

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

*THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.*

IX.

NEO-BABYLONIAN THEORIES—JEWISH AND APOCRYPHAL  
IDEAS

THE inadequacy of previous attempts to explain the Resurrection of Jesus out of natural grounds is convincingly shown by the rise of a new mythological school, which, discarding, or at least dispensing with, theories of vision and apparition, proposes to account for the "Resurrection-legend"<sup>1</sup>—indeed for the whole New Testament Christology<sup>1</sup>—by the help of conceptions imported into Judaism from Babylonia and other parts of the Orient (Egyptian, Arabian, Persian, etc.). The rise of this school is connected particularly with the brilliant results of exploration in the East during the last half century, and with the consequent vast enlargement in our knowledge of peoples and religions of remote antiquity. The mythologies of these ancient religions—the study of comparative mythology generally—puts, it is thought, into the hands of scholars a golden key to open locks in Old and New Testament religion which have hitherto remained closed to the most painstaking efforts of the learned.<sup>2</sup> The prestige which this new Babylonian school has already gained through its novelty and boldness of speculation entitles it to a consideration which, perhaps, if only its own merits were regarded, would hardly be accorded to it.

It is well to apprehend at the outset the position taken up by this revolutionary Babylonian school. It is the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des Neuen Testaments*, pp. 64, 89–95.

<sup>2</sup> Gunkel, p. 78: "Already in the Old Testament there are mysterious portions [he instances the "servant of Jehovah" in Isaiah] which hitherto have defied all attempts at interpretation," etc.

fact that myths of resurrection, though in vague, fluctuating form, to which the character of historical reality cannot for a moment be attached, are not infrequent in Oriental religions.<sup>1</sup> They are traceable in later even more than in earlier times, and specially are found in connection with the Mysteries. The analogies pressed into the service of their theories by scholars are often sufficiently shadowy,<sup>2</sup> but it is admitted that the myths used in the Mysteries and related festivals, whether Egyptian, Persian, Phrygian, Syrian, or Greek, had all a certain family likeness. They all turn, as Boissier remarks in his *La Religion Romaine*, on the death and resurrection of a god, and, in order still more to inflame the religious sensibility, in all the tales the god is loved by a goddess, who loses and refinds him, who mourns over his death, and ends by receiving him back to life. "In Egypt, it is Isis, who seeks Osiris, slain by a jealous brother; in Phoenicia, it is Astarte or Venus, who weeps for Adonis; on the banks of the Euxine, it is Cybele, the great mother of the gods, who sees the beautiful Attis die in her arms."<sup>3</sup> Older than any of these, and, on the new theory, the parent of most of them, is the often-told Babylonian myth of Ishtar and Tammuz.<sup>4</sup> All, in truth, are nature-myths, telling the same story of the death of nature in winter, and its revival in spring, or of the conquest of light by darkness, and the return of brightness with the new sunrise.<sup>5</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> For examples, see Cheyne, *Bible Problems*, pp. 119-22; Farnell, *The Evolution of Religion*, pp. 60-82; Frazer, *Golden Bough*, ii. pp. 115-168; Zimmern in Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 387 ff., 643.

<sup>2</sup> As when Zimmern connects this idea with the Babylonian god Marduk; or Cheyne (*ut supra*, p. 119) instances the myth of Osiris, "who after a violent death lived on in the person of his son Horus!"

<sup>3</sup> Boissier, i. p. 408.

<sup>4</sup> See the story in full in Sayce's Hibbert Lectures, *The Religion of the Ancient Babylonians*, Lect. IV., "Tammuz and Ishtar."

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gunkel, *ut supra*, p. 77; A. Jeremias, *Babylonisches im N.T.*, pp. 8 ff., 11, 19, etc.

in the Mysteries an allegorical significance was read into these myths, and they became the instruments of a moral symbolism, in which faint resemblances to Christian ideas can be discerned.

All this is old and tolerably familiar. But the Babylonian school goes much further. It is no longer parallels merely which are sought between the Gospel narratives and pagan myths, but an actual derivation is proclaimed. Ancient Babylonia had developed a comprehensive world-theory of which its mythology is the imaginative expression. These myths spread into all countries, receiving in each local modification; Israel, which came into contact with, and in Canaan deeply imbibed, this culture, could not escape being affected by it. Winckler, and in a more extreme form Jensen, find in Babylonian mythology the key not only to the so-called legends of the patriarchs, of Moses and Aaron, and of the Judges, but to the histories of Samuel, of Saul and David, of Elijah and Elisha. Now, by Gunkel, Cheyne, Jensen, and others, the theory is extended to the New Testament. Filtering down through Egypt, Canaan, Arabia, Phoenicia, Persia, there came, it is alleged, myths of virgin-births, of descents into Hades, of resurrections and ascensions; these, penetrating into Judaism, became attached to the figure of the expected Messiah—itsself of old-world derivation—and gave rise to the idea that such and such traits would be realized in Him. Dr. Cheyne supposes that there was a written “pre-Christian sketch” of the Messiah, which embodied these features.<sup>1</sup> One form of the Jewish conception is seen in the picture of the woman clothed with the sun in Revelation xii. More definitely, the form which the conception assumed in Christian circles is seen in the legends of Christ’s birth and infancy, in the incidents and miracles

