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## FROM PHILO TO PLOTINUS

BY NORMAN BENTWICH, Cairo, Egypt.

NEO-PLATONISM was the final outcome of Hellenistic philosophy, and it represents in thought the fusion of peoples which characterized the cosmopolitan Graeco-Roman society. Its most distinguished exponent was Plotinus, a Hellenist Egyptian who taught in the third century C.E., but it flourished for 200 years after his time; and it was from this system that in the early Middle Ages philosophical thought made a fresh start among the Arabs. Jewish thinkers thus played an important part in the revival of metaphysics, and found in the last stage of Greek speculation ideas sympathetic to their religious outlook. It is instructive therefore to trace the Jewish elements which were contained in the original amalgam, and more especially to consider the influence on it of the one considerable Jewish Philosopher of the ancient world.

Philo-Judaeus, it is generally recognized, was one of the direct forerunners of neo-Platonism, which may be defined as the development of Plato's system in the light of Eastern religious ideas. He it was who in the first century of the common era made fruitful the religious seed which was latent in the Platonic teaching by combining with it Hebraic conceptions, just as he made fruitful the philosophical ideas implicit in Hebraic monotheism by his mastery of Hellenic philosophy. He fused

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with the Platonic single impersonal 'Good', evolving itself in the multiplicity of the material world through the noetic spiritual 'Ideas', the Jewish personal God who creates all things by His will. Hence the saying which is handed down by Suidas and other scholars: ἡ Φίλων πλατωνίζει ἡ Πλάτων φιλωνίζει:—either Philo Platonizes or Plato Philonizes. The work of a great thinker lives afresh in each age; and Plato was, in the first century, recreated for the Greek world and still more for the non-Greek world by the interpretation of the Judeo-Hellenistic sage. More especially in his latest works, the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, Plato had realized that metaphysics, to influence mankind, must be transformed into theology, and that ethics must be established by reverence for God. For four centuries he had lacked adequate interpreters of this side of his teaching; he was a great theological and religious reformer as well as the founder of metaphysics and logic; but the heads of the school which derived from him were not fitted to develop his religious thought.

Philo, however, approached Greek philosophy as a whole, and Plato in particular, from a new standpoint, bringing to his studies an intense religious conviction that all things were the expression of the divine unity; and he sought to develop and confirm that conviction by a philosophical doctrine. It might have been expected that his work would be continued by a band of Alexandrian Jewish Hellenists sharing his religious outlook, but a combination of circumstances,—among which the rise of Christianity as a separate religious community, the destruction of the Jewish national centre in Palestine, and the attendant decay of the Jewish community of Alexandria

are the most important—prevented the Judeo-Hellenistic school from progressing beyond the point to which he carried it. He is the only original philosopher in that school: his Jewish predecessors and the religious apologists who followed him, merely combined their dogmatic creed with philosophical doctrines, directly borrowed and assumed without modification. He, alone, constructed a scheme which, though based mainly upon Greek elements, combined them in a new fashion so that they formed a new and organic whole. Nevertheless, though he lacks true successors, he stands at the head of a new development of Hellenistic thought. And two streams of philosophy may be traced running parallel through the next two centuries, both of which have their source in Philo: the stream of pagan neo-Platonism, and the stream of Christian Gnosis. They culminate at the same time, the one in Origen, the other in Plotinus.

Certain features of the development of these two doctrines are common to both. There is a growing tendency to make all teaching more rigid, more fixed, more prosaic, and more matter-of-fact. Although the substance of thought is not less vague and unscientific than it was with Philo, the form is entirely different, and less appropriate. He expressed his religious philosophy in poetical, suggestive, utterance; the later neo-Platonists and the Patristic philosophers endeavour to set it out in a dogmatic creed, and in pseudo-logical syllogism. From the beginning of the Christian era there was a remarkable decline of mental power of every kind throughout the Roman-Greek world. Creative imagination degenerated into crude fantasy: reason sank into playing with words. The lowering of the standard of thought

