerning the creation of the universe. The Great Archon being thus instructed, was filled with *fear*, and confessed the *sin* he had committed in magnifying himself; and this is the meaning of 'I acknowledge my transgression and I confess my sin.' When, therefore, the Great Archon was enlightened, every creature of the Ogdoad was likewise enlightened, and then came the time for the enlightenment and evangelising of the ruler of the Hebdomad. For this end the son of the Great Archon communicated to the son of the Second Archon the light which he himself had received from above, and he communicated his instruction to his Father, who in like manner was convinced of, and confessed *his* sin. By this time every creature of the Hebdomad was enlightened, and had the Gospel preached unto them. For in this division (the region below the æther) also, there is an infinite creation

of powers, principalities, and dominions (concerning whom Basilides has a lengthy dissertation; who moreover in this region places the 365 heavens, and their ruler ABRASAX, so called because his name contains that sum, for which reason the year consists also of that number of days).

“After all this it was necessary that the *Unformedness* (*ἀμορφία*) existing in our region—that is, the Sonship still lying enclosed in the mass like an abortion—should be enlightened in the same manner with those aforementioned. The Light therefore passed through the Hebdomad upon the son of the Hebdomad—that is, upon *Jesus*, the son of Mary. This is ‘the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee,’ namely, the power of *unction*, descending from the Supreme through the Demiurgus upon the Son.

“The present constitution of things will last until every particle of the Sonship enveloped in the unformed mass shall be attracted into Jesus, shall be disentangled and sublimated by him, and rendered capable of ascending by itself to the first source of Light, to which it bears a natural affinity.

“In this way the Three Persons of the Sonship being all united once more above the firmament, then mercy shall be shown unto the creation, ‘which languishes and groans waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God’; for all men belonging to the Sonship shall ascend up unto Him. When this is accomplished, He will bring upon the world a *deep ignorance*, so that all things here below shall abide in their nature, and desire nothing contrary to their nature. By this means the souls appointed to abide here below will be destitute of even the slightest notion of anything existing above them, lest they should be tormented by the fruitless desire of ascending up into the same; like as though a *fish* should desire to pasture with the flocks upon the hills, a wish which, if gratified, would be its destruction. For all things are *eternal* so long as they continue in their natural place, but become *mortal* when they endeavour to escape beyond it. The same *ignorance* will envelop the ruler of the Hebdomad, in order that sorrow and grief and confusion may flee away from him; that he may no longer be troubled with the desire of things above him and contrary to

his nature. This ignorance shall also come over the Great Archon of the Ogdoad, and over all creatures subject unto him, and for the same reason. This is the 'restoration of all things; enclosed from the beginning within the seed, and disposed according to its season. This is the Saviour's meaning in 'My hour is not yet come'; it is also signified by the Magi beholding the star, inasmuch as His coming, proclaimed from the beginning, was subject to the disposition of the stars.\*

"The Gospel is the *Declaration* of supramundane things, which the Great Archon knew not of. But when it was told him of the Sonship, of the Boundary Spirit, and of the No-being God, he rejoiced with an exceeding great joy. With respect to the birth of Jesus, all things came to pass as they are written in the Gospels. For *He* was the firstfruits of the division of the classes, previously all commingled here below. Now, as the world is distributed into the Ogdoad, the head of the universe, whose chief is the Great Archon, and into the Hebdomad, whose chief is the Demiurgus, chief also of our degree where Frailty (liability to error) subsists, it was necessary that this Confusion should be distributed and set in order by Jesus. That part of him, therefore, which was of the 'Unformedness,' namely, his body suffered what it did suffer and returned again into unformedness; that part which belonged to the Hebdomad, namely, his soul, returned again into the Hebdomad after his resurrection; the part belonging to the Ogdoad remained with the Great Archon, and the part belonging to the Boundary Spirit was left there in his ascension. But the third Sonship, thus purified in his passage upwards, was reunited to the Blessed Sonship who is supreme above. (In short, the whole theory of the religion consists in the *Confusion* of the Seed-heap, its *Redistribution* into classes, and the *Restoration* of all things to their natural places. This division of the classes was made in the first instance by Jesus, and the sole object of his passion was the restoration of the classes, which were mixed up together, into their proper order. And for this reason Jesus himself was

\* This may allude to the Rabbinical explanation of the "sign of the coming" of the Messiah as being

the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Pisces.

*distributed* as we have shown, amongst the several classes. These then are the things that Basilides fables, who taught in Egypt, and, having learned his wisdom *from the Egyptians* brought forth such fruits as these.)”

This concluding remark of Hippolytus deserves particular notice; it shows that he regarded the Basilidan theory as the mere *adaptation* to present requirements of an ancient esoteric doctrine belonging to the Egyptian priesthood. That it was nothing more than a plagiarism from the Aristotelian philosophy, as the learned Father labours to demonstrate with so much ingenuity, appears to me by no means made out. But the Basilidan theory has one striking feature that distinguishes it from every other form of the Gnosis, in its entirely ignoring the existence of an *Evil Principle*, or of malignity and rebellion against the Supreme God. His two rulers of the upper and lower worlds, the Great Archon of the Ogdoad, and the Demiurgus of the Hebdomad, so far from opposing the Gospel receive it with joy, and humbly acknowledge their inferiority to the sender. The Passion of Jesus is not due to the malice of either of them, but is voluntary, and undertaken as the sole means of restoring confused elements of the All to the *harmony* indispensable for their *eternal* duration. Even the final withdrawing of the Divine Light from the Ogdoad and Hebdomad is done for the same beneficent purpose, in order that both they and their greatness may rest for ever in blissful ignorance, each holding himself supreme in his own creation, and knowing of nothing above it, may no longer be tormented by vain aspirations after a state of perfection for which his nature is not adapted. The benevolent spirit that pervades the whole theory strongly supports the assertion of Hippolytus, and points out for its source the Egyptian mythology, to which the notion of two principles, equal in power but antagonistic in nature, would have been unutterably shocking.

## THE OPHITES.

The Ophites should hold by right the first place amongst the schools we are considering, for that impartial and acute historian of the Gnosis, Hippolytus, styles them, "The Naaseni who specially call themselves 'Gnostics.' But inasmuch as this deception of theirs is multiform and has many heads (a play upon their name of serpent-followers), like the Hydra of fable, if I smite all the heads at once with the wand of Truth, I shall destroy the whole serpent, for all the other sects differ but little from this one in essentials." He therefore commences his history of the Gnostic heresies, properly so called, with a minute account of this one, illustrated with copious extracts from their text-books; on account of their antiquity and importance bestowing much more of his space upon them than upon any other of their offshoots or competitors.

Their strange-sounding title "Naaseni"—"Followers of the Naas" (the only way in which the Greek, from its want of aspirate letters, could write the Hebrew *Nachash*, "Serpent")—was literally rendered by "Ophites," the name which has ever since served to designate them. They first assumed a definite existence about the same time as the Basilidans, in the middle of the second century, although the elements of the doctrine are derived from a source much more remote. That source was the secret doctrines taught in the various Pagan Mysteries; and likewise certain philosophic theories of the Greeks, although certainly not to the same extent as the learned Hippolytus labours so ingeniously to demonstrate.