<sup>1</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 128.

of His ministry, in the three days and nights of His burial in the tomb, and in the stories of His Resurrection and Ascension. It is the mythical theory of Strauss over again, with the substitution of Babylonian mythology for Old Testament prophecy as the foundation of an imaginary history of Jesus.

The shapes which this theory assumes in the hands of the writers who advocate it are naturally various. A few instances may be given.

Dr. Cheyne goes far enough in assuring us that "there are parts of the New Testament—in the Gospels, in the Epistles, and in the Apocalypse—which can only be accounted for by the newly-discovered fact of an Oriental syncretism which began early and continued late. And the leading factor in this is Babylonian." Among the beliefs the "mythic origin" of which is thus accounted for, is "the form of the belief in the Resurrection of Christ."<sup>1</sup> His "pre-Christian sketch" theory is alluded to below.

Gunkel's position is not dissimilar, and is wrought out in more detail. Judaism and Christianity, he holds, are both examples of syncretism in religion.<sup>2</sup> Both are deeply penetrated by ideas diffused through the Orient, and derived chiefly from Babylonia. He states his thesis thus: "That in its origin and shaping (*Ausbildung*) the New Testament religion stood, in weighty, indeed essential points, under the decisive influence of foreign religions, and that this influence was transmitted to the men of the New Testament through Judaism."<sup>3</sup> He traces the penetrative influence of Oriental conceptions in Judaism, with special respect to the doctrine of the resurrection;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bible Problems*, pp. 19, 117.

<sup>2</sup> *Ut supra*, pp. 34, 117. Judaism must be named "Eine synkretistische Religion." So, "Das Christentum ist eine synkretistische Religion."

<sup>3</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 31-35.

finds in it the origin of the Messianic idea, and of the Christology of St. Paul and St. John ;<sup>1</sup> and derives from it the Gospel narratives of the Infancy,<sup>2</sup> the Transfiguration,<sup>3</sup> the Resurrection from the dead on the third day,<sup>4</sup> the appearance to the disciples on the way to Emmaus,<sup>5</sup> the Ascension,<sup>6</sup> the origin of Sunday as a Christian festival,<sup>7</sup> etc.

A. Jeremias, from a believing standpoint, criticizes this position of Gunkel's, and the denial of the absoluteness of Christianity connected with it.<sup>8</sup> Sharing the same general view that "the Israelitish-Judaic background" of the New Testament writings "is no other than the Babylonian, or better, the old Oriental background,"<sup>9</sup> he sees in the Babylonian mythology a pre-ordained providential preparation for the Gospel history and the Christian religion, the essential truths of which he accepts.<sup>10</sup> The resurrection of a god formed part of the universally-spread mythus.<sup>11</sup>

Everything hitherto attempted, however, in the application of this theory to the Biblical history is hopelessly left behind in the latest book which has appeared on the subject—Professor Jensen's *Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur*, of which, as yet, only the first volume has appeared. But this extends to 1,030 pages. It treats

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 24-5, 64, 89-95. "The form of the Messiah belongs to this original mythological material" (p. 24).

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 65-70.

<sup>3</sup> P. 71 (likewise the Baptism and Temptation narratives, pp. 70-1).

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 76-83.

<sup>5</sup> P. 71.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 71-2.

<sup>7</sup> Pp. 73-76.

<sup>8</sup> *Bab. im N.T.*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> P. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Pp. 6, 46, 48, etc. The heathen myths are "Schattenbilder" (prefigurations, foreshadowings) of the Christian verities.

