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Christianity and Other Religions, in the Graeco-Roman World¹

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FROM THE DAY of its birth, Christianity was faced with difficult and delicate problems in understanding its relationship with its mother faith, Judaism. On the one hand, its first members were all Jews, and it inherited from Judaism a large collection of sacred scriptures and an attitude of veneration towards them as oracles of God, spoken by prophets and wise men and lawgivers as they were moved by the Spirit of God. With and through these scriptures it inherited a conception of God as the One Living and True God—over against the gods of the nations, “so-called gods in heaven or on earth,” which were “nothing in the world,” “dumb idols,” (1 Cor. 8:4–7; 12:2), the products of the minds and hands of the men who worshipped them (Acts 17:29); or, at the most, the symbols of evil powers, created by God and in the last analysis subordinate to him, but hostile to him and to mankind (Eph. 6:12). It inherited also the Jewish conception of a particular historical society as the people of God, which he himself had formed and was forming to show forth his praise; and it looked upon the church as the continuing embodiment of that society, now enjoying the blessings of a new covenant which had been given through Christ in place of the old covenant given through Moses (Heb. 8:6–10:18). Its inheritance from Judaism included also the hope of a blissful future, when God would establish his rule over all the earth in a kingdom of righteousness and peace. We should also have to see as part of that inheritance the conception of God as Judge, to whom all men must one day render account of the deeds done in the flesh, whether good or evil; and the accompanying concept of God as merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, keeping mercy for thousands, delighting in mercy. The treasures of this Jewish inheritance could be listed in much greater detail, but most of them would fall within these four great areas: God, the People of God, the Sacred Scriptures, the Age to Come.

The attitude of Jesus to this inheritance—which was of course his own inheritance as a Jew—was at once critical and constructive. Basically, he took a positive attitude to the traditions of his people, declaring: “I came

1. This paper was prepared initially for a symposium on “Christianity and Other Religions,” held at the joint sessions of the Canadian Theological Society, the Canadian Society of Church History, the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, and the Canadian Section of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, McGill University, Montreal, May, 1961.

not to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). And the community of his immediate followers, the primitive church that formed around his apostles in Jerusalem after his death and resurrection, continued to regard itself as the people of the covenants, the heirs of the promises made to Abraham. The blessings of the new life in Christ were looked upon as the first fruits of the blessings which the God of Israel had promised to their fathers through the prophets. The oracles of God spoke of good things to come; the Law "had a shadow of good things to come" (Heb. 10:1). And now, at the end of the ages, Christ has been manifested as "high priest of good things that have come" (*tōn genomenōn agathōn*, Heb. 9:11). He was the substance, the body, of which the ritual requirements of the law had been so many shadows (Col. 2:17). His followers were living through the inauguration of the age of fulfilment.

Yet Jesus did not shrink from challenging the tradition at many points, and from setting his own "I say unto you" over against what had been said to the men of old. He kept company with very disreputable people; he exercised a strange freedom towards the observance of the Sabbath; he refused to allow any moral significance to the food laws; and he foretold that, in the coming Kingdom, men from the four quarters of the earth would sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to enjoy its felicity, while "the sons of the Kingdom"—men born into the privileged race of Israel—would be cast into outer darkness. The early church, following in his footsteps, found itself obliged to maintain his challenge to the established traditions of Israel at many points. Christians lived as Gentiles and not as Jews, even though for a generation they made every effort to remain as accepted members of the Jewish national community. The result was that for all that Christianity and Judaism had in common they were not linked in co-operation against the surrounding paganism, but were more and more driven into open conflict. Jesus was crucified; and without seeking to shift the responsibility for his execution from the Roman authorities (as do all our Evangelists), we must acknowledge that he was brought to his death with the connivance of the responsible leaders of Judaism and at their instigation, and with the approbation of the populace at large. In Jerusalem and Judaea, his followers were subject to sporadic persecution even during the earliest years; and after the fall of Jerusalem, the two faiths, mother and daughter, lived in open hostility. Christian Jews were expelled from the synagogues; and in the cities of the Diaspora, the Jews spurred on the authorities to persecution of the Christians.