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manifested itself most forcibly in the conception of God. Human reason could no longer conceive the world as the evolution of one noetic principle, and human imagination could not rise to the idea of a divine unity, who reigned alone with undivided sway. Hence, in the one school we have first a gnostic dualism, next a Trinity of first principles, and lastly a fantastic system of emanations; in the other a similar progress, which is, however, saved from the last stage, because the Church fixed its dogma once for all upon an unalterable foundation. The decline of mental power is shown also in the more complete dependence upon authorities, and the inability to combine them in a new synthesis. While the desire for harmonizing different systems of thought is stronger than ever, the method which the neo-Platonists employed was the subordination of diverse principles; and the method of the Church Fathers was to set out excerpts from the various Greek philosophers as evidence of their agreement with their religious dogmatism.

Another common feature of the post-Philonic philosophy is its engrossing interest in God and theology. The religious attitude is the only possible attitude of each and every school. It is partly a cause, and partly an effect, of this that Eastern teachers figure so prominently among the philosophical writers of the first three centuries of the common era. They possessed the more vivid sense of the divine government, and were better able to supply the popular demand for theological speculation. Even in the Stoic, which was the most rational of schools, Musonius and Epictetus in the second century imposed a certain amount of Eastern colour, and intensified the religious tendency.

The most distinguished of the Platonists of the first two centuries of the Christian era were Ammonius of Alexandria, who taught in Athens (c. 60–70 C.E.); his pupil, Plutarch of Thebes in Greece; Albinus (f. 150 C.E.), probably a Jew who taught in the school of Smyrna; Maximus of Tyre, Numenius of Apamea, certainly a Jew, and Atticus, possibly so, who belong to the reign of Marcus Aurelius. It is notable that almost all of them are of Eastern origin. Of Ammonius of Alexandria we have no record: but his disciple, Plutarch, has left an abundant collection of philosophical as well as of historical works, and from them we can infer the character of the Platonism he had imbibed. Its leading feature is the mixture of Greek with foreign ideas. In the decay of original and independent speculation the thinkers of the time endeavoured to reach some kind of certainty by comparing the ancient authorities of different peoples and syncretizing their results. It is the more probable, therefore, that the Alexandrian teacher Ammonius, who must have known Philo's works, carried something of his influence to his school at Athens, and it is significant that Plutarch exhibits a remarkable interest in the nature of the Jewish God and Jewish religious observances. Among the *Quaestiones Conviviales* he includes studies of the likeness between Jehovah and Dionysus, of the relation between the Jewish Sabbath and Bacchic rites, and of the reasons for which the Jews abstained from eating pork.

Plutarch is less a philosopher than a scholarly priest, aiming not so much at the discovery of truth as the re-establishment of the Greek national religion of Delphi, to which philosophy is brought as a support by allegorical interpretation. But the Delphian religion was to be univer-

salized just as the philosophical Judaism of Philo was to be universalized. The parallel between the chief Jewish and the chief Greek Platonist of the first century both as regards their general attitude to philosophy and their special philosophical doctrine, is striking and instructive. Both alike seek a catholic unity of faith by a philosophical interpretation of their own national religion; but while Plutarch syncretizes all other conceptions of the deity, e.g. in the treatises 'On the E at Delphi' and 'On Isis and Osiris', Philo endeavoured to surpass them, and insisted on the special Jewish conception of God. Both again anticipate the Scholastics, in the sense that they subordinate philosophy to a fixed religious conception of reality. Both insist upon a spiritual conception of the Deity and of the soul, and are in direct hostility with the Stoic school, whose atheism and pride they attack. Both in accordance with this attitude reject the dialectical and eclectic tendencies of the Academic school, as it had developed from the third to the first century B.C.E., and, returning to the original works of Plato for their guide, draw out from them their religious teaching. Both finally advance intuition as the true cognitive faculty, and crown their teaching with mysticism.