<sup>11</sup> Pp. 8-10. Jeremias has, however, little to say on the application to the Resurrection of Christ. He makes much more of the Virgin-birth (pp. 46 ff.). He says that no one who understands the circle of conceptions of the ancient Orient will doubt that Isa. vii. 14, in the sense of the author, really means a "virgin" (p. 47).

of the origins of the legends of the Old Testament patriarchs, prophets, and deliverers, and of the New Testament legend of Jesus, embracing all the incidents of His history—birth, life, miracles, death, and Resurrection. All, as the title suggests, are treated as transformations and elaborations of the old Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh and Eabani. We have Abraham-*Gilgamesh*, Jacob-*Gilgamesh*, Moses-*Gilgamesh*, Joshua-*Gilgamesh*, Samson-*Gilgamesh*, Samuel-*Gilgamesh*, Saul-*Gilgamesh*, David-*Gilgamesh*, Solomon-*Gilgamesh*, Elijah-*Gilgamesh*, Elisha-*Gilgamesh*, etc. With endless iteration the changes are rung on a few mythical conceptions; personages are blended, and attributes and incidents are transferred at will from one to another; the most far-fetched and impossible analogies are treated as demonstrations. The basis being laid in the Old Testament, the stories of John the Baptist and Jesus are then affiliated to the Gilgamesh myths through their supposed Old Testament parallels. For instance, the Resurrection of “Jesus-*Gilgamesh*” is supposed to be suggested by such incidents as the revival of the dead man cast into the grave of Elisha, on touching the bones of the prophet,<sup>1</sup> and the removal of the bones of Saul<sup>2</sup> and Samson<sup>3</sup> from their respective tombs!<sup>4</sup> “Incredible such trifling,” one is disposed to exclaim. Not incredible, but the newest and truest “scientific” treatment of history, on the most approved “religionsgeschichtliche” methods, thinks Jensen himself. The result, at least, in this author’s learned pages, is the removal of the last particle of historicity from the life of Jesus in the Gospels. Such a person as Jesus of Nazareth “never existed”—“never lived.”<sup>5</sup> “The Jesus-legend is an Israelitish

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xiii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. xxi. 12-14.

<sup>3</sup> Judges xvi. 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Gilgamesch-Epos*, p. 923; cf. pp. 471, 697.

<sup>5</sup> P. 1026.

*Gilgamesh*-legend,"<sup>1</sup> attached to some person of whom we know absolutely nothing—neither time nor country.<sup>2</sup> "This Jesus has never walked the earth, has never died on earth, because He is actually *nought* but an Israelitish *Gilgamesh*—*nought* but a counterpart (*Seitenstück*) to Abraham, to Moses, and to innumerable other forms of the legend."<sup>3</sup>

It is needless to confront a reasoner like Jensen, confident in his multiplied proofs (?) that the Gospel history is throughout simply a *Gilgamesh*-legend, with the testimony of St. Paul. Everything that St. Paul has to tell of Jesus in his four accepted Epistles (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians) belongs with the highest probability to the *Gilgamesh*-legend.<sup>4</sup> True, St. Paul tells how he abode fifteen days with St. Peter at Jerusalem, and then saw, and doubtless spoke with St. James, the Lord's brother; and again how fourteen years later he met this same brother at Jerusalem. That is, he met the brother of this perfectly legendary character.<sup>5</sup> Jensen's reply is simple. Since the Jesus of the Gospels and of the Epistles never existed, St. Paul could not have done what he describes. If these notices actually come from him, "the man either tells a falsehood, or he has been mystified in a wonderful way in Jerusalem."<sup>6</sup> It is a suspicious circumstance that St. Paul has to confirm his statement about seeing St. James with an oath.<sup>7</sup> It adds to the doubt that in 1 Corinthians xi., in its present form, this same St. Paul is found declaring that he received the quite mythical account of the institution of the Lord's Supper as a revelation of the Lord!<sup>8</sup> "The ground here sinks beneath our feet."<sup>9</sup>

Jensen is an extremist, and his book may be regarded

<sup>1</sup> P. 1024.

<sup>2</sup> P. 1026.

<sup>3</sup> P. 1029.

<sup>4</sup> P. 1027.

<sup>5</sup> P. 1028.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> P. 1029.

as the *reductio ad absurdum* of a theory which, before him, had been getting cut more and more away from the ground of historical fact. It is to that ground the endeavour must be made to bring it back. The Resurrection of Jesus, it has already been shown, is a fact which rests on historical evidence. What has the theory just described to say to this evidence? It is a theory, obviously, which may be applied in different ways. It may be applied, e.g., to explain special *traits* in the narratives without denying the general facts of a death, a burial, and subsequent appearances of Jesus. It may be combined with a vision theory, and used, as indeed in part it is, by A. Meyer<sup>1</sup> and Professor Lake,<sup>2</sup> to explain how the stories of these appearances came to take on their present form. Or, treating the whole account of the Resurrection as mythical, it may give itself no concern with the facts, and simply seek to account for the origin of the legend.