In support of this statement I shall proceed to quote from the same Father some curious examples of the method in which the Naaseni pretended to recognise their own "knowledge" in the esoteric religions of antiquity. After quoting a long passage from Pindar about the conflicting theories as to the creation of the First Man\* and the names given to him by different nations, the Ophite text-book continues:

\* "But the Libyans held that *Iarbas* was the first-born of men; he who, rising up out of their droughty plains, first gathered the sweet dates of Jove. And even in our day, the Nile fattening the mud of Egypt,

“This was the Man brought forth by the Earth spontaneously; but he lay without breath, without motion, without stirring, like a statue; being made after the image of their Adamas above, the subject of their hymns, through the agency of several Powers, concerning each one of whom they narrate a long fable. But in order that the Man above might be obtained, ‘from whom is every tribe upon the Earth, and likewise in the Heavens,’ there was given unto him a *soul*, that through this soul the image of the Man above might suffer and be chastened in bondage. As to the nature and source of this soul sent down to animate this image, the Ophite theory is derived *not from Scripture, but from the doctrine of the Mysteries.* ‘The Gospel according to the Egyptians’ is their text-book on this point. They premise that the nature of the soul is extremely difficult to investigate by reason of its inherent changeableness, never abiding fixedly in the same place, habits, or passion: and they adopt in this particular the *notions of the Assyrian mystics.* It is a question with them whether the soul comes from the ‘Pre-existing,’ or from the ‘Self-begotten One,’ or from the ‘Effusion of Chaos.’ They adopt the *Assyrian* division of the soul as being both one and threefold! For all Nature longs for a soul; the soul is the efficient cause of all things that grow, are nourished and have action. For without a soul, growth and nutrition are impossible; even stones have a soul, for they possess the faculty of growth, and this faculty cannot exist without nutrition. All things therefore in Heaven or Earth, and in the Abyss, are eager after a soul. This *soul* the Assyrians call ‘Adonis,’ ‘Endymion,’ ‘Attis’; and hence arose the fable of the love of Venus for Adonis; *Venus* signifying *generation.* The love of Proserpine for Adonis means that the soul is mortal if separated from Venus; that is, from generation. When the Moon is enamoured of Endymion, it is Nature herself desiring a more sublime soul. When the Mother of the gods emasculates her lover, Attis, it signifies the Power

and giving life to things clothed with flesh, through his moist heat breeds living creatures. The Assyrians pretend that the First Man

arose in their country, *Oannes*, the eater of fish; but the Chaldeans say he was *Adam.*”

above recalling into itself the male energy of the soul. For the Man that is above is of both sexes." [On this account they most vehemently denounce all intercourse with women.] "Attis was deprived of his virility, that is, was divested of his lower, earthly, part, and then translated to the Upper World, 'where is neither male nor female, but a new creature,' the Man above, of two sexes. And to this truth not only Rhea, but all creation, beareth testimony. And to this doth Paul refer in Romans (i. 20-27): (where they strangely pervert his expression ἀρχημοσίνη, as signifying that heavenly, sublime, felicity, that *absence of all form* which is the real source of every form). These same verses of Paul, according to them, contain the key to their whole system, and to their 'Mystery of Celestial Pleasure.' For the promise of 'Washing' applies to none save the man who is introduced into the eternal pleasure, 'being washed with the True Water, and anointed with the Unction that cannot be spoken.' The Phrygian Mysteries, equally with the Assyrian, teach the same great truth, when they teach the blessed nature of things past, present, and to come, hidden and yet manifested; the 'true kingdom that is within you.' To the same effect they bring forward the *Gospel of Thomas*, which has, 'He that seeketh shall find me amongst children from seven years downwards, for in the fourteenth generation, being hidden, I will manifest myself.' [Although in reality this is not a maxim of Christ's, but a maxim of Hippocrates. 'The boy at seven years of age is the half of his father,'—in stature.]

"The Egyptians were, after the Phrygians, the most ancient of mankind, and the first establishers of mysteries. The Ophites explain as follows the esoteric doctrine concerning Isis, and the genital member of Osiris, lost, sought after, and enveloped by her seven times in a black (or dark blue)\* vestment. Osiris is the element *Water*; Nature seven times enveloped in an ethereal robe, that is, the seven planetary spheres, stands for Generation and Change, or Creation transformed by the ineffable, formless, imageless, incomprehensible Deity. The same is implied in the words of Scripture, 'The righteous man shall fall *seven* times, and shall rise again'—his

\* Μέλας has both these meanings.

all signifying the revolutions of the planets put in motion by the All-mover.

“They likewise discourse concerning the essence (or *existence*) of the ‘Seed,’\* the final cause of all things that exist, although itself none of them, and yet making and generating all things; or, as they themselves express it, ‘I become what I will, and am what I am; therefore I say that moving all, I am myself immovable.’ For it continues what it is, making all things, although itself is made nothing of all that exist. To this doctrine the Saviour’s words refer, ‘Why callest thou me good? One only is good, my Father which is in Heaven, who maketh the sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust, and sendeth His rain upon the sinners and upon the righteous.’ And this is the *great and unknown Mystery*, hidden amongst the Egyptians and yet manifested, for Osiris standeth in his temple before Isis, having his secret part exposed and pointed upwards, and crowned with all the fruits of the creation. And for this cause, the same member [the Phallus] holds the first position in the most sacred places, being shown forth unto the world, ‘like a light set upon a candlestick’: it is set up on the house-tops, and in the streets, and for landmarks. It is a blessing acknowledged and proclaimed by all, for they call it the ‘Bringer of Luck’ (*ἀγαθηφόρον*),—not understanding what they say. This mystery the Greeks got from Egypt, and observe unto this day. For by this symbol they represent Hermes; and they entitle that god ‘Logicos,’ for he is the *interpreter* and Creator of things made, in making, and to be made; and he is represented by this his proper symbol. And that *this* is the Hermes, guide, companion, and author of souls, Homer hath perceived, for he saith (Od. xxiv. 1-2):—

‘Cyllenian Hermes summoned forth the souls of the bold suitors,’

not meaning those of Penelope’s suitors, but of us the awakened and admonished.

‘From what vast happiness, what height of glory,’

we have fallen, namely, from the Primal Man, the *Adamas*

\* The “Seed of the World” in the Basilidan system, as already explained (p. 73).

that is above, into this vessel of clay, and become the servants of the Demiurgus, of Ildabaoth, the God of Fire, the *Fourth* in number (for by this name they call the creator of the 'World of Species,' *κοσμὸς ἰδικός*).

"In his hand his wand Beauteous, all golden, by whose potency the eyes of mortals he at pleasure lulls to sleep, or rouses others from their slumber. For He is the sole author of life and death, therefore is it written, 'Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron.' But Homer wishing to embellish the incomprehensible reality of the nature of the Logos, has given to him a rod of *gold*, not of iron. Some He casts into slumber, others he awakens, and makes them aware of their condition: 'Awake thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' For *this* is the Christ that is figured within all the sons of men by the unfigured Logos. *This* is the great and profound mystery of the Eleusinian rites, the cry, YE KYE, *Rain! Conceive!* All things are subject unto Him, for 'their sound is gone forth unto all lands.' And again, *this* is the hidden sense of Homer's

'He waved his wand, they followed with shrill cry.'

That is, the souls in a continuous line, as the poet goes on to express by the simile—

'As in the furthest depths of some vast cave,  
Shrill cry the bats when one drops from their chain,  
Down from the rock where fast they cling together.'

That is, the souls fallen down from the Rock above, namely from the Adamas. *This* is the Adamas, the chief corner-stone, 'which is made the head of the corner,' because in the head is placed the formative substance, the brain, out of which all generation proceeds. 'I will set the Adamant in the foundations of Zion' is allegorical for setting the figure of the Man (in the soul). And the text, 'This Adamas is firmly held by teeth in the wall,' is the *Inner Man* that is signified, the 'stone cut without hands,' which hath fallen down from the Adamas above into this earthly potter's vessel, this figure of *forgetfulness*.\*

\* Meaning the *Body*, in which the Inner Man imprisoned has lost all recollection of his primal source.

“The souls follow Hermes, or the Logos.

‘So moved they, crying, through the darksome paths;  
Hermes their guide, that god devoid of ill.’

That is, he leads them to the everlasting places where no ill comes; for whither were they going?

‘They passed o’er Ocean’s wave and Leucas’ rock,  
The Sun’s bright portals, and the land of dreams.’

“This ‘Ocean’ signifies the generation of gods and the generation of men, ever tossing in a perpetual flow and ebb. When it runs *downwards* it is the generation of men; when it tosses itself *upwards* against its boundary,\* the rock Leucas, it is the generation of gods. ‘For this cause,’ saith the Wise One, ‘I have said ye are gods and the children of the Most Highest, when ye shall make haste to flee out of Egypt, and shall come beyond the Red Sea into the Wilderness’; that is, out of this earthly mixture (or confusion) up to the Jerusalem above, which is the mother of the living. ‘But if ye return into Egypt (or, into this earthly nature) ye shall die.’ ‘Egypt’ being the prison of the body. *This* is the mighty Jordan which, flowing downwards, hindered the flight of the Children of Israel; but which Jesus (*i.e.* Joshua) turned, and made to flow upwards.”