Under these conditions, the dialogue between Christianity and Judaism continued. The Fourth Gospel reflects the terms of controversy of the late first century, rather than those of the life of Jesus or of the early church. Sabbath observance is still a particular point of dispute, but this and all such matters are incidental to the fundamental conflict over the Person of Christ. For the Christians, he is the Incarnate Logos, the Son of God, the Light and Life of the world. For Jews, this claim is the most shocking

blasphemy. For the Christians, the failure to acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God means that the Jews are repudiating the testimony of their own scriptures, which testify to him in every part. Moses himself, in whom they trust, will condemn them at the Judgment, for they do not believe his writings, in which he wrote of Jesus (John 5:45-47). The Jews may no longer be recognized as the people of God and the offspring of Abraham; their father is the devil, and they do his works. They profess to know God, but their profession is a lie, for it is God who gives honour to Jesus; and anyone who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him (John 8:39-55; 5:22-23).

For all this sharpness, the Christians had no intention of repudiating their Jewish inheritance. They denied the title of People of God to the Jews, and claimed it for themselves. The great body of the church firmly rejected every interpretation of its faith which rejected the Old Testament or denied that the God of Israel was also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The unity of God was the first Christian dogma, and stands at the head of every creed. The God of creation is also the God of redemption; the God who has now spoken in his Son is the same as he who spoke to the fathers by the prophets; the God of the gospel of Christ is also the God who gave the Law through Moses. The conversations with Judaism do not involve any debate over the authority of the ancient scriptures; this is common ground.

The debates are not always so acrimonious as those of the Fourth Gospel. Justin Martyr (*ca.* 150) represents the rabbi Tryphon as a courteous adversary with whom the questions at issue can be discussed calmly and reasonably. Some of Tryphon's companions laugh and jeer, till Justin rises to leave; but the rabbi sends off the two who have been offensive and the discussion proceeds amicably. The principal matters in dispute are clearly enough the Christian claims for Jesus, and the proper interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures which both parties recognize to be authoritative. Justin claims authority also for the words of Jesus, which "possess a terrible power in themselves and are sufficient to inspire those who turn aside from the path of rectitude with awe; while the sweetest rest is afforded those who make a diligent practice of them." But he undertakes to show that the writings of the prophets are sufficient to demonstrate the truth of the Christian gospel and the errors of Judaism, and the whole debate is conducted on the basis of the scriptures which Tryphon himself acknowledges.

Each is anxious to convert the other. Justin appeals to Tryphon: "If you have any concern for yourself and long for salvation and believe in God—seeing that you are no stranger to the matter—you may come to know God's Messiah, be initiated, and be happy." The rabbi smiles gently at the suggestion, tells Justin that he would have been wiser to stick to the Platonic philosophy than to be deceived by false doctrines and to become a follower of worthless men.

But now that you have forsaken God and put your hope in a man, what salvation is left for you? If, then, you will listen to me—I have already counted you a friend—be first of all circumcised, and then observe, as it is decreed in the Law, the sabbaths and the festivals and the new moons of God; and in a word, do all that is written in the Law; and then perhaps you will obtain mercy from God.²

Tryphon challenges the claim of Justin that Jesus is the Messiah.

Messiah [he asserts], if he has indeed been born, and exists somewhere, is unknown and is not himself aware that he is Messiah, and he has no power until Elijah comes and anoints him and makes him manifest to all. You people, accepting as true an empty rumour, forge a kind of Messiah for yourselves, and for his sake you are now perishing without heeding what you are about.

The learned rabbi puts no stock in the popular calumnies against the Christians, but he cannot understand how they can expect to receive good things from God when they do not obey his commandments about circumcision and the observance of holy days, but put their hopes in a man who was crucified, while they go on living after the manner of the heathen around them.³ He challenges Justin to prove first that Jesus is the Messiah, and then that he "existed as God before the ages, then that he submitted to be born and become man, yet that he is not man of man."⁴ Messiahship, as he understands it, does not involve any titles of divinity. Justin affirms that there is only one God, the God of Israel, the Maker of all things. "Answer me then," demands the rabbi, "how you can show that there is another God beside the Maker of all things; and then you must show how he submitted to be born of the Virgin."⁵ Justin is quite prepared to accept this challenge under both its aspects. He will undertake to show that the Old Testament itself gives ample testimony to all that the Christians claim for their Lord; he will undertake also to show, still from the scriptures which Tryphon himself acknowledges, that the laws of circumcision, of the sabbath and the feasts, and of the purificatory rituals are not necessary to salvation.