It is probably doing the theory no injustice to say that, in the hands of its chief exponents, it is the latter point of view which rules. There is no necessity for discussing the empty tomb, or the reality of Christ's appearances. Enough to show that the history, as we have it, is a deposit of mythological conceptions. Gunkel, e.g., excuses himself from discussion of the origin of faith in the Resurrection,<sup>3</sup> and confines himself to elucidating the form of the legend. Jensen, as just seen, regards the whole as a purely mythological growth. Cheyne has nearly as little to say on the historical basis. If this view be adopted, it cuts belief in the Resurrection away from the ground of history altogether, and it might be enough to reply to it—the history is *there*, and it is utterly impossible, by any

<sup>1</sup> *Die Auferstehung Christi*, 184–5, 353–4.

<sup>2</sup> *Resur. of Jesus Christ*, pp. 260–3.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 76–7.

legerdemain of the kind proposed, to get rid of it. You do not get rid of facts by simply proposing to give an artificial mythological explanation of them. The Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles still stand, as containing the well-attested accounts which the Church of Apostolic days had to give of its own origin. These accounts had not the remotest relation to Gilgamesh epics, nature-myths of Egyptian, Greek, or Persian Mysteries, or pagan speculations of any kind, but were narratives of plain facts, known to the whole Church, and attested by Apostles and others who were themselves eye-witnesses of most of the things which they related. It was the fact that on the Friday the Lord was publicly crucified, and died; that He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa, in presence of many spectators; that on the morning of the third day—"the first day of the week"—the tomb was visited by holy women, who found it empty, and received the message that Jesus had risen, as He said; that on the same day He appeared to individual disciples (Mary, St. Peter, the disciples going to Emmaus), and, in the evening, to the body of the disciples (the eleven); that afterwards there were other appearances which the Evangelists and St. Paul recount; that, after forty days, He was taken from them up to heaven. The attempts to break down this history have been studied in previous chapters, and proof has been given that these attempts have failed.

Now, in lieu of the history, and as a new discovery, there is offered us this marvellous mythological construction, by which *all* history, and most previous theories of explanation as well, are swept into space. In dealing with it as a rival theory, not of the origin of belief in the Resurrection, for that it can hardly be said to touch, but of the Gospel story of the Resurrection, it must in frank-

ness be declared of it that it labours under nearly every possible defect which a theory of the kind can have. This judgment it is necessary, but not difficult, to substantiate.

1. One thing which must strike the mind about the theory at once is the *baselessness* of its chief assumptions. Nothing need be said here of the general astral Babylonian hypothesis with which it starts, or of the assumed universal diffusion of this astral theory throughout the East. That must stand or fall on its own merits.<sup>1</sup> Nor need the traces of the influence of Oriental symbolism in Old Testament prophecy, or in Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic, be denied, if such really can be established. But what is to be said of the allegation on the correctness of which the application to the New Testament depends, of a wholesale absorption of Babylonian mythology by the Jewish nation, and the crystallization of this mythology round the idea of the Messiah in Jewish popular thought in pre-Christian times? What proof worthy of the name can be given of such an assumption? Dr. Cheyne's form of the theory, already referred to, had best be stated in his own words. "The four forms of Christian belief," he says, "which we have been considering are the Virgin-birth of Jesus Christ, His descent into the nether world, His Resurrection, and His Ascension. On the ground of facts supplied by archæology, it is plausible to hold that all these arose out of a pre-Christian sketch of the life, death, and exaltation of the expected Messiah, itself ultimately derived from a widely current mythic tradi-

<sup>1</sup> Winckler's theory on this subject is still the subject of much dispute among scholars (cf. Lake, *Resur. of Jesus Christ*, pp. 260-2). Prof. Lake says on its application to Scripture: "The difficulty is to decide how far this theory is based on fact, and how far it is merely guess-work" (p. 262). For a popular statement of Winckler's theory, see his *Die Babylonische Kultur in ihren Beziehungen zur unarigen* (1902), and in criticism of Winckler and Jeremias, E. König, "*Altorientalische Weltanschauung*" und *Altes Testament*.