The general correspondence is supported by a number of similarities in their detailed ideas, more especially in that part of philosophy which was to both of supreme importance, i.e. their theology. Plutarch conceives the chief God in his essence to be beyond mortal comprehension; we only know *that* He is: not *what* He is.<sup>1</sup> In his treatise upon the E at Delphi he argues that the holy letter really stands

<sup>1</sup> Plut. 391 F.

for the word Εἶ (Thou Art), and is the appellation of the ineffable and unknowable God. 'Neither number therefore nor order, nor conjunction does the letter seem to indicate. But it is an address and appellation of the God complete in itself, which, as soon as the word is uttered, sets the speaker thinking of the power of the God. "Being" is His true and unerring and solely appropriate name. We ought to say of God, He is, and is in relation to no time, but in relation to eternity the timeless and changeless, in which is neither before nor after, nor future nor past, nor elder nor younger. But being One He has filled the Ever with the one Now.' But while God in essence is timeless, changeless, unknowable, He reveals Himself by different effluences in the universe.<sup>2</sup> The different aspects of Dionysus are analogous to the Powers or 'Ideas' of Philo. Plutarch recognizes also a supreme cosmic power. 'God in His unity cannot create the world, because He cannot be the subject of any change, but it is fitting for some other God or rather a demon appointed to rule over perishable things to do this and undergo this condition.' In his religious veneration for Dionysus, Plutarch asserts the unity of the Godhead; but, as was natural to a thinker who started from polytheism, he was willing to hypostatise the divine powers, and thus he foreshadows more completely than Philo the later developments of neo-Platonism. Plutarch sometimes calls the chief power the λόγος or νοῦς,<sup>3</sup> and represents its function as the production of harmony from discord, like that of the Λόγος τομεύς (the dividing Logos) in Philo.<sup>4</sup> Coming nearer to Philo's language, he suggests the attributes which the Jewish thinker applied to the creative Word

<sup>2</sup> *De E.* 9.<sup>3</sup> *De Is.* 49.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 55.



in a passage where he justifies the deification of the crocodile, because it is tongueless, and therefore an imitation of God: 'For the divine Logos also needs no voice, and proceeds noiselessly to rule mortal things with justice.'<sup>5</sup> With this we may compare Philo's interpretation of the voice at the revelation at Sinai, that it was the Divine Presence itself which exalted the multitude.<sup>5a</sup> Again, like Philo, Plutarch regards the Platonic Ideas in two aspects, or rather he imagines paradeigmatic ideas and moving forces in material things derived from them: ἀπόρροιαί, ὁμοιότητες, εἶδη, λόγοι, whose operation can be expressed by the image of the seal stamping wax.<sup>6</sup> So far Plutarch's theory of Being is akin to Philo's. But it exhibits a striking divergence in its explanation of matter and evil. Failing to interpret the world throughout in an idealistic way, the Greek thinker deliberately adopts a dualistic view. There are two antagonistic powers in the government of the universe, the good and evil God, Mind and Matter. This is a fundamental part of his Platonism, and he derives it confidently from the teaching in the *Laws* of Plato about the evil world-soul.<sup>7</sup> But although he finds superficial Platonic authority for his crude solution, Plutarch shows himself rather a follower of the neo-Pythagorean teaching, which exaggerated the dualistic elements to be found in Plato's works into a coarser theory of reality. Parallel with the dualism of Plutarch (viewed as a cosmological theory) is the gnosticism of the early Christian Church, represented most soberly by Basilides and Valentinus. They are parallel results of the same spirit,

<sup>5</sup> *De Is.* 75.

<sup>5a</sup> *De Decalog.* 11.

<sup>6</sup> *De Is.* 53-4.

<sup>7</sup> *De Is.* 45; *Plat.* 4.

and represent the growing obscurantism that was infecting speculation.