“Following guides like those just cited, these very strange fellows the Gnostics (observes Hippolytus), the inventors of a new art of grammar (or, criticism), extol beyond all expression their prophet Homer, who hath foreshown these doctrines unto them: and, by seducing those ignorant of the Holy Scriptures into such-like fancies, they make fools of them in the manner described.”

“Another of their maxims is that ‘Whoso saith that the All cometh from *One* is grossly deceived; but he that saith that the All cometh from *Three*, hath the true key to the system of the universe. For there is one nature of the Man that is above, Adamas; one mortal here below; one without a king, the generation existing up above, where is Mariam the Sought-After, and Jothor the great and wise, and Sephora, she that

\* The Basilidan “Boundary Spirit,” or Holy Ghost (p. 76).

seeth, and Moses, whose offspring is not in Egypt, for his sons were born unto him in the land of Midian. Neither hath this truth escaped Homer, for he sings—

“All things are parcelled into portions three,  
And to each portion its due honour falls.”

For it is necessary that the *Great Ones* (τὰ μεγέθη) should be expressed in words, but in such wise that “hearing men may not hear, and seeing they may not perceive.” For if the Great Ones were not uttered, the world could not exist. These three most sublime names are, KAVLACAV, SAVLASAV, ZEESAR. *Kav-lacav* is the name of the Adamas who is above; *Savlasav* of him who is below, mortal; *Zeesar* of the Jordan that floweth upwards. *This* is He that pervades all things, being at once male and female, named by the Greeks Geryon, as having three bodies and flowing out of the Earth: whom the Greeks also call “The Moon’s celestial horn,” because he has *mized* and *tempered* all things [a play upon the similar sounding words κέρας and κρᾶσις]. “For all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made, and what was made in him is Life.” This Life is the life unspeakable, the generation of the Perfect Man, unknown to former ages. The “Nothing” that was made without him is the World of Species, for *that* world was made without him by the *Third* and by the *Fourth* One.\* *This* is the Cup (*condy*) of Joseph, “out of which the king doth drink and use divination.” Of this also do the Greeks (Anacreon) sing in Bacchic frenzy,

“Bring me, boy, the draught divine;  
Bring me water, bring me wine;  
Make me drunk with quaffing deep,  
Lull my charmed soul to sleep;  
For my cup predicts to me  
Of what country I shall be.”

Here Anacreon’s dumb cup utters the unspeakable mystery, for it tells him to *what country* he shall belong, that is, whether to the *Spiritual* or to the *Carnal* world. *This* also is the “Water changed into wine,” at the famous wedding at Cana, when Jesus manifested the kingdom of Heaven—that kingdom which is

\* Ildabaoth, the God of Fire.

hidden within every man, like the leaven sufficient for the three measures. Here likewise is the unspeakable secret of the *Samothracian Mysteries*, which none but we the "Perfect" are able to understand, for the Samothracians expressly mention the Adamas who is above—the Primal Man. For in the Temple of the Samothracians stand two naked men, having their hands and their genital members elevated towards heaven,\* like the Hermes of Cyllene. These two statues represent the Primal Man, and the Spiritual Man after he is "born again, and made like unto Him every whit."

"This is the true sense of the Saviour's words, 'Unless ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven'; and 'Though ye shall drink of the cup that I drink of, whither I go ye shall not be able to enter.' For He knew the nature of His disciples, and that every one must abide in his own nature. For out of the Twelve Tribes he chose the Twelve Disciples; for which cause not all who heard their teaching received or understood the same; for that which is not according to Nature is contrary to Nature. Him (Adamas) do the Phrygians name 'Corybas,' for he descends from the Head (*cory*) who is above, the Supernal Brain; and permeates the All in a manner incomprehensible. And, as the Prophet hath it, 'Ye have heard his voice, but ye have not beheld his form'; that is, the *Image* coming down from the Formless One above no one knows, for it is hidden within an earthen vessel. This is as the Psalmist hath it: 'The God dwelling in the great

\* A valuable notice of the type under which the Cabiri were represented in this the most venerated of all the Grecian sanctuaries. It is curiously illustrated by Ficoroni's bronze group, figured in his "Memorie di Labico," and given to the Kircherian Museum. A female, half-draped in a star-spangled robe, rests her hands on the shoulders of twin youths, similarly *arrecti*, with the ears and standing-up hair of fauns, one holds a horn, the other the handle of a vase. The base is inscribed in very archaic letters—

DINDIA MAGOLNIA FIEA DE-  
DIT NOVIOS PLAVTIOS MED  
ROMAI FECID

where it will be seen that Dindia uses the *metronymic* after the Etruscan fashion. This group, six inches high, served for handle to the lid of a cylindrical pyxis, two palms deep, resting on three lion's claws. With it was found a mirror, the back engraved with the combat of Pollux and Amycus, LOSNA with her crescent standing in the middle, the names in regular Etruscan.

flood, and crying aloud out of the waters of the sea'; that is, He cries aloud out of the multiform *confusion* (or, medley) of things mortal unto the Formless One who is above, 'Save my First-born from the lions.' [And in the same sense do they interpret all the similes concerning 'waterfloods,' and the promises of the Deity's never forgetting His chosen people.]

"The Ascension or Regeneration, that is, the conversion of the Carnal Man into the Spiritual, is thus explained by means of a curious perversion of words taken from different Psalms: 'Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates, that the King of Glory may come in. Who is this King of Glory? The very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people, He is the King of Glory, mighty in battle.' *Battle* signifies the war in your members ever being waged within this earthly creature made up of conflicting elements. *This* is the *gate* seen by Jacob as he was journeying into Mesopotamia; that is, the young man growing up out of the boy, and *Mesopotamia* signifies the stream of the Great Ocean which flows out of the middle of the Perfect Man. The same deity is called by the Phrygians PAPA, because He *appeased* the confusion and chaotic tumult which prevailed before His coming. For this name is the unanimous cry *παῦε, παῦε*,\* of all things in Heaven, in Earth, and under the Earth, calling upon Him to *appease* the discord, and to 'send peace to men that were afar off'—that is, to the earthly and mortal—'and to them that were near' that is, to the spiritual and perfect. He is likewise called 'dead' by the Phrygians, inasmuch as he is *buried* within the tomb of the body; to which circumstance also apply the words, 'Ye are whitened sepulchres, full of dead men's bones and all manner of uncleanness; because the Living Man doth not dwell within you.'

"The dead shall rise from their graves' signifies that the Earthly Man shall be born again spiritual. Unless they pass

\* A subsequent thousand years' experience of the blessings of ecclesiastical rule has furnished Walter de Mapes with a more humorous etymology for this title—

"*Papa*, si rem tangimus nomen habet a re,

Quidquid habent alii solus vult papare:

Aut si nomen Gallicum vis apocopare,

*Payez, payez* dit le mot, si vis im-  
petrare."

through this 'Gate' all continue dead, but him that hath passed through the Phrygians call a *god*, for he becomes a god, having passed through the Gate into Heaven. Paul means the same by his 'being caught up into the third heaven, and hearing unutterable things.' Again, 'the publicans and harlots shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven before you,' where *publicans* means the Gentiles 'upon whom the *ends* of the world have come'; \* where 'ends' are the seeds of the universe scattered about by the Formless One, as is set forth by the Saviour, 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,' declaring that none but the perfect Gnostics can comprehend this mystery.

"Those beloved by the Formless One are Pearls in this vessel of clay; and to them refers the precept, 'Cast not that which is holy to the dogs; neither throw your pearls before swine;' meaning sexual intercourse with women—an act fit only for dogs and swine. He is also called *Αἰπόλος* by the Phrygians, not because he really kept flocks, as the profane fancy, but because he is *ὁ αἰεὶ πῶλῶν*, 'he that ever turns' the universe in its due revolutions, whence the phrase, the 'poles' of heaven. And Homer (Od. iv. 384-85) says—

'Here *turns* about the truthful sea-god old,  
Immortal Proteus by the Egyptians called.'