tion respecting a solar deity.”<sup>1</sup> And earlier, “The Apostle Paul, when he says (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4) that Christ died and that He rose again ‘according to the Scriptures,’ in reality points to a pre-Christian sketch of the life of Christ, partly—as we have seen—derived from widely-spread non-Jewish myths, and embodied in Jewish writings.”<sup>2</sup> With this drapery it is assumed that the figure of Jesus of Nazareth was clothed. But where is the faintest trace of evidence of such a pre-Christian Jewish sketch of the Messiah, embracing Virgin-birth, Resurrection, and Ascension? It is nothing but an inferential conjecture from the Gospel narratives themselves, eked out by allusions to myths of deaths and resurrections of gods in other religions. These, as said above, are, in their origin, nature-myths. The Resurrection of Jesus was no nature-myth, but an event which happened three days after His Crucifixion, in an historical time, and in the case of an historical Personage. Parallels to *such* an event utterly fail.<sup>3</sup>

2. The baselessness of the foundation of the theory is only equalled by the *arbitrariness* of the methods by which a connexion with the Gospel story is sought to be bolstered up. Specimens of Professor Jensen’s reasonings have been given above, and no more need be said of them. But a like arbitrariness, if in less glaring form, infects the whole theory. In the Protean shapes assumed

<sup>1</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 128; cf. note xi. p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> P. 113. Gunkel may be compared, *ut supra*, pp. 68-9, 78-9.

<sup>3</sup> Gunkel admits that “this belief in a dying and rising Christ was not present in official Judaism in the time of Jesus”; but thinks it may have lurked “in certain private circles” (*ut supra*, p. 79). Cheyne, in his own note, can give no evidence at all of writings alluding to a resurrection (*ut supra*, p. 254).

Jesus and His Apostles found, indeed, a suffering and rising Christ in the O.T., but their point of view (on this see Hengstenberg, *Christology*, vol. iv., app. iv.) was not that of contemporary Judaism. The disciples themselves were “slow of heart” to believe the things that Jesus spoke to them (Luke xxiv. 25-8, 44-6).

by Oriental mythology it is never difficult to pick out isolated traits which, by ingenious, if far-fetched combinations, can be made to present some resemblance to some feature or other in the Gospel story. Thus, as parallels to "the death of the world's Redeemer," we are told by Dr. Cheyne: "That the death of the solar deity, Marduk, was spoken of, and his grave shown, in Babylonia, is an ascertained fact; the death of Osiris and of other gods was an Egyptian belief, and, though a more distant parallel, one may here refer also to the empty grave of Zeus pointed out in Crete."<sup>1</sup> [Gunkel gives this last fact more correctly: "In Crete is shown the grave of Zeus, naturally an *empty* grave."<sup>2</sup>] Where facts fail, imagination is invoked to fill the gaps, this specially in the parts which concern the Resurrection. Thus, in Jeremias: "The 'grave of Bel' (Herod. i. 18), like the grave of Osiris, certainly stands in connexion (*zusammenhängt*) with the celebration of the death and resurrection of Marduk-Tammuz (Lehmann, i. p. 276), even *though we still possess no definite testimonies to a festival of the death and resurrection of Marduk-Tammuz*"<sup>3</sup> (italics ours). Gunkel thinks that the Jewish belief in the resurrection compels us to "postulate" that "in the Orient of that time belief in the resurrection must have ruled."<sup>4</sup> Jensen has to face the fact, that the Gilgamesh epic has nothing about a resurrection. But, he says, "that the Babyloniana Gilgamesh, who must die, in the oldest form of his legend (*Sage*) rose again from the dead, appears self-evident. For he is a Sun-god, and sun-gods, like gods of light and warmth, who die, must also, among the Babylonians, rise again."<sup>5</sup> The oldest form of the Elisha-Gilgamesh legend, he thinks, probably included a translation to heaven, and, as an in-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 253-4.<sup>2</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 77.<sup>3</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 9.<sup>4</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 33.<sup>5</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 925.

ference from this, a resurrection.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Resurrection of Jesus is a "logical postulate" from the fact of His exaltation, in accordance with a long series of parallel myths.<sup>2</sup>

A special application of the theory to the Gospel history connects itself with the Resurrection "on the third day," and the origin of the Sunday festival. It is very difficult, indeed, to find suitable illustrations connecting resurrection with "the third day"—indeed, none are to be found. We are driven back on Jonah's three days in the fish, which Dr. Cheyne says is not sufficient to justify St. Paul's expression; <sup>3</sup> on the Apocalyptic "time and times and half a time," and three days and a half; on a Mandæan story of a "little boy of three years and one day"; on the Greek myth of Apollo slaying the serpent Pytho on the fourth day after his birth; on the festival of the resurrection of the Phrygian Attis on the fourth day after the lamentations over his death.<sup>4</sup> This is actually supposed to be evidence. Gunkel makes a strong point of the festival of Sunday. How came the Resurrection of Jesus to be fixed down to a Sunday? How came this to be observed as a weekly festival? "All these difficulties are relieved, so soon as we treat the matter from the 'historical-religious' point of view."<sup>5</sup> The "Lord's Day" was the day of the Sun-god; in Babylonian reckoning the first day of the week. Easter Sunday was the day of the sun's emergence from the night of winter.<sup>6</sup> Can it be held, then, as accidental that this was the day on which Jesus arose? <sup>7</sup> It is really an ancient Oriental

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 923-4.