Plutarch's general outlook upon the universe is represented in the other incipient neo-Platonists who fill in the interval between Philo and Plotinus. They all profess the belief in one supreme transcendental God, who is so far exalted above the world and mankind as to be incomprehensible. He is associated with Plato's *τὰγαθόν*, or the Idea of the Good, which they interpret literally as 'beyond Being' (*ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας*). Between this barren principle and the world they are compelled to place intermediate beings; some endeavour to establish a scientific theology, based upon a logical ordering of the various divine agencies mentioned in Plato's Dialogues; others again are content to fill in the intermediate steps more vaguely and develop Plato's demonology. Typical of this class is Maximus Tyrius, who is not so much a philosopher as a philosophical rhetorician, and is the more instructive as an index of the religious ideas of the period, just because he makes no attempt at a scientific system, and aims only at setting out neatly accepted notions. One of his dissertations deals with the nature of Plato's God, and another with demons.<sup>8</sup> He declares that while all nations differ about their gods, yet they agree in recognizing one supreme God, who is the father of all; and this is the God whom Plato has established; but he does not mention his name because it is unknowable. Beneath the one God come the orders of demons, *διαδοχῇ καὶ τάξιν ἀρχῆς καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ μέχρι γῆς*. As imagination narrowed, the interval between God and man had to be definitely graded. If man could

<sup>8</sup> Cp. Taylor's *Translation of the Dissertations*, Nos. 2-7.

not reach God, he should reverence his offspring, the stars and demons.<sup>9</sup>

The other class of incipient Neo-Platonists who endeavoured to establish an exact theology, and in the form of their work are more philosophical, elaborate a division of the Godhead, which reaches its fullest statement in Plotinus, but is well defined before his time. Numenius of Apamea is the most distinguished representative of this class; and it has been often suggested that he was a Hellenistic Jew.<sup>10</sup> His name was not uncommon among the Jews and is found as early as the first book of the Maccabees (12. 1, 16 and

<sup>9</sup> In passing a curious parallel may be noted between Maximus Tyrius and Maimonides, which may be due to some Arabic neo-Platonist, intermediate between the Pagan and the Jewish philosopher. In his first dissertation on 'What God is according to Plato', Maximus expounds his theory of divine emanation, which produces not only thirty thousand gods but a multitude of divine essences innumerable. And then he continues thus: 'Conceive a mighty empire and powerful kingdom in which all things voluntarily assent to the best and most honourable of Kings. But let the boundary of this empire be . . . heaven and earth: . . . while the mighty King himself, seated immovably, imparts to the obedient the safety which he contains in himself. The associates of this empire are many visible and many invisible gods, some of them encircling the vestibules as messengers of a nature most allied to the King, his servants, and the associates of his table: but others subservient to them, and again others possessing a still more subordinate nature.' Now Maimonides at the conclusion of his *Guide to the Perplexed* (Bk. III, ch. li) uses the same image to describe God's providence over all things and the different gradations of the human recognition of God. He pictures a king in his palace with his subjects partly in the city, partly without it. Of those in the city some turned their backs on his palace: others turned towards it. And of these some entered and walked in the vestibules and some actually reached the inner court where the king was seated. Maimonides thus applies to the degrees of human approach towards God the simile which Maximus used for the degrees of emanation from God.

<sup>10</sup> Cp. Siegfried, *Philo als Ausleger des A. T.*, 277, 402, and Nicolas, 'Études sur Philon' in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, VII, 769.