The continuing controversy with Judaism, coupled with the retention of the Old Testament, obliged the Christian teachers to interpret the ancient scriptures in ways which justified the rejection of many of the traditional practices of Judaism. At the same time, it impelled Christian theologians to advance more rapidly along paths which Hellenistic Judaism had already struck out, to show that the Old Testament was fundamentally in accord with all that was best in the religious philosophy of the Greeks. They enjoyed much greater freedom than such men as Philo could possibly claim for themselves, in that they were not obliged to justify Judaism as a way of life at the same time as they were attempting to interpret the

2. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 8.

3. *Ibid.*, 10.

4. *Ibid.*, 48.

5. *Ibid.*, 50

Jewish scriptures as documents of Hellenistic philosophy. In fact, the more freely they resorted to Hellenic or Hellenistic interpretations of the scriptures, the more conclusively they showed that the Jewish interpretations were wrong. Thus the controversy with Judaism over the true meaning of the scriptures actually favoured the acceptance of Hellenistic conceptions, and the notion that the doctrines of the Greek philosophers were in fact taught by the prophets and lawgivers of Israel. The Christian presentation thus made a double appeal: its teaching was in accord with Reason, as was shown by its agreement with the best thought of the Greeks; and at the same time, it was presented with all the authority of an ancient Revelation, as was shown by the testimony of the Law and the Prophets. The Graeco-Roman world of the time was eager for such a combination of authorities; for there had come to be a general lack of confidence in the powers of the unaided Reason to arrive at any sure apprehension of the truth, and an equally widespread willingness to believe that somewhere revelations of truth had been granted to ancient sages of the East—perhaps to Zoroaster, perhaps to “gymnosophists” of India, perhaps to Imhotep—why not, then, to Moses, the Lawgiver of the Hebrews?

The presence of Truth in the Greek philosophers was explained by the Christian teachers in two ways. Either the Greeks borrowed their doctrines from Moses, without acknowledging the debt; or, they had listened to the divine Logos, always active in the world as the light of men, but fully revealed only in Jesus Christ, the Logos made flesh. No one thought of the dialogues of Plato as inspired in any sense akin to that which was predicated of the scriptures; but Christian teachers took over the notion of Philo that Plato had actually read the works of Moses, had understood them (correctly, as the Christians now did) as allegories of a higher truth, and had taught this higher truth as his own philosophy. It is easy enough for us to see what lies behind this extraordinary theory. Philo, and the Christian theologians after him, first gave a Platonic interpretation to the books of the Law and then took it for granted that this was the only true and proper interpretation—the meaning intended by Moses himself. Educated Greeks of the time were inclined to treat the works of Homer in the same fashion. Since Moses was supposed to have written the books of the Law many centuries before Plato composed his dialogues, no one could dispute the priority of the Hebrew sage. The only possible interpretation of the presence of Platonism in the books of Moses, then, was that Plato had learned all his wisdom from the Lawgiver. This theory, artificial as it seems, opened the gates for the reception of Platonic doctrines into the fabric of Christian thought, and for Platonizing Stoicism, and eventually for Neoplatonism. In the words of Aimé Puech:

The theory of pagan borrowings from Scripture permitted the Apologists to exhibit a certain disdainful generosity towards Hellenism; above all, it permitted them to exploit the treasures of Hellenism without scruple. They accustomed themselves to the firm refusal to condemn the Greek thinkers *en bloc*.

The distinction between what ought to be rejected and what ought to be preserved was delicate, but the margin could be given to indulgence.⁶

Naturally, there were wide differences of opinion over what elements in the Greek treasury could be received and incorporated into the structure of Christian thought. At the one end of the spectrum we have the uncompromising hostility of a Tertullian, with his protest: "What part has Athens in Jerusalem?"; which to him is the equivalent to St. Paul's: "What fellowship has light with darkness, or what concord can there be between Christ and Belial?" At the other end, we have the generous mind of Clement of Alexandria, who will claim that Philosophy was the tutor given by God to the Greeks, to lead them to Christ, as the Law was to the Hebrews. Yet even Tertullian will claim that all Christian believers, even the illiterate, are "philosophers"; by which he means that they practice the virtues which are acknowledged by all the schools—Cynic, Stoic, Platonist alike—as essential to the good life.

Justin Martyr appears to be first of the Christian teachers to make use of the other line of approach: the theory that the Logos of God, which has brought to men the fulness of truth through its incarnation in Jesus Christ, has always and everywhere been present in the world as the spirit of revelation; and he boldly claims as Christians all those who have lived *meta logou*—with Logos (with Reason, or, with the Word).

Each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the seminal Logos. . . . Whatever things were rightly said among all men are the property of us Christians. . . . For all the writers (philosophers and poets) were able to see realities darkly through the sowing of the implanted Logos that was in them.⁷

That is not to say that they are reliable guides.

Whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Logos; but since they did not know the whole of the Logos, which is Christ, they often contradicted themselves.⁸

In this spirit, the Christians were able to draw freely, yet critically, from the springs of Greek philosophy, appropriating whatever they found compatible with the fundamental principles of the faith.

So it came about that the Apologists of the second century opened the way for that alliance of Christianity with Greek philosophy which was to exert profound and lasting influences on the whole development of Christian thought. But the first contacts between the Gospel and the Graeco-Roman world were not made in the realm of philosophy. Christianity did not come into the Hellenistic world as a system of philosophy competing with the schools of Athens and Rhodes, as a rival of the Academy and the Stoa. It came as religion, calling men to abandon the worship of all other gods and to serve the living and true God and him alone. We must now turn

6. A. Puech, *Les Apologistes grecs du IIe siècle de notre ère* (Paris: Hachette, 1912), p. 37.

7. Justin, *Apol.* II, 13.

8. *Ibid.*, 10.

our attention to the very difficult problem of the relations between Christianity and the religions which were practised in the Graeco-Roman world.

Our discussion must be limited to the forms of religion which retained or found for themselves a footing in the Greek-speaking world. The ancient religions of Egypt and Syria will concern us only in so far as they were transplanted into Greek soil, and came to have an international following; and the religions of the border regions of the Empire will not concern us at all. Even with this limitation, the picture of religious life in the Hellenistic world is infinitely complex and incredibly hard to draw. The old and the new, the traditional cults of the Greek states and the Oriental mysteries, were carried on side by side for centuries.

It may be granted that the Olympian gods had lost much of their power over the spirits of men, but they were by no means ready to disappear from the scene. The public religion of the Greek cities was maintained with little change, and in some places with greater splendour than ever. Athena continued to be honoured with her annual and quinquennial processions, and with gifts of new dresses woven for her by chosen Athenian maidens; and these rites were to be celebrated for another four hundred years. The store-chambers of Paestum (the ancient Poseidonia) just south of Naples show that Hera was still receiving votive offerings in the second and third centuries of our era. The Hellenistic Age saw the building of the greatest altar ever known in the ancient world—the altar of Zeus at Pergamum, decorated with the marvellous frieze which depicted the battle of the gods and the Titans, built to celebrate the victory of Attalus I over the Galatae in the third century B.C. This is in all probability the “throne of Satan” of Rev. 2:13; costly sacrifices of bulls continued to be offered upon it long after the kingdom of Pergamum had ceased to be. Undoubtedly, cultivated circles had lost all faith in the ancient gods, but it would seem that the masses of the people still believed in them, and the Apologists attack them as if they were still serious foes to Christian faith.

But even though the ancient cults were still a potent force, a still greater significance must be attached to the new forms of religious life which flourished in the world of Hellenistic and Roman times. Alongside the state religions, we have to take note of the proliferation of private societies formed for the worship of particular gods, especially for Dionysos. Largely through the medium of such cult-groups, a number of Oriental religions—Egyptian, Syrian, and Anatolian—gained a footing in the Greek world and spread westwards into Italy and Gaul and Britain. We see an increasing devotion to certain Saviour-gods, mighty benefactors of mankind who had once lived as men on earth and had been exalted to heaven at death, with limitless power to aid their worshippers—gods such as Heracles and Asklepios (better known to us under their Roman names as Hercules and Aesculapius). There was a certain movement eastwards on the part of Italian deities, carried by the inhabitants of Roman colonies, so that Silvanus and Liber, Diana and Minerva, and Mars and Venus have their

shrines and altars at Philippi and Corinth. Great importance attaches also to the ruler-cult, especially the cult of the Emperors, the deified Caesars, and the goddess Roma; this was by no means a mere political device for promoting the loyalty of subject peoples, but it was in substance a recognition that a divine power was embodied in the ruler, and an expression of hope and thanksgiving towards one who could promote peace and prosperity. In the long run, the most enduring and persuasive of all the new movements was the astral religion—the worship of the heavenly bodies as divine beings, and the pseudo-science of astrology which went with this. The ancient gods of Greece and Rome now had to share their meed of adoration with a multitude of strangers—the Phrygian Sabazios, who was even identified at times with the God of Israel, partly because he too was called “the Most High,” partly by reason of the cult-title Sabaoth; the Egyptian triad of Sarapis, Isis, and Horus-Harpocrates; the Great Mother in her manifold forms—the Phrygian Cybele, Agdistis, Ma, the Ephesian Artemis, the Syrian Atargatis; the Great Gods of Samothrace; the Persian deities Ormuzd and Mithras and (above all) Anahita; and the ancient Hittite deity Teshub, a smith-god worshipped by the ironworking Chalybes even before the Hittites came on the scene, who was destined to win an astounding popularity as Jupiter Dolichenus—even Jupiter Optimus Maximus Sol Invictus Dolichenus—and to see his altars erected all over the Empire, even as far west as Hadrian’s Wall. The Christianity of the early centuries, like the Christianity of today, was called to preach its gospel in a religiously plural world.