"He is likewise styled 'Fruitful,' because 'the children of the widow shall be more than those of her that hath a husband;' that is, the *spiritual* who are born again, being immortal, are in number more (though but few of them are born into this life) than the *carnal*, who, in spite of their present multitude, do all perish utterly at last.

"The knowledge of the Perfect Man is very deep, and hard to be attained to. 'The *beginning* of perfection is the knowledge of man, but *absolute* perfection is the knowledge of God.' He (Adamas) is designated by the Phrygians as, 'the Green Wheat-ear cut off'; on this account, at the Eleusinian rites, the initiated hold up in silence to the Directors the wondrous mystery, the green ear of wheat. This wheat-ear is the Perfect Son descended from the Adamas above, the Great Giver

\* A play upon *τελώναι* and *τέλη*.

of light, like the Hierophant himself. This latter is not actually castrated like Attis, but emasculated by the use of hemlock, so that he despises all carnal pleasure; and whilst celebrating the mysteries amidst blazing torches, he cries aloud, 'The holy Brimo hath borne a sacred son, Brimos'—alluding to the Spiritual Birth. The rites are therefore named 'Eleusinian' and 'Anactorian,' from the Greek words signifying *Coming* and *Ascending*. This is what the initiated themselves declare concerning the mysteries of Proserpine; and of the road leading the defunct down to her the poet (Amphis) hath—

'But underneath her lies a rugged path,  
Hollow and muddy, yet the best to lead  
Down to the lovely groves of precious Venus.'

"These are the Lesser Mysteries, of *earthly* origin, 'in which men ought to rest themselves for a while, and then proceed to the Greater Mysteries,' that is, to heavenly regeneration.

"The Father of the All is furthermore called by the Phrygians 'Amygdalus,' *the Almond Tree*; not meaning the natural tree, but the Pre-existing One, who, having within himself the Perfect Fruit pulsating and moving about in his depths, *toro open* (δύμωξε) his bosom, and brought forth the Invisible, Ineffable Son, of whom we are treating.\* He is moreover denominated the 'Piper,' because that which is born is the harmonious *Spirit* [or, *breath*, the Greek affording no distinction between the two senses of the word.] The Spirit is likewise called the Father, and the Son begotten by the Father; for the worship of the Perfect is not carnal, but spiritual: therefore, 'Neither in Jerusalem nor in this mountain shall ye worship any more.'

"This is the mystery of the Incomprehensible One, *furnished with innumerable eyes*, whom all Nature longeth after in different ways. [Perhaps an allusion to the Brahminical figure of Indra, god of the heavens.] This is the 'Word of God,' that is, the

\* Some lurking tradition of this mystery may have suggested the machine of the almond (*machina della mandola*) containing the Archangel Gabriel, in the spectacle of the Annun-

ciation constructed by Brunelleschi for the church of Sta. Croce. See Vasari's detailed account of this remarkable example of a miracle-play.

word of the declaration of his great power: 'Wherefore it shall be sealed up, and veiled, and hidden, lying in the dwelling-place, where is established the Root of all the Æons, Powers, thoughts [Platonic *Ideas*], gods, angels, spirit-messengers that are, that are not, begotten, unbegotten, comprehensible, incomprehensible, of the years, months, days, hours, moments, whence Time begins to grow and increase by particles. For a moment (or geometrical *point*), itself being nothing, made of nothing, indivisible, grows by accretion into a magnitude incomprehensible.' This is the Kingdom of Heaven, the grain of mustard seed, the Indivisible Point existing within every one, but only known unto the Spiritual Man.

" 'There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard amongst them,' signifies that whatever men say or do, has all a *spiritual meaning* to the Perfect; even the actors in the theatre utter nothing without the intervention of the Deity. For when the audience are seated, and the actor comes upon the stage, clad in a gorgeous robe and twanging his lyre, he sings thus a great mystery without knowing what he says—'Whether thou be the offspring of Saturn, or of blessed Jove, or of the mighty Rhea, hail! *Thee* Assyrians call the thrice-desired *Adamas*; whilst Egypt styles *Thee Osiris*; the Greeks in their wisdom (esoteric knowledge) the *Moon's Holy Horn*; the Samothracians, the venerable *Adamnas*; the Hæmonians, *Corybas*; the Phrygians, at one time, *Papa*, the *Dead One*; at another, the *God*, or the *Barren One*, or the *Green Wheat-ear* cut off; or him whom the fruitful *Almond Tree* poses the man playing on the pipe.' *He* is the multiform *Attis*, whom they thus describe in their hymns: 'I will sing of *Attis*, the favourite of *Rhea*, with the clashing of cymbals, the bellowing of the *Idæan* pipe of the *Curetes*, and will intermingle the sound of *Phœbus'* lyre. *Evoe! Evau!* Thou that art like unto *Pan*, unto *Bacchus*, thou Shepherd of the white stars!'

"For these" (adds Hippolytus) "and other such like reasons, these Ophites frequent the Mysteries of the Great Mother, fancying that by means of what is done there they can see through the whole secret. But in reality they have not the least advantage over other people, except that they are not

emasculated, and yet they act as though they were. For they most strictly forbid all intercourse with women, and in every other respect, as we have fully described, they do the same things as the eunuchs, the regular priests of Rhea."

After giving an account of their worship and glorification of the Serpent (which I shall extract when treating of the Agathodæmon religion) Hippolytus thus continues:—"The foregoing is a sample of the insane, absurd, and interminable theories of the sect. But to show up, as far as lies in our power, their *unknowing* 'knowledge,' the following hymn\* is here inserted, as containing a summary of the whole creed:—

"The generative law of the All was the First Mind;  
 But the Second was the effused chaos of the First:  
 In the third place the Soul received a law, and began to operate.†  
 Whereupon She (the Soul) enveloped in the figure of a fawn,  
 Struggles with Death, suffering a probationary penance.  
 At one time, invested with royalty, she beholds the Light;  
 At another, cast down into misery, she weeps.  
 Now she weeps and rejoices;  
 Now she weeps and is judged;  
 Now she is judged and dies.  
 When shall her deliverance be?  
 The wretched one  
 Hath entered, as she strayed, into an evil labyrinth.  
 But Jesus said: Father, suffer me;  
 She in quest of evil (or, the chased of evil ones) upon earth  
 Wandereth about, destitute of Thy Spirit:  
 She seeketh to escape from the bitter chaos,  
 But knoweth not how to pass through.  
 For this cause send me, O Father!  
 I will go down holding the Seals,  
 I will pass through all the Æons;  
 I will reveal all the mysteries;  
 I will manifest the forms of the gods; ‡  
 And the hidden secrets of the holy way  
 I will teach, giving unto them the name of GNOSIS.‡

"This, therefore, is the system (or pretension) of the Naaseni, who designate themselves 'the Gnostics.' But this

\* This hymn is written in anapestic verses; its text is in many places hopelessly corrupted by the transcriber. I have therefore often been obliged to conjecture the original sense.

† An enunciation of the funda-

mental doctrine "All is Three," already stated by Hippolytus.

‡ That is, will disclose to the faithful the different figures of the Archons of the lower spheres, a promise fulfilled at much length by the author of the Pistis-Sophia.

deception of theirs being multiform, and having many heads like the Hydra of fable, if I smite all the heads at a single blow with the wand of Truth, I shall destroy the whole serpent, for all the other sects differ but little from this in essentials."

Hippolytus has not given a connected analysis of the Ophite system; he probably deemed it superfluous labour, as having been already done with much exactness by Irenæus in his great work, to which the former occasionally refers as being then in everybody's hands. To the Bishop of Lugdunum, therefore, we must apply for this information, which will be found given at much length in Chapters xxxi.-xxxiii. of the First Book of his History. He states that the Ophites, like other Gnostics, rejected the Old Testament altogether as the work of a subordinate divinity, and containing nothing of the revelations of their *Sophia*, or Divine Wisdom; whilst they held that the New, although originally of higher authority, had been so corrupted by the interpolations of the Apostles as to have lost all value as a revelation of Divine truth. They drew the chief supports of their tenets out of the various "Testaments" and similar books then current, and ascribed to the Patriarchs and the most ancient Prophets, for example, the book of Enoch.