15. 15). Apamea, too, was a famous Jewish centre in Syria, and on its coins of the second century the name of Noah and a design of the Ark have been found. Numenius then, if not a Jew himself, must have been influenced by Jewish teaching and have been in contact with Jewish Hellenists. He may be credited also, without doubt, with knowledge of Philo's writings, and he shows how Philo's doctrines were transformed by less refined minds. Origen<sup>11</sup> mentions that he often introduced verses from the works of Moses and the prophets in support of his philosophy, and allegorized them with ingenuity; and he quotes examples from his works on Numbers and on Space. Eusebius<sup>12</sup> gives like testimony, and preserves a fragment in which Numenius states his philosophical method thus: 'We should go back to the actual writings of Plato and combine them with the doctrine of Pythagoras, and call in to confirm them the beliefs of the cultured races. That is, we should compare their holy books and laws and bring to the support of Plato the harmonious ideas that are to be found among the Brahmans, the Jews, and the Magi.' It may be that the tradition which ascribed to Numenius the authorship of the two sayings<sup>13</sup>—ἡ Πλάτων φιλωνίζει ἡ Φίλων πλατωνίζει: and τί ἐστι Πλάτων ἡ Μωύσης ἀττικίζων ('What is Plato but Moses speaking Attic Greek?') is erroneous; but it seems clear from the other notices of his work that he enlarged upon the agreement between the Bible and Greek philosophy, and this conception he must have derived from Philo-Judaeus.

The few fragments of his work which are extant exhibit

<sup>11</sup> *c. Celsum* IV, 51.

<sup>12</sup> *Praep. Ev.* IX, 411 c.

<sup>13</sup> Clemens, *Strom.*, I, 150, and Euseb., *op. cit.*, XI, 10.

several correspondences with the Philonic interpretation of the Bible; e.g. he praises the verse in the first chapter of Genesis, 'The spirit of God was upon the waters,' because water represents the primal matter, which was filled with the spirit of God.<sup>14</sup> His theology, however, shows a striking descent from the monotheistic Platonism of Philo. With him the division of the Godhead into an unknowable Being, who is the first Unity, and an active Creator who is derived from him, a division that the Christian commentators foisted on Philo, is fully and dogmatically accomplished. The strong infusion of Pythagorean ideas which appears in Numenius, as in all the later neo-Platonists, led him to carry the division one step further, and find in the Godhead the holy triad, which exercised a potent fascination during the period.<sup>15</sup> 'The first God being in himself is simple, because being united throughout with himself, he can never be divided. God, however, the Second and Third is one; by being associated with matter, which is duality, he makes it one, but is himself divided by it.' The first God, who is the abstract impersonal Monas of Pythagorean speculation, is free from all manner of work; and the second God, who is the Creator, governing and travelling through the Cosmos, is conceived in two aspects: (1) in his divine exaltation; (2) in his creative operation; and each aspect is treated as a separate hypostasis. 'He is the self-maker of his own Idea, and he makes the world as its creator.' In this confused speculation, anticipating the mediaeval scholastic's argumentation, we see a mystical development of an idea found in Philo that the Logos is at once the *ἰδέα ἰδεῶν*, and

<sup>14</sup> Cp. Porphyry, *Antrum Nympharum*, ch. 10; Philo, *De M. Op.* 11.

<sup>15</sup> Fragment in Euseb., *op. cit.*, XI, 537 ff.

also the sum of forces which pervade the universe. The different attributes of the Hebraic God become the different powers of Alexandrian-Jewish speculation, the different hypostases of Syrian Platonism. Numenius converted Philo's poetry into dogma, and his fragments show how an unimaginative mind in an unintellectual era debased Platonism in adapting it to the less exalted religious needs of his day. The Eastern Platonists of the second century were led away by impersonal conceptions of the Godhead to divide it. And as Maximus remarked,<sup>16</sup> thinking, perhaps, of the contemporary interpretations of Plato, the vagueness of the poets was better than ἡ παρησία τῶν νεωτέρων about the divine nature, the bold cocksureness of the new philosophers.

Numenius was the founder of the Syrian school of Platonism, which through Porphyry was merged in the third century with the school of Alexandria. His works, according to Porphyry,<sup>17</sup> were constantly studied in the school of Plotinus. Amelius, one of the disciples, is said to have known all of them almost by heart. The deduction of a Platonic Trinity from the *Timaeus* did not, however, pass without challenge. Atticus, who was his contemporary, championed a truer Unitarian Platonism, and on the strength of this was claimed by the Church fathers as a witness of Plato's agreement with Jewish monotheism. Proclus mentions him as a neo-Pythagorean philosopher, and attacks him for identifying the τὰγαθόν of the *Timaeus* with the Δημιουργός (Creator), and thus combining the Creator with the supreme unity. 'But in Plato,' he says with perverse accuracy, 'the Creator is called good but

<sup>16</sup> Discourse on 'Whether poets or philosophers have spoken more truly'.