<sup>2</sup> P. 924.

<sup>3</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 110-13; cf. Gunkel, *ut supra*, pp. 79-82; Lake, p. 263.

<sup>5</sup> Gunkel, p. 74.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 74, 79. Thus also Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, ii. p. 721.

<sup>7</sup> P. 79.

festival which is here being taken over by the primitive Christian community, as later the Church took over December 25 as Christmas Day.<sup>1</sup> It fails to be observed in this ingenious construction—wholly in the air, as if there was no such thing as history in the matter—that there is not a single word in the Gospels or in the New Testament connecting “the first day of the week”—reckoned in purely Jewish fashion by the “Sabbath”—with the day of the sun, or any use or suggestion of the name “Sunday.” The “primitive community” had other and far plainer reasons for remembrance of the “Lord’s Day” (Jesus alone was their “Lord,” and no sun-god), viz., in the fact that on the Friday of the Passover week He was crucified and entombed, and on the dawn of the first day of the week thereafter actually came forth, as He had predicted, victorious over the power of death, and appeared to His disciples.

This theory, in brief, destitute of adequate foundation, laden with incredibilities, and disdainful of the world of realities, has no claim whatever to supersede the plain, simply-told, historically well-attested narratives of the four Gospels as to the grounds of the Church’s belief from the beginning in the Resurrection of the Lord from the dead. As has frequently been said in these pages—*the Church knew its own origin*, and could be under no vital mistake as to the great facts on which its belief in Christ as its Crucified and Risen Lord rested. It is difficult to imagine what kind of persons the Apostles and Evangelists in some of these theories are taken for—children or fools? They were really neither, and the work they did, and the literature they have left, prove it. Who that has ever felt on his spirit the power of the impression of the picture and teaching of Jesus in the Gospels could

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 74-5, 79.

dream of accounting for it by a bundle of Babylonian myths? Who that has ever experienced the power of His Resurrection life could fancy the source of it an unreality?

It may be appropriate at this point to say a few words on the state of *Jewish belief* on the subject of resurrection. That the Jews in the time of Jesus were familiar with the idea of a resurrection of the dead (the Sadducees alone denying it) <sup>1</sup> is put beyond question by the Gospels, though there is no evidence, despite assertions to the contrary, <sup>2</sup> that they connected death and resurrection with the idea of the Messiah. The particular ideas entertained by the Jews of the resurrection-body, <sup>3</sup> while of interest in themselves, have therefore only a slight bearing on the origin of belief in the Resurrection of Jesus from His tomb on the third day. <sup>4</sup> That was an event, *sui generis*, outside the anticipations of the disciples, notwithstanding the repeated intimations which Jesus Himself had given them regarding it, <sup>5</sup> and only forced upon their faith by indubitable evidence of the actual occurrence of the marvel. There is no reason to suppose that the idea of the resurrection of the body was a form subsequently imposed on a belief in the Lord's continued life <sup>6</sup> originally gained in some other way. The Resurrection of Jesus never meant anything else in the primitive community than His Resurrection in the body.

Of greater importance is the question raised by Gunkel in his discussion as to *whence* the Jews derived their idea

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 23, etc.; cf. Acts xxiii. 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> As above; cf. John v. 28, 29; xi. 24; Matt. xiv. 2; and the instances of resurrection in the Gospels (Jairus's daughter, son of widow of Nain, Lazarus).

<sup>3</sup> Gunkel and Cheyne give no proof, and none is to be had.

<sup>4</sup> On these, cf. Lake, *ut supra*, pp. 23-7, with references.

<sup>5</sup> As already seen, these were persistently misunderstood by the disciples. The critics mostly deny that they were given.