The primary article of this doctrine, was the Emanation of all things from the One Supreme, long utterly unknown to mankind, and at last only revealed to a very small number capable of receiving such enlightenment. Hence he is named *Bythos*, "Profundity," to express his unfathomable, inscrutable nature. Following the Zoroastrian and the Kabbalistic nomenclature they also designated Him as the "Fountain of Light," and "The Primal Man," giving for reason of the latter title that "Man was created after the *image* of God," which proved the nature of the prototype.

The *Beginning* of Creation, that is, the Primal *Idea*, or Emanation, was the "thought," *Ennoia*, of Bythos, who bears also the significant name of *Sige*, "Silence." This *Idea* being the first act of creation of the Primal Man, is therefore properly denominated the "Second Man." *Ennoia* is the consort (compare the Hindoo *Durga*) of Bythos, and she produced *Pneuma*, "the

Spirit," who, being the source of all created things, is entitled "the Mother of all living," and likewise *Sophia*, the wisdom from on high. As the mother of all living, *Sophia* is the medium between the intellectual and material worlds. In consequence of this, when *Bythos* and *Ennoia*, charmed with her beauty, furnished her with the divine Light, *Sophia* produced two new Emanations—the one perfect, *Christos*, the other imperfect, *Sophia-Achamoth*. (This scheme resembles the Buddhistic; *Bythos* answering to the First Buddha; *Sige*, *Sophia*, *Christos*, *Achamoth*, *Ildabaoth*, to the successive other Five.)

Of these emanations *Christos* was designed for the guide of all who proceed from God; *Achamoth*, for the guide of all proceeding out of matter; nevertheless, the Perfect One was intended to assist and lead upwards his imperfect sister.

Furthermore, the Spirit rests upon Chaos, or the *waters of Creation*, which are Matter, Water, Darkness, the Abyss. This Chaos was devoid of all *life*, for life proceeds ultimately from the Supreme, who has no connection whatever with Matter. Neither could his purely intellectual daughter, *Sophia*, act directly upon it; she therefore employed for agent her own emanation, *Achamoth*, whose mixed imperfect nature fitted her for that office.

This First Tetrad, *Bythos*, *Ennoia*, *Sige*, *Sophia*, were in the meantime creating *Ecclesia*, the Idea of the Holy Church. But the imperfect *Achamoth* upon descending into Chaos, lost her way there, and became ambitious of creating a world entirely for herself. She floated about in the Abyss, delighted at imparting life and motion to the inert elements, until she became so hopelessly entangled in Matter as to be unable to extricate herself from its trammels. In this condition she produced the creator of the *material* world, the Demiurgus, *Ildabaoth*.

But after this event, *Achamoth* feeling the intolerable burden of her material part, after long and repeated efforts, at length struggled forth out of Chaos. She had never belonged to the *Pleroma*, but she attained to the "Middle Space"; where she entirely shook off her material part, and determined to erect a barrier between the World of Intelligence and the World of

Matter. Ildabaoth, "Son of Darkness," creator and tyrant of the Lower World, followed the example of Bythos in producing subordinate Emanations. First of all he generated an Angel in his own likeness; this Angel a second; and so on up to the number of six. These are all reflexions one of the other; but they inhabit, with their father, Ildabaoth, seven different regions; to which the Middle Space, dominion of their origin Achamoth, forms the eighth. Their names are Iao, Sabaoth, Adonai, Eloï, Ouraios, Astaphaios. They became the Genii of the seven worlds, or planetary spheres. The first four names are the mystic titles of the God of the Jews—degraded thus by the Ophites into appellations of the subordinates of the Creator; the two last signify the forces of Fire and Water.

In this degradation of the names most sacred in the Jewish theology, is clearly to be recognised, the very teaching of those "dreamers" reprobated by Jude, v. 8 for despising "Dominion," and speaking evil of "Dignities." For "Dominion" is the "Empire" in the Sephiroth (see page 35) to which the Kabbala assigned the title *Adonai*. Now we find here the Ophites making Adonai the *third* son of Ildabaoth, a malevolent Genius, and like his father and brethren, the eternal adversary of the Christ. The "Dignities" mean the other personages of the Sephiroth, similarly dishonoured by the new doctrine. Jude shows plainly whom he had in view by contrasting in the next verse the audacity of these "blasphemers" with the respect shown by the Archangel Michael towards his opponent on account of his *angelic nature*, however fallen from his high estate. By a most singular coincidence (much too close to have been merely accidental), Jude's censure, nay, his very expressions are repeated by Peter in his second Epistle (ii. 10). If either of these Epistles were really written by the Apostles whose names they bear, these passages bring to light the very early existence of this school of Gnosticism, which indeed may have been founded before the promulgation of Christianity. But to return to the operations of Ildabaoth. Besides the Spirits above mentioned, he generated Archangels, Angels, Virtues, and Powers presiding over all the details of the creation. Ildabaoth was far from being a pure spirit; ambition

and pride dominated in his composition. He therefore resolved to break off all connection with his mother, Achamoth, and to create a world entirely for himself. Aided by his own Six Spirits, he created Man, intending him for the image of his power; but he failed utterly in his work, his Man proving a vast, soulless monster, crawling upon the earth. The Six Spirits were obliged to bring their work again before their father, to be animated: he did so by communicating the ray of Divine Light which he himself had inherited from Achamoth, who by this loss punished him for his pride and self-sufficiency.

Man, thus favoured by Achamoth at the expense of her own son, followed the impulse of the Divine Light that she had transferred to him, collected a further supply out of the creation with which it was intermingled, and began to present not the image of his creator Ildabaoth, but rather that of the Supreme Being, the "Primal Man." At this spectacle the Demiurgus was filled with rage and envy at having produced a being so superior to himself. His looks, inspired by his passions, were reflected in the Abyss, as in a mirror, the image became instinct with life, and forth arose "Satan Serpentine-formed," *Ophiomorphos*, the embodiment of envy and cunning. He is the combination of all that is most base in matter with the hate, envy and craft of Spiritual Intelligence. Out of their normal hatred for Judaism, the Ophites gave this being the name of *Michael*, the guardian angel of the Jewish nation according to Daniel (v. 21). But they also called him *Samiel*, the Hebrew name of the Prince of the Devils.

In consequence of his spite at the creation of Man, Ildabaoth set to work to create the three kingdoms of Nature, the Animal, the Vegetable, and the Mineral; with all the defects and evils they now exhibit. Next, in order to regain possession of the best of things, he resolved to confine Man within his own exclusive domain. In order to detach him from his protectress Achamoth, and from the celestial region, he forbade him to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, which could reveal the mysteries and confer on him the graces from above. But Achamoth, in order to defeat his scheme, sent her own Genius, Ophis, in the form

of a serpent to induce him to transgress the commandment, and so to break the Law of Jealousy. Though not so stated, it would appear that the serpent-form was put on by Achamoth's minister in order to escape the vigilance of Ildabaoth, under the disguise of his offspring Satan, Ophiomorphos.

Enlightened by eating the forbidden fruit, Man became capable of comprehending heavenly things. Nevertheless Ildabaoth was sufficiently powerful to revenge himself, which he did by shutting up the First Pair in the prison-house of Matter, that is, in the *body*, so unworthy of his nature, wherein Man is still enthralled. Achamoth, however, continued to protect him: she had extracted from his composition and absorbed into herself the divine Spark of Light; and ceased not to supply him therewith, and defend him in all his trials.