<sup>17</sup> *Life of Plotinus*, 3 and 14.

not *the* good, and Mind, too, is good, but the Good is the cause of all being and above the rest.' We know nothing of the personal history of Atticus, and no ancient writer suggests that he was a Jew. But he upheld in all its strictness the monotheistic principle, which must have been induced to some extent by Jewish influences, and he marked a religious reaction against the syncretic and eclectic tendencies which combined Aristotelian with Platonic ideas. His works were dissertations praising Plato and upbraiding Aristotle for their respective agreement and disagreement with the religious standpoint which makes knowledge of the one God the supreme Good.<sup>18</sup> Upon each part of philosophy he pointed out the fallacies (as he thought) of the one Greek philosopher, the truths of the other; and the argument is throughout one which might have been adopted by a faithful Jew. Thus Plato ascribes all to the divine providence or soul of the universe, Aristotle makes the divine sphere terminate at the moon, and severs the ruler of the universe from the divine government. Plato says the soul is incorporeal and immortal: Aristotle all but reduces the soul to a nullity (*μικρὸν δεῖν μηδὲν ἀποφῆναι τὴν ψυχὴν*), representing it as neither altogether body nor incorporeal. Plato unites the *νοῦς* and the *ψυχή*: Aristotle divides them and attaches immortality only to the *νοῦς*, and this amounts to a denial of a personal after-life. Plato maintains that the world was created: Aristotle regards it as eternal.

Atticus reveals that the question of creation was already a subject of dispute in the school, but he vehemently maintains his interpretation of Plato's teaching as to the

<sup>18</sup> Cp. Euseb., *op. cit.*, 509 a.

origin of the world by direct creation.<sup>19</sup> 'We pray that at this point we may not be opposed by those of our own household who choose to think that according to Plato also the world is uncreated. For they are bound in justice to pardon us if on reference to Plato's opinions we believe what he himself being a Greek has discoursed to us Greeks in clear language. "For God," says he, (*Timaeus* 30 A), "having formed the whole visible world not at rest but moving in an irregular and disorderly manner, brought it out of disorder into order, because He thought that this was altogether better than the other".' Atticus goes on to argue that the world though created may be imperishable if God so wills it. 'For there is no stronger bond for the preservation of things so created than the will of God. Nor is there any cause from without acting in antagonism with God.' Maimonides would have found a valuable ally for his controversy against the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world, had he known of the argument of Atticus. In another striking passage Atticus<sup>20</sup> contrasts the religious sympathies of Plato's theory of ideas with Aristotle's rationalistic rejection of it. The argument reads like an expansion of certain passages in Philo's writings, modified by the controversial religious zeal of the writer: 'The very main-spring and central point of the Platonic system,' he says, 'the order of noetic existences, has been rejected and trodden down and utterly scorned by Aristotle. For there is nothing of Plato left, if you take away these primal ruling notions. By this conception he most clearly excels all other thinkers. Imagining God to be the father, creator, lord, and protector of all things, and inferring from ex-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 801 ff. Gifford's translation.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 814; cp. Philo, *de Mundi Op.* 4.



perience that the artist must first conceive in mind what he is about to produce, and then with regard to the mental idea proceed to their likeness in concrete things—in this fashion he established the thoughts of God as prior to material things, the incorporeal noetic models of creation and subordinate causes of all particular things. But Aristotle, not being able to perceive that what is great and divine and noble in things requires a power of the like nature to bring it into being, puts complete confidence in his own subtle analytical power, which, while it was able to pierce earthly things and give adequate knowledge of them, did not allow him to acquire a vision of the true reality.'