Christianity began as a mission of Jews to Jews, but within a single generation it found itself directing its main efforts to Gentiles—to the world of this exceedingly complex fabric of religions, with their gods many and lords many. It certainly did not occur to Christian missionaries to consider what the gospel might have in common with any of these religions, or to think in terms of syncretism or of any kind of friendly rivalry. They summoned their hearers to turn to God from idols, to serve the one living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven. St. Paul will remind his Corinthian converts of their pagan past, as of something wholly alien to their life in Christ. “You know how, when you were still pagan, you were swept off to those dumb heathen gods, however you happened to be led” (1 Cor. 12:2, NEB). The author of Ephesians will be even more explicit. “Remember then your former condition,” he writes, “you, Gentiles as you are outwardly—you were at that time separate from Christ, strangers to the community of Israel, outside God’s covenants and the promise that goes with them. Your world was a world without hope and without God” (Eph. 2:11–12, NEB). St. Paul and St. Barnabus, when they are taken for Zeus and Hermes at Lystra, refuse with horror the sacrifice that the priest of Zeus is about to offer, and tell the people: “The good news we bring tells you to turn from these follies to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them” (Acts 14:15).

Despite this overt hostility, there were in fact elements in the teeming religious life of the ancient world which had unsuspected affinities with Christianity, and even within the New Testament we find that they are beginning to make their weight felt within the church. There are indications that Gentile converts to Christianity were not easily induced to adopt the Jewish attitude of intolerance. Their own background had not prepared them for the doctrine of a "jealous" God who would by no means share his glory with another, and some of them—perhaps more than we commonly imagine—were ready to worship old gods and new together. Most of the ancient religions were tolerant; almost every great temple made room for shrines of other gods along with the deity to whom the temple was dedicated, as *sunnaoi theoi*. St. Paul is obliged to warn his converts that they must not go one day to the table of the Lord Jesus and sit down the next at the table of the Lord Sarapis. "I will not have you become partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. Can we defy the Lord? Are we stronger than he?" (1 Cor. 10:20–22, NEB). The tendency to syncretism was there, and was not easily or quickly—or ever entirely—suppressed.

Historically, indeed, Christianity has always been a syncretistic religion, and has defied the efforts of its theologians to keep it free of accretions from other faiths. The freedom with which Christian art borrowed motifs of cardinal importance from the creations of Greek and Oriental sculpture is a sufficient token of the general mind of the church. Thus the great Olympian Zeus of Pheidias provided the model for Christian representations of God and of Christ Enthroned; the Hellenistic statues of Hermes Kriophoros were sometimes taken over outright for images of Christ the Good Shepherd; and, above all, the whole iconography of the Madonna and Child is derived from the imagery of the Isis-cult—the pictures and statues of Isis with the child Horus in her arms. The nimbus which surrounds the heads of Christ, the Virgin, and the Saints on icons and ivories is drawn from the *Hvareno* of Persian reverence for the Great King, after its adoption by Diocletian into the insignia of the Roman Emperor as the divine world-emperor, the manifest presence of the Unconquered Sun. From some angles and to some degree, these phenomena reflect a certain paganizing of Christianity, and it is even possible to argue that the cult of the Blessed Virgin is in many respects little more than the adoption of the Hellenistic goddess-cults, already showing signs of fusing into the cult of Isis *Myrionymos* ("of ten thousand names"), into the fabric of Catholic Christianity; and that the cults of saints are little more than the return of polytheism by the back door. This is a gross oversimplification, for in fact devotion to the Virgin and to the Saints has never threatened the unity of God in Catholic thought and worship. But it must be acknowledged that, both in general and in a multitude of detailed observances, these cults do owe a great deal to the forms of religious life of the Hellenistic world in which the Church grew to maturity.