And of this there was full need. A new enemy had come into the field against Man, the Genius Ophis whom Ildabaoth had seized, and punished for his share in the affair of the Tree of Knowledge, by casting him down into the Abyss; and who, contaminated by his immersion in Matter, became converted into the exact image of his fellow-prisoner, Ophiomorphos. The former was the type, the latter the antitype, and the two are often confounded together. Thus we get a third dualism into the scheme. Sophia and Sophia-Achamoth, Adam-Kadmon and Adam, Ophis and Ophiomorphos. Ophis, at first Man's friend, now began to hate him as the cause (though innocent) of his own degradation. With Ildabaoth, and his Sons, he continually seeks to chain him to the body, by inspiring him with all manner of corrupt desires, more especially earthly love and the appetites. But Achamoth supplies Man with the divine Light, through which he became sensible of his *Nakedness*, that is, of the misery of his condition of imprisonment in this body of death, where his only consolation is the hope of ultimate release.

But the seductions of Ildabaoth and his crew gained over all the offspring of Adam, except Seth, the true type of the Spiritual Man: and his posterity kept alive the seed of Light and the knowledge of divine Truth throughout all the generations following. When they in the Wilderness received

the commandments and institutions of Ildabaoth and his Sons, the Planetary Genii, and afterwards the teaching of the Prophets, inspired from the same source, Achamoth infused into their predictions something higher, comprehended not even by their Lord, and made them preach the advent of the Primal Man, the eternal Æon, the heavenly Christ. [The same notion was a favourite one with the Mediæval *Cathari*.]

Achamoth was so afflicted at the condition of Man that she never rested until she had prevailed on her mother, the celestial Sophia, to move Bythos into sending down the Christ to the aid of the Spiritual Sons of Seth. Ildabaoth himself had been caused to make ready the way for his coming through his own minister, John the Baptist; in the belief that the kingdom Christ came to establish was merely a *temporal* one: a supposition fostered in him by the contrivance of Achamoth. Besides inducing him to send the Precursor, she made him cause the birth of the *Man* Jesus by the Virgin Mary; because the creation of a *material* person could only be the work of the Demiurgus; not falling within the province of a higher power. As soon as the Man Jesus was born, the Christ, uniting himself with Sophia, descended through the seven planetary regions, assuming in each an analogous form, thus concealing his true nature from their presiding Genii, whilst he attracted into himself the sparks of the divine Light they still retained in their essence. [These "analogous forms" are explained by the fact that the Ophite Diagramma figured Michael as a *lion*, Suriel as a *bull*, Raphael as a *serpent*, Gabriel as an *eagle*, Sabaoth as a *bear*, Erataoth as a *dog*, Ouriel as an *ass*.] In this manner the Christ entered into the man Jesus at the moment of his baptism in the Jordan. From this time forth Jesus began to work miracles; before that He had been entirely ignorant of his own mission. But Ildabaoth at last discovering that he was subverting his own kingdom upon earth, stirred up the Jews against him, and caused him to be put to death. When he was on the cross, the Christ and Sophia left his body, and returned to their own place. Upon his death the Two took the Man Jesus, abandoned his *Material* body to the earth, and gave him a new one made out of the Æther. Thenceforth he consisted

merely of soul and spirit, which was the cause why the Disciples did not recognise him after his resurrection. During his sojourn upon earth of *eighteen* months after he had risen, he received from Sophia that perfect knowledge, the true Gnosis, which he communicated to the small portion of the Apostles who were capable of receiving the same. Thence, ascending up into the Middle Space, he sat down upon the right hand of Ildabaoth although unperceived by him, and there he is collecting all souls that have been purified through the knowledge of Christ. When he shall have collected all the Spiritual, all the Light, out of Ildabaoth's empire, Redemption is accomplished and the end of the world arrived: which means nothing else than the reabsorption of all Light into the Pleroma from which it had originally descended.

The sect were divided in their opinions as to the nature of Ophis. Although agreed that this genius was in the beginning the *minister* of Achamoth, the Ophites of Theodoret's time held that he had been converted into the enemy of Man; although by inducing him to break the commandment of Ildabaoth he had proved the final cause of Man's deliverance from his power. But all these nice distinctions, and complicated machinery of Redemption were the invention of the later schools: unknown to the sect described by Hippolytus. For the primitive Ophites, retaining the Egyptian veneration for the Agathodæmon, regarded their serpent, The Naas, as identical with either Sophia, or the Christ. That writer says positively "the *Naas* (Hebrew, *Nachash*) is the *only* thing they worship, whence they are denominated *Naaseni*. Even two centuries later when Epiphanius wrote, they employed a living tame serpent to encircle and consecrate the loaves that were to be eaten at the Eucharistic supper. Again Tertullian has (In Præscript.) "Serpentem magnificent in tantum ut etiam Christo præferant"—a passage that suggests that their *ophis* was connected with the antique Solar Genius of the Pharaonic religion. It was a peculiarity of the Egyptians that, like the present Hindoos, they were divided, as it were, into sects, each of which adopted some one deity out of the Pantheon for the exclusive object of worship, paying no regard to all the

rest. As in modern Hindooism Vishnu and Siva have engrossed the religion of the country, so in the Egypt of the first Christian century Anubis and Cnuph had become the sole objects of Egyptian veneration, as the monuments hereafter to be reviewed will abundantly evince.

To establish the identity of their Ophis with the Saviour, his followers adduced the words of St. John, "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." All this proves that the section of the Ophites which regarded the serpent as *evil* by its nature, had been led astray from the primitive doctrine of their sect by the prevailing Zoroastrian and Jewish notions upon that subject. The creed of the original Gnostics, the Naaseni, gave a very different view of the nature of the serpent considered merely as a type; a fact which shall be established in the section on the Agathodæmon worship.

Epiphanius gives the following abstract of their doctrine to explain their reverence for the serpent as the true author of divine *knowledge*. "The Supreme Æon having produced other Æons, one of these, a female, named Prunicos (i.e. *Concupiscence*), descended into the waters of the abyss: whence, not being able to extricate herself, she remained suspended in the Middle Space, being too much clogged by matter to return above, and yet not sinking lower where there was nothing cognate to her nature. In this condition she produced Ildabaoth, the God of the Jews; and he in his turn seven Æons or Angels, who created the seven heavens. From these seven Æons Ildabaoth shut up all that was above, lest they should know of anything superior to himself. The seven Æons then created Man in the image of their Father, but prone, and crawling upon earth like a worm. But the Heavenly Mother, Prunicos, wishing to deprive Ildabaoth of the power wherewith she had unadvisedly invested him, infused into Man a celestial spark—the soul. Straightway man rose up on his feet, soared in mind beyond the limits of the eight spheres, and glorified the Supreme Father, Him who is above Ildabaoth. Hence Ildabaoth, full of jealousy, cast down his eyes upon the lower layer of Matter, and begat a Virtue, whom they call his Son. Eve,

listening to him as the Son of God, was easily persuaded to eat of the Tree of Knowledge." Such is the brief summary of Ophite tenets, as given by Epiphanius. The details of the elaborate system given in the preceding pages are extracted from Theodoret who flourished half a century later.



FIG. 4.

## MACHINERY OF THE GNOSIS.

The *doctrines* of the chief schools of Gnosticism having been fully described in the preceding sections, the next step in the natural order of things will be to consider the MACHINERY employed by its teachers to set forth these new doctrines.

The deities of the ancient mythology continued to hold their place in the productions of the great sect whose birth-place was Alexandria, and consequently some insight into the sense in which the novel theosophy adopted them may be obtained by learning what were the powers and attributes of these same gods, when their worship held undisputed possession of the country. On this account, the chief deities of Egypt, and the figures under which they are recognised, must now be briefly described—together with their Coptic titles, so often found on these monuments in strange companionship with the holy names of the Jewish creed, with the Magian Genii, even with the appellatives of Hindoo gods—the very terminology of the religion plainly indicating its remote and multifarious sources.