Atticus illustrates a stage in the religious development of philosophy, which is still more intensified in the Patristic writers who were his contemporaries. For him monotheism is the touchstone of philosophical doctrines. By the Church fathers the ideas of the Greek thinkers are weighed in the balance of Biblical teaching: they are no longer valued according to their intrinsic or rational excellence, but only according to the closeness of their agreement with revealed truth. Philo's allegories belong to a different stage of thought, when the religious mind is so attracted by foreign philosophy that it endeavours to read it into the holy book. But in the second century the religious schools of the Christian fathers no longer admitted Greek philosophy to be of the same rank of truth as the Bible. It was accepted as corroborative evidence, rather than as a profounder meaning of the religious doctrine. The Jewish-Hellenistic school of Alexandria, of which we know no later exponent than Philo, passed insensibly into the Christian Catechetical school which was first founded in the Egyptian capital at the end of the

second century; and Philo passed out of the tradition of his own people to become the guide and teacher of a sect which departed further and further from the Jewish monotheism. The religious ideas of the Alexandrian Church fathers prevented them from maintaining the Philonic attitude either towards God or towards Platonism. They started with a fixed and unalterable belief in the division of the Godhead, and in a recent revelation of perfect truth. There was no question of finding beneath the words of the New Testament a profounder philosophy than they bore on their surface. For the words were themselves the language of the moral philosophers of the day, and in the eyes of the Christians a higher wisdom than any utterance of the Greek genius. Christianity, in the words of Eusebius,<sup>21</sup> was 'neither Hellenism nor Judaism, but a new and truer kind of divine philosophy'. Athenagoras, Clement, and Origen, therefore, do not seek, as Philo had sought, from Plato a science which should complement revealed truth, but only evidence of their own doctrines, to confirm their preconceived dogmatic position. At the same time they accept Philo's position about the Pentateuch that it is the depository of philosophical doctrines, and they extend his allegorical method to the prophets and Psalms. Philo may be said to bear to them the relation which Aristotle had to the mediaeval Scholastics; he is the master of method. But while they accept his teaching almost as a gospel, reproduce large sections of it in their own commentaries, borrow his style of composition, and follow his method implicitly, yet their spirit and their attitude are radically different. They regard Greek philosophy, and more especially Platonism, as

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, 16 d.

an imperfect image of wisdom, reflecting more or less clearly the doctrines of their religion, and largely derived, in so far as it is valid, from knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures. They revive and elaborate the charges of plagiarism invented by the Jewish apologists of the first century B. C. E., and tacitly dropped by Philo. In a curiously naïf passage Clement<sup>22</sup> claims that the Jews were the first people to speculate philosophically about the nature of reality, and the Greeks were their pupils, as is proved among other reasons by the fact that the doctrine of ideas which Philo had expounded in his allegories on Genesis was the prototype of Plato's idealism. Philosophy and revealed religion belonged to different grades of truth, and the one was only useful to compare with the other. For missionary purposes it was desirable to be able to show that the two were consistent. But none of the Patristic writers make any attempt to construct a religious philosophy in the sense which Philo had given to it. They have no special theory of the soul, of knowledge, or of ethics; their philosophy is almost exclusively theology, and in addition their philosophical is entirely subordinate to their dogmatic theology. Clement appropriately names his work *Στρωματεῖς* (patchwork), for it is a miscellany pure and simple, a collection of detached fragments of Greek works which tend towards monotheism. He openly professes himself an eclectic.<sup>23</sup> 'I call philosophy not the Platonic or the Aristotelian or the Stoic, but the eclectic system of all the true doctrines proclaimed by each of these schools, the whole of those which teach righteousness along with pious knowledge.' The attitude which he and Origen take up is more liberal than that of Tatian and

<sup>22</sup> Cp. Clemens, *Strom.* I, 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* i. 37.