<sup>6</sup> Thus Harnack and others.

of the resurrection. It is to be granted that Gunkel has a much profounder view of what he calls "the immeasurable significance" of this doctrine of the resurrection for the New Testament<sup>1</sup> than most other writers who deal with the topic. He claims that "this doctrine of the resurrection from the dead is one of the greatest things found anywhere in the history of religion,"<sup>2</sup> and devotes space to drawing out its weighty implications. Just, however, on account of "this incomparable significance" of the doctrine, he holds that it cannot be derived from within Judaism itself, but must take its origin from a ruling belief in the Orient of the later time.<sup>3</sup> The existence of such a belief is a "postulate" from its presence in Judaism, and is thought to be supported by Oriental, especially by Egyptian and Persian, parallels.<sup>4</sup> He discounts the evidence of the belief in the Old Testament furnished by passages in the Psalms, the prophets, and in Job. The doctrine, in short, "is not, as was formerly commonly maintained, and sometimes still is maintained, a genuine product of Judaism, but has come into Judaism from without."<sup>5</sup> If this be so, it may be argued that it is really a pagan intrusion into Christianity, and ought not to be retained.

The "immeasurable significance" of the belief in resurrection among the Jews may be admitted, but Gunkel's inferences as to the foreign origin of the belief can only be contested. For—

1. The *link fails* to connect this belief with any foreign religions. Gunkel seems hardly aware of the paradox of his theory of a world filled with belief in the resurrection, while yet the Jews, till a late period, are supposed to have had no knowledge of it. But the theory itself is without

<sup>1</sup> *Ut supra*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> P. 32.

<sup>3</sup> P. 33.

<sup>4</sup> P. 33.

<sup>5</sup> P. 31.

foundation. There is no evidence of any such *general* belief in a resurrection of the dead in ancient religions. No evidence of such general belief can be adduced from ancient Babylonia. Merodach may be hailed in a stray verse as "the merciful one, who raises the dead to life," and Ishtar may rescue Tammuz from Hades. But this falls far short of the proof required. Belief in the reanimation of the body may underlie the Egyptian practice of embalming, though this is disputed, but the developed Osiris-myth is comparatively late, and without provable influence on Judaism.<sup>1</sup> The alleged Persian or Zoroastrian influence is equally problematical. It is very questionable how far this doctrine is found in the old Persian religion at all.<sup>2</sup> The references to it are certainly few and ambiguous,<sup>3</sup> and totally inadequate to explain the remarkable prominence which the doctrine assumed among the Jews.

2. The *adequate grounds* for the development of this doctrine are found in the Old Testament itself. It may be held, and has been argued for by the present writer,<sup>4</sup> that, so far as a hope of immortality (beyond the shadowy and cheerless lot of Sheol) appears in the Old Testament, it is always in the form of deliverance from Sheol, and renewed life in the body. The state of death is neither a natural nor normal state for man, whose original destiny was immortality in the completeness of his personal

<sup>1</sup> On Merodach, Osiris and Resurrection, cf. Sayce, *Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, pp. 24, 153 ff., 165, 168, 288, 329, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Schultz remarks: "This point [of influence] will be the more difficult to decide, the more uncertain it becomes how far this doctrine, the principal witness to which is the Bundelesh [a late work], was really old Persian" (*O.T. Theol.* ii. p. 392).

<sup>3</sup> This can be tested by consulting the translation to the Zend-Avesta in *The Sacred Books of the East*. The indexes to the three volumes give only one reference to the subject, and that to an undated "Miscellaneous Fragment" at the end.

<sup>4</sup> In *The Christian View of God and the World*: Appendix to Lect. V., "The Old Testament Doctrine of Immortality."

life in a body; and the same faith which enabled the believer to trust in God for deliverance from all ills of life, enabled him also, in its higher exercises, to trust Him for deliverance from death itself. This seems the true key to those passages in the Psalms and in Job which by nearly all but the new school of interpreters have been regarded as breathing the hope of immortality with God.<sup>1</sup> In the prophets, from Hosea down, the idea of a resurrection of the nation, including, may we not say, at least in such passages as Hosea vi. 2, xiii. 12, and Isaiah xxv. 6-8, xxvi. 19, the individuals in it, is a familiar one. A text like Daniel xii. 2 only draws out the individual implication of this doctrine with more distinctness. In later books, as 2 Maccabees, the Book of Enoch, Ezra iv., the doctrine is treated as established (sometimes resurrection of the godly, sometimes of righteous and wicked).

Little has been said in these discussions of the New Testament *Apocryphal* books,<sup>2</sup> the statements of which it has become customary to draw into comparison with the accepted Gospels. Only a few remarks need be made on them now. They have been kept apart because, in origin, character, and authority, they stand on a completely different footing from the canonical Gospels, and because there is not the least reason to believe that they preserve a single authentic tradition beyond those which the four Gospels contain. This has long been acknowledged with regard to the stories of the Infancy, the puerilities

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Pss. xvi. 8-11; xvii. 15; xlix. 14, 15; lxxiii. 24; Job xiv. 13-15 (R.V.); xix. 25-27. In his *Origin of the Psalter* Dr. Cheyne accepts the resurrection reference of several of these passages, seeing in them a proof of Zoroastrian influence (pp. 382, 406, 407, 431, etc.). This, however, as he himself acknowledges, is where leading scholars fail to support him (pp. 425, 461). Cf. Pusey, *Daniel*, pp. 512-17.