1. The great god of Lower Egypt, Phthas (phonetic, Ptah), is represented in a close-fitting robe, with his feet joined together, and standing upon a base of *four* steps, called the "Four Foundations," and which typified the Four Elements, of which he was the grand artificer—an emblem long afterwards taken in the same acceptation by the Rosicrucians, sometimes he appears as a dwarf and Priapean; sometimes as Phtha-Tore with a beetle forehead. His proper attribute is the Cynocephalus baboon. His four sons, the Cabiri, are painted as little ugly dwarfs, bearing for badges of office, *a sword, a crocodile, a serpent, a human head* stuck on a hook. They become in the hierarchy of the Pistis-Sophia the "Collectors unto Wrath" (*ἐπιναῖοι*), whose office is to accuse souls in the Judgment. The many-armed Genius brandishing similar weapons, often found on Gnostic talismans, probably expresses the same idea in a condensed form.

2. Ammon (phonetically, Amen) has a human, and occasionally a ram's, head, from which rises a parti-coloured plume. He is modified into "Pan-Mendes," Priapean, and brandishing a whip. In the character of "Ammon-Chnubis" he has his feet bound together, and wears the horns of a goat. He is often figured as the serpent, called by the Greeks the "Agathodæmon." His symbol is the *vase* "Canopus," for so the Greeks pronounce the name of Chnubis. United with the sun, he becomes "Ammon-Ra."

3. The Sun-god, Phre, or Ra, depicted with the head of a hawk, supporting the solar disc entwined with the serpent Uraeus.

4. Thoth or Thoyt, ibis-headed, is the "Scribe of the gods." Sometimes he takes the head of a hawk, and becomes the famous "Hermes Trismegistus." His symbol is the winged orb, *Tat*, answering to the *Mir* of the Persians. (He is the prophet Enoch's fourth rebellious angel, Penumuc, "who discovered unto the children of men bitterness and sweetness, and pointed out to them every unit of their wisdom. He taught men to understand writing, and the use of ink and paper. Therefore numerous have been those who have gone astray, from every period of the world even to this day. For men were not born for this, thus with pen and with ink to confirm their faith." [lxviii. 10. 13.]])

5. Sochos is depicted with the head of a crocodile, and is also symbolised by a crocodile with the tail bent.

6. The Moon-god, Pa-Ioh, (*Pa*, being the Coptic definite article) is represented having his feet close together; upon his head is a single lock of hair and the crescent. At other times, this deity is figured bi-sexual, and casting gold dust over the heavens, that is, bespangling them with the stars.

7. Osiris is a human figure distinguished by his lofty conical helmet, and holding a crook and a whip. The eye is his symbol.

8. Aroeres (Aroi), the Horus of the Greeks, has a single lock of hair upon his head. He is figured as being suckled by Isis and again, as seated upon the lotus; he also occasionally wears the head of a hawk, as being one character of the Solar god.

His symbol, the hawk, appears upon the breast of Isis in a torso in the Borgia Collection.

9. Anubis (Anbo) is always jackal-headed, and sometimes has also a human one head, springing from a separate neck. His Coptic name, ANBΩ, may often be observed in Gnostic legends.

10. Bebon, or Babys, has the head of a hippopotamus, or a crocodile, and carries a sword: a figure which used to be taken for Typhon. He stands for the constellation Ursa Major in the Zodiac of Denderah.

Of *goddesses* the principal are—

1. Neith: expressed by the Vulture, or else by a female with head of a vulture, or lion. In the last case she takes the name of Taf-net. She symbolizes the vault of Heaven.

2. Athor: with the head of a cow, or else of a woman covered with the skin of the Royal Vulture. She is denoted hieroglyphically by a hawk placed within a square.

3. Isis: a female with horns of a cow, between which rests a disk, the lunar circle.

4. Sate: the Grecian Hera, wearing tall plumes on her head, and sometimes personified with a feather in place of head, stands for "Truth," in which latter quality she appears regularly at the Judgment of the Soul.

The Four Genii of the Amenthes, or Hades, are represented with the heads of a man, jackal, baboon, and hawk, respectively; and are often placed together like mummy-shaped figures, forming the Canopic Vases.

The *symbols* of the same worship have been to some extent explained by persons writing at a time when they were still a living, though fast expiring, language. Of such writers the most valuable is Plutarch, who in his curious treatise 'De Iside et Osiride,' has given the meaning of several of these symbols, and, as it would appear, upon very good authority. According to him, Isis sometimes signifies the Moon, in which sense she is denoted by a *Crescent*; sometimes the Earth as fecundated by the waters of the Nile. For this reason water, as the seed of Osiris, was carried in a vase in the processions in honour of this goddess.

*Osiris* is denoted by the picture of an *Eye* and *Sceptre*; his

name being compounded of *Os* "many," and *iris* "eye." Upon this point Macrobius states (Sat. I. 21), "The Egyptians, in order to denote that Osiris means the Sun, whenever they want to express his name in hieroglyphic writing, engrave a Sceptre and on top thereof the figure of an Eye; and by this symbol they express 'Osiris,' signifying this god to be the Sun, riding on high in regal power, and looking down upon all things, because antiquity hath surnamed the Sun the 'Eye of Jupiter.'"

The *Fig-leaf* stands for "King"; and also for the "South."

The *Lizard*, which was believed to conceive through the ear, and to bring forth through the mouth, is the type of the generation of the Word, that is, the *Logos*, or Divine Wisdom. (This belief explains the appearance of a lizard upon the breast of certain figures of Minerva.)\*

The *Scarabeus*, in its making spherical receptacles for its eggs, and by its retrograde motion, imitates the action and movement of the Sun. This insect had no female, according to the popular belief of the Egyptians.

The *Asp* expresses a planet, for like that luminary, it moves rapidly, though without any visible organ of locomotion.

The *Ibis* stands for the Moon: the legs of the bird, when extended, making an equilateral triangle. (It is hard to discern any analogy between the Moon and this figure of geometry, but yet the Pythagoreans denoted Athene by the same sign. But that Plutarch is here correct is proved by many gems which show a triangle set upon an altar and adored by the baboon, Luna's favourite beast.) How the later Egyptians symbolised the Sun and Moon is well expressed upon a jasper (Waterton) where Horus, seated on the lotus, is adored by the baboon; in the field are the sun-star and the crescent attached to their respective figures, and also the *Triangle* very conspicuously placed.

Horus—Plutarch remarks—wears a crown of the branches of the *Persea*, because its fruit resembles in shape the *heart*; its leaves, the *tongue*. The legend goes that the tree (*Cordia myxa*, or *Sebestene plum*) was first planted at Memphis by the hero *Perseus*, whence its name. In memory of his mythic ancestor,

\* Of which a fine example, an intaglio, is figured in the *Museum Odesalchum*.

Alexander ordered that a garland of Persea leaves should form the prize at the games he instituted at his new Capital. The tree never wants a succession of flowers and fruit; the latter Pliny compares to a red plum, adding that it will not grow in Europe.

We next come to a professed treatise upon this recondite subject, Horapollo's 'Interpretation of the Sacred Animals.' Unfortunately, this work bears upon its face clear evidence of having been excogitated by some pragmatical Alexandrian Greek, totally ignorant of what he was writing about, but impudently passing off his own stupid *conjectures* as to the meaning of the figures on the ancient works surrounding him, as though they were interpretations handed down to him by antique authority. He must have written under the Lower Empire, when the art of reading hieroglyphics was entirely lost, for we know that it still existed in the first century; Tacitus particularly notes that an *aged* priest read to Germanicus upon his visit to Thebes the contents of the historical tablets on the edifices of that city. "Mox visit veterum Thebarum magna vestigia; et manebant structis molibus literæ Ægyptiæ priscam opulentiam complexæ, jussusque e senioribus sacerdotum patrium sermonem interpretari" (Ann. II. 60). This happened A.D. 19. It would appear that the knowledge of hieroglyphics was fast dying out, and only preserved by members of the previous generation.\*

It is only in a few instances that Horapollo has preserved some genuine tradition of the meaning of those symbols which were the most generally used, and therefore the last to be forgotten. Of these explanations the most important are what follow.