Tertullian, who regarded Greek philosophy as the invention of the devil, and the marriage-gift of the fallen angels to the daughters of men ; but they feel bound to take account of that attitude. Philosophy, they urge apologetically, is a worthy recreation, an aid to faith ; like the stolen fire of Prometheus, it may be fanned into flame by the divine impulse, but at the same time it is the gift of the inferior angels, and much of it is Hebrew wisdom corrupted.<sup>24</sup> Clement was a Platonist with strict limitations ; and Origen in his controversy with the pagan Celsus began the open battle between reason and faith which was for centuries to destroy the independence of philosophy and break the continuity of civilization. Philo brought to the interpretation of the Greek philosophers a principle which was philosophical : his religious successors came to it with an outlook upon life which was not commensurate with philosophy. Professor Bigg, the historian of the Christian Platonists, points the contrast : 'In Philo's scheme knowledge was more than faith, and vicarious suffering has no meaning : such words as Atonement and Mediator could not mean to the Jewish Platonist what they meant to the Christian.' In other words, dogma supplanted reason as the standard of truth in the Christian school.

In the Patristic theology, however, we find a close correspondence with the ideas of Philo as they had been developed in the Syrian School of the second century. The primal unity is the 'Unconditional One', 'deified Zero', as Dr. Hort called it.<sup>25</sup> We know not what He is,' says Clement, 'but only what He is not : He is infinite, without limit, form and name ; and if we name Him we do so

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* I, 17 ; VIII, 1 ; V, *passim*.

<sup>25</sup> Introd. to Clem. *Strom.*, bk. VII.

improperly.' <sup>26</sup> He is *ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν μονάδα*. <sup>27</sup> The God whom we know is His son, the Logos, who is identified with Christ. All the attributes which Philo attached to his poetical Logos belong to it in its Christian guise, but with the difference that the Logos is now definitely a separate person; and Origen <sup>28</sup> explicitly declares he is not *insubstantivum*, to distinguish him from the Jewish Logos. He is the name and House of God, His consciousness, living wisdom, activity, light, and image, the High Priest, Melchizedek. He, in his turn, is connected with the world through his *ἐπίνοιαί*, which correspond with the creative and executive *δυνάμεις* (powers) of Philo; and these again constitute a third hypostasis, the 'Holy Spirit'.

In this way the theology of Hellenistic-Jewish monotheism was made to do service for Christian Trinitarianism. It needed only a change of spirit. The theological doctrines of Clement and Origen are still nearer the theology of the school of Plotinus than the doctrines of Numenius; and if we knew more of the history of the Christian school at Alexandria during the second century, we could say with greater certainty how much the one influenced the other. The Christian and Pagan schools were indeed in conscious antagonism during the third century, and that doubtless is the reason why Philo, the guide of the Christians, is not mentioned by any of the pupils of Plotinus. But, as we have seen, the works of the Syrian Platonist, Numenius, which on their face reveal the influence of Philo, were regularly read and commented upon in the school of Plotinus. Moreover, the father of the Pagan school and the master to whom Plotinus

<sup>26</sup> *Strom.* V, 11.

<sup>27</sup> *Paedagogus*, I, 8.

<sup>28</sup> *De Principiis*, I, 2.

ascribes the root of his system, Ammonius Saccas, was himself originally a Christian; and we are told that Origen was his pupil. The inference may be drawn from these facts that Jewish-Christian and Pagan philosophy at Alexandria during the second century to a large extent grew up together, and that there was no violent barrier between them. Differences of outlook, differences of method doubtless there were, but none the less the schools had much in common and sources which they shared. Foremost among those common sources was the religious Platonism of Philo: and in the ultimate development of ancient philosophy those teachings of the Jewish sage, albeit in a distorted form, played an important part. Hence, when in the Middle Ages the Jewish philosophers of Spain absorbed into their thought large elements of neo-Platonism, they were in part receiving back what had been derived from an earlier fusion of Jewish and external culture.