<sup>2</sup> A collection of some of the chief of these, edited and annotated by the present writer, may be seen in *The New Testament Apocryphal Writings*, in the "Temple Bible" series (Dent).

of which put them outside the range of serious consideration by any intelligent mind. No more reason exists for paying heed to the fabulous embellishments of the narratives of the Resurrection. A romance like *The Gospel of Nicodemus* (fifth cent.), whether based on a second century *Acts of Pilate* or not, receives attention from no one. It is simply a travesty and tricking out with extravagances of the material furnished by St. Matthew and the other Evangelists. More respect is paid to the recently discovered fragment of *The Gospel of Peter*,<sup>1</sup> which begins in the middle of Christ's trial, and breaks off in the middle of a sentence, with Peter and Andrew returning to their fishermen's toils, after the feast of unleavened bread is ended. Here, it is thought, is a distinct tradition, preserving the memory of that flight into Galilee which the canonical Gospels ignore. Yet at every point this Gospel shows itself dependent on St. Matthew and the rest, while freely manipulating and embellishing the tradition which they contain. A single specimen is enough to show the degree of credit to be attached to it. From St. Matthew is borrowed the story of the watch at the tomb, with adornments, the centurion, e.g., being named Petronius. The day of the Resurrection is called "the Lord's Day." Then, we read, as that day dawned, "While the soldiers kept watch two and two at their post, a mighty voice sounded in the heaven; and they saw the heavens opened, and two men descending from thence in great glory, and approaching the sepulchre. But that stone which had been placed at the door of the sepulchre rolled back of itself, and moved aside, and the tomb opened, and both the young men went in. When, therefore, those soldiers beheld this, they awakened the centurion and the elders—for they also were there to watch—and while they were

<sup>1</sup> A Gnostic Gospel of the 2nd century.

telling what they had seen, they beheld coming forth from the tomb three men, and the two supporting the one, and a cross following them. And the heads of the two reached indeed unto heaven, but the head of the one who was led by them reached far above the heavens. And they heard a voice from heaven that said: Hast thou preached unto those that sleep? And the answer was heard from the Cross: Yes. . . . And while they were yet pondering the matter, the heavens open again, and a man descends and goes into the sepulchre.”<sup>1</sup> This may be placed alongside of the narrative in the Gospel without comment.

JAMES ORR.

## THE LAND OF EDOM.

### I. PRELIMINARY.

In the Old Testament the name Edom is essentially that of a people, and, as in the case of Moab,<sup>2</sup> it is doubtful whether it is ever applied by itself to their land; certainly not till the latest writers.<sup>3</sup> The land is called *the land of Edom*,<sup>4</sup> and *the field or territory of Edom*.<sup>5</sup> In parallel to

<sup>1</sup> If it is argued that this is a simple expansion of St. Matthew's story of the watch, as the latter is an addition to St. Mark's, it may be observed that St. Matthew's story is an expansion or embellishment of nothing, but a distinct, independent narrative; while the story in *The Gospel of Peter* has evidently no basis but St. Matthew's account, which it decorates from pure fancy.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Obviously the people in Num. xx. 18 ff., JE; 1 Sam. xiv. 47, and many other passages. The dictionaries interpret it as the name of the land when used in the feminine, e.g. Jer. xlix. 17; Ezek. xxv. 13 f., xxxii. 29, xxxv. 15 (Buhl, *Gesch. der Edomiter*, takes it as land in Jer. xlix. 17. Ezek. xxxv. 15, but as people in Ezek. xxxii. 29). But in Mal. i. 4 (and elsewhere) it is used of the people with a feminine verb. There are passages in which we see how readily the name could pass from people to land, e.g. 2 Kings iii. 20; and there are others in which it may mean either, e.g. Num. xxxiv. 3, Josh. xv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> אֶדְוֹם אֶרֶץ, Gen. xxxvi. 16 f., P; 1 Kings ix. 26; Isa. xxxiv. 6, and elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> אֶרֶץ אֶדְוֹם, Gen. xxxii. 4 [Eng. 3], J.E.; Jud. v. 4. It is doubtful whether אֶרֶץ is to be taken here in its geographical sense of *wild country* (Assyr., hill-country), or in its political sense of *territory*. There was also a *wilderness* of Edom.