"The *Cynocephalus* baboon denotes the Moon, because that beast has a certain sympathy with the luminary, and during her dark quarter sits without eating, his eyes fixed upon the

\* But the Demotic writing must have lingered much longer in use, for Capitolinus, cap. 34, mentions the "Egyptian" as one of the current alphabets of the third century. "The soldiers raised a tomb to Gordian at Circeium Castrum, on the confines of Persia; placing upon this

edifice (*moles*) an epitaph in Greek, Latin, Persian, Jewish, and *Egyptian* letters, so that it might be read by everybody. "Divo Gordiano, victori Persarum, victori Gothorum, victori Sarmatarum, depulsori Romanarum seditionum, victori Germanorum, sed non victori Philipporum."

ground as though mourning for her loss. He moreover denotes the *priestly order*, because he is naturally circumcised, and abhors fish and fishermen. Erect and with uplifted paws and a basilisk (*asp*) upon his head, he symbolises the New Moon, whose first appearance he hails after this fashion. By his voiding his urine at fixed and regular intervals, he first suggested to observers the regular division of the day into hours, and furnished the first idea of the invention of the *Clepsydra*, or water-clock.

“The *Dog* (Jackal) represents the sacred scribe: because that functionary ought to be always studying, and likewise should *bark at*, and make himself disagreeable to, everybody. In another sense he expresses a Prophet, from his habit of staring fixedly at the statues of the gods.

“The *Hawk* means ‘God,’ or ‘Sun.’

“The *Lion*, from the resemblance of his *round* face to the solar orb, is placed beneath the throne of *Horus*, the Egyptian title of the Sun.

“The Rising of the Nile, called in Coptic *Nov* or *Nev*, is denoted by three large vases; and also by a lion, because it attains its full height when the Sun is in that sign of the Zodiac; for which same cause the spouts of the sacred lavers are made in the shape of lions’ heads.

“By the *Ibis* is signified the *heart*, because the bird belongs to *Hermes*, who presides over the heart and all reason. The *Ibis* also, by its own shape, resembles the form of the heart; concerning which matter there is a very long legend current amongst the Egyptians.”

But the most graphic account of the symbols and ceremonies employed in the worship of *Isis*, whilst yet in its full glory (the middle of the second century), is to be obtained from the description of her Procession which *Apuleius* (himself one of the initiated) has penned in the eleventh Book of his “*Golden Ass*.” “Next flow on the crowds of people initiated into the divine mysteries; men and women of every rank, and all ages, shining in the pure whiteness of linen robes; the latter having their dripping hair enveloped in a transparent covering: the former with their heads shaven clean, and the crowns thereof

shining white—these earthly stars of the nocturnal ceremony, raising as they went a shrill tinkling with *sistra* of bronze, silver, and even of gold. But the chief performers in the rites were those nobles, who, clad in a tight-fitting robe of linen descending from the waist down to the heels, carried in the procession the glorious symbols of the most potent deities.

“The first held out at arm’s length a *lamp*, diffusing before him a brilliant light; not by any means resembling in form the lamps in common use for illuminating our evening meals, but a golden bowl supporting a more ample blaze in the midst of its broad expanse. The second, similarly robed, held up with both hands the *Altar* that derives its name from the beneficent *Providence* of the supreme goddess. The third marched along bearing aloft a *palm branch* with leaves formed of thin gold, and also the *Caduceus* of Hermes. The fourth displayed the symbol of Justice, the figure of the *left hand* with the palm open, which, on account of its natural inactivity, and its being endowed with neither skill nor cunning, has been deemed a more fitting emblem of Justice than the right hand. The same minister likewise carried a small golden vestibule made in a round form like an *udder*, out of which he poured libations of milk. The fifth carried a *winnowing fan* piled up with golden sprigs. The last of all bore a huge *wine jar*.

“Immediately after these came the Deities, condescending to walk upon human feet, the foremost among them rearing terrifically on high his dog’s head and neck—that messenger between heaven and hell displaying alternately a face black as night, and golden as the day; in his left the caduceus, in his right waving aloft the green palm branch. His steps were closely followed by a cow, raised into an upright posture—the cow being the fruitful emblem of the Universal Parent, the goddess herself, which one of the happy train carried with majestic steps, supported on his shoulders. By another was borne the coffin containing the sacred things, and closely concealing the deep secrets of the holy religion. Another carried in his happy bosom the awful figure of the Supreme Deity, not represented in the image of a beast either tame or wild, nor of a bird, nor even in that of man, but *ingeniously devised* and

inspiring awe by its very strangeness, that ineffable symbol of the deepest mystery, and ever to be shrouded in the profoundest silence. But next came, carried precisely in the same manner, a small vessel made of burnished gold, and most skilfully wrought out into a hemispherical bottom, embossed externally with strange Egyptian figures. Its mouth, but slightly raised, was extended into a spout, and projected considerably beyond the body of the bowl, whilst on the opposite side, widening as it receded into a capacious opening, it was affixed to the handle, upon which was seated an asp wreathed into a knot, and rearing up on high its streaked, swollen and scaly neck."

These images and symbols require a few remarks in elucidation: suggested by the notices of ancient writers, or by the representations of these very objects upon extant monuments of the same religion. The "udder-shaped" vessel exactly describes the one so frequently placed upon the Gnostic gems, and which Matter so strangely interprets as the "Vase of Sins" of the deceased—an unlikely subject to be selected for a talisman intended to secure the *benevolence* of heaven. Much more to the purpose is Köhler's conjecture that it is one of the earthen pots used to be tied round the circumference of the irrigating wheel, still employed for raising the water of the Nile to fertilise the adjacent fields; "fecundating Isis with the seed of Osiris" in ancient phrase, and certainly the *string* fastened about its top favours such an explanation; in fact, we have an example of similar veneration for a vessel in the case of the Canopus, the pot that held the same water when purified for drinking. The "winnow-fan" is also often represented, placed over this hemispherical vase; the same instrument played an important part in the marriage ceremony of the Greeks. When piled with fruit of all kinds, it was placed on the head of the bride; the same significant article, a broad, shallow basket, was the cradle of the infant Bacchus—the "*mystica vannus Iacchi*." The golden "Bowl," serving for lamp, often figures amongst the various emblems adorning our talismans. The "Sistrum" got its peculiar outline from the Indian *Yoni* (emblem of the female sex), and it was on account of its similar shape the almond, *luz*, was also held sacred in Egypt, which seems the

true origin of the "vesica piscis," serving as the inclosure for divine figures. The British Museum possesses a Hindoo altar in hardstone, neatly polished, having its flat top formed into the shape of the *lingam-yoni*; at each corner of the square a little idol is squatted. This Indian figure, signifying the Active and Passive Powers of Nature in conjunction for the work of Creation, is sculptured like a round shallow basin, with long projecting lips tapering to a twist, with an obtuse cone rising out of its middle. Now this is the exact shape of a large brown lamp from Herculaneum (Caylus, vii. pl. 33), on which from its centre, instead of a cone, springs a bent fore-finger, *digitus obscenus* (with the same meaning as the *lingam*) serving for handle to carry it by, whilst from the sides project the three arms of the Egyptian *Tau*. This vessel must have belonged to the Isis-worship in that town, no doubt as popular there as it is known to have been at the neighbouring Pompeii. As for the office of "Anubis-bearer," it is related that when Commodus discharged that duty in the procession, he gratified the insane cruelty of his nature by cracking the shaven skulls of all within reach with the weighty head of the idol; and it seems to follow as a matter of course that the Anubis of Apuleius, in order to display *alternately* an ebon and a golden visage, must have possessed a *pair* of heads, human and canine, just as he is figured, holding the caduceus and palm upon certain Basilidan gems. Lastly, the mysterious image, too awful to be described, but whose nature is darkly hinted at as neither of *bird*, *beast*, nor *man*. These very expressions would tempt me to believe a compound of all three; in a word, the veritable figure of the Abraxas god. And be it remembered that this image was the "Supreme God," and he, we know, was the IAO of Egypt. This idol must have been of *small* dimensions, for it was carried in the *bosom* of the devotee's robe, and my suspicion is strongly confirmed by the existence in the late Mertens-Schaffhausen Collection of a bronze statuette, five inches in height, found in the south of France, and thus described in the Catalogue. "No. 2002. Statuette of Iao standing, armed with cuirass, shield and whip; his head in the form of a cock's, his legs terminating in serpents."