But there were affinities of a subtler and deeper kind than these. It is not too much to say that the very idea of the Catholic Church has affinities with the widespread Hellenistic feeling of the unity of mankind. All the great schools of the time are marked by the refusal to be concerned with racial, national, and social divisions among men. After the conquests of Alexander, the city state and the national state had little meaning; and there was a widespread longing for Concord—*Homonoia*—for a true unity of mind and heart embracing all mankind. Stoicism, by far the most vigorous philosophy of the age, kept before its adherents “Zeno’s vision of a world in which all men should be members one of another, citizens of one State without distinction of race or institutions, subject only to and in harmony with the Common Law immanent in the universe, and united in one social life not by compulsion but by their own willing consent, or (as he put it) by Love.”⁹ There is a clear kinship between this Stoic conception, with its correlated individualism and universalism, and the Christian vision of a community in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—a true City of God whose citizenship is open to all men of faith; and in correlation with this, its concern with the individual—the person—not as Jew or Gentile, not as slave or master, but as a human being, burdened with sin, made of flesh, doomed to death, but invited by the grace of God to become a son of God, a saint, and an heir of eternal life. There is much here that goes beyond anything that Hellenistic religion or philosophy had to offer; but the general pattern, the correlation of individualism and universalism, is characteristically Hellenistic and not in the least Jewish. The Jews were, in fact, the most reluctant of all peoples to yield to the spirit of cosmopolitanism which was spreading over the world; and strong elements of the Jerusalem church fought bitterly against every effort to abolish national and racial distinctions in the church at large. It might even be argued that the ultimate repudiation of the gospel by the Jewish people stemmed from this unwillingness to be absorbed into a catholic community which would admit of no racial distinction or privilege; while the Christian advance among the Gentiles was aided by the spirit of catholicity, which seemed to give actuality to the Hellenistic vision of one world, united in mind and heart, and animated by the one spirit which was also the Spirit of the universe itself.

Examples and illustrations could be multiplied almost without end. No one will deny that Christianity sprang up as a shoot from the stock of Judaism, and that it was quickly transplanted into the soil of Hellenistic culture—a soil to which the parent stock itself had become in some measure accustomed. It will be agreed, likewise, that the definitive shape which the new faith assumed in the Catholic orthodoxy of the fourth and fifth centuries issued from a fusion of Jewish with Greek elements, with strong and significant influences from Egypt, Syria, Babylonia, and Persia, as

9. W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (2 vols., Cambridge: University Press, 1948), Vol. I, p. 147f.

these had already established themselves in the Graeco-Roman world. We should also have to allow for certain Roman influences, especially in the domain of law, from the time of Tertullian and Cyprian on. The wide differences of opinion arise over the question of how much of this development was legitimate, and how much of it ought to be regarded as a debasement and corruption of the pristine purity of our religion.

The question is not limited to the sphere of ancient history. It is raised again whenever Christianity comes into contact as a missionary movement with other religions which are themselves the fruits of advanced cultures. It must be frankly recognized that there are no generally accepted criteria for judging the legitimacy of particular developments, at least for those who are neither prepared to agree that anything which Rome has sanctioned is legitimate, nor to assume that anything which cannot claim the sanction of the New Testament is *ipso facto* illegitimate. If the church is to be true to her own past, she can never look upon herself as one of a number of religious options in a world of multiple faiths. We know that there are gods many and lords many, but for us there is one God, the Father; and one Lord, Jesus Christ; and there is no salvation for us or for others in any other name that is named. We cannot gather with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists in a world parliament of religions to form a common front against secularism or materialism, as if everything that is called "religion" were for some reason better than irreligion—a very questionable proposition indeed! At the same time, we cannot read our own history without coming to feel that a church which wins for its Lord the allegiance of peoples who now follow other faiths will receive as well as give, and will be radically transformed as her gospel plants deep roots in the soil of other cultures. Arabia and Africa and Asia will contribute of their treasures, as Greece and Rome and the worlds of the Teuton and the Slav have long since done; and we must expect that the catholic church of the future, more truly catholic than ever, will pass through transformations as great as those that marked the change from the Palestinian churches of the first century to the great structure of the imperial church of the fourth century. And it seems likely that we shall never have simple rules for determining what changes can be admitted without endangering the substance of the faith, or what will bring enrichment. We shall always have to strive, under the guidance of the Spirit which Christ has promised, to be loyal to our one Master, as much in the welcome which admits new treasures as in the steadfastness which holds fast to the old.