

APOSTOLIC PREACHING AND EMPEROR WORSHIP.

THE aim of this discussion is to attempt, on the basis of researches made by scholars within recent years, a more or less definite estimate of certain aspects of the bearing of the Imperial cult on Christian teaching and influence in the first age of the Faith.

Certain facts, it may be held, have passed beyond the region of controversy. The best authorities, for example, are agreed that the real clue to the interpretation of the Apocalypse is to be found in the very enigmatic thirteenth chapter. There, the great Dragon, the embodiment of all that is evil and ungodly, makes over his power and authority to the Beast which comes up out of the sea. The Beast, upon whose horns are ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy, is worshipped by all who dwell on the earth, "every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain" (Apoc. xiii. 8). The second Beast, which comes up out of the earth, exercises all the authority of the first Beast. He commands those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the first Beast. Those who refuse to worship that image, he causes to be killed. Recent interpreters are at one in holding that the first Beast symbolizes the Imperial Power of Rome.¹ That dominion is visualized for the inhabitants of Asia Minor in the temples erected, at first, to the Divine Augustus and the goddess Rome, subsequently, to the *Divi* (dead

¹ See, e.g., Bousset *ad loc.*

rulers) and the living Emperor.¹ The second Beast represents the provincial priesthood of the Imperial cult, which had attained enormous power in Asia Minor.

The provincial Diet, the yearly gathering of the municipal deputies of the province, had become so closely associated with the temple festival and games celebrated annually in honour of the deified Emperor, that soon the presidency of the assembly became a function, *ex officio*, of the high-priesthood of the provincial temples.² These provincial high-priests necessarily became links between the Imperial administration and the general religious life of the provinces. It would therefore be for them a matter of self-interest, as well as of patriotism and religion, to denounce to the ruling state-officials any disloyalty on the part of individuals to that worship which was the very emblem of Imperial unity and stability.

The difficult references to the mark of the Beast (Apoc. xiii. 16, 17) have had, at least, some light shed upon them by Professor Ramsay's brilliant investigation of the inscription of Gondane, belonging to the Imperial estates, near Pisidian Antioch, relating to a religious society known as the ξένοι Τεκμορείοι or Tekmoreian Guest-Friends. The Tekmor (τέκμωρ), from which they took their name, "was some solemn sign and pledge of the loyalty of the celebrant to the Emperor and his service. We can hardly be mistaken in connecting the institution of this solemn secret symbolic act with the greatest political fact of the third century, the war between the State and the Christian faith" (Ramsay, *Studies in the Eastern Roman Provinces*, p. 347). There is nothing rash

¹ See Kornemann, *Zur Geschichte d. antiken Herrscherkulte*, in *Klio*, ed. by Lehmann, i. p. 108.

² See Mommsen, *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, i. pp. 347, 348; Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 127; O. Hirschfeld, *Sitzungsberichte* of the Berlin *Akademie*, 1888, p. 347 (notes).

in the hypothesis that similar usages must have been current at an earlier date.

It is plain that the writer of the Apocalypse, composed in all likelihood in the reign of Domitian, recognized a life and death struggle in the opposition between the Christian faith and the Imperial worship. This was precisely the attitude taken by the Emperor Domitian himself. No ruler more arrogantly asserted claims to divine adoration. In his own lifetime he had himself proclaimed as *dominus et deus*.¹ Refusal to acknowledge those claims must have appeared the highest form of treason. And such refusal adherents of the Christian faith were bound to make.

This negative aspect of the situation is thoroughly intelligible. But was there a positive aspect also? Apart from the general situation, were there definite elements in the Christian faith and in the Christian Gospel, as they were propagated throughout Asia, calculated to provoke bitter antagonism in the minds of loyal adherents of the Imperial cult? The central Figure of the new and rapidly spreading propaganda was the crucified and risen Jesus. In what character was Jesus set forth by the Christian missionaries as they journeyed through the provinces of the Roman Empire? We know that among their Jewish compatriots in Palestine the first followers of Jesus were designated Nazarenes. But soon, as the sphere of influence of the new religion expanded, this name, which probably had a more or less contemptuous *nuance*, was exchanged for that of *Χριστιανοί*. This, also, may have been at first a nickname (so Wetstein and others). In any case, it is a striking outside testimony to the fact, so fully established by the New Testament, that the Messiahship of Jesus stood in the forefront of apostolic preaching.

A larger view of the Messianic Hope of Judaism has shown

¹ See Ramsay, *Church in Roman Empire*, p. 275.

that the remarkable foreshadowings of the Old Testament cannot be compressed within the conception of the Anointed King. Yet this must not blind us to the significance of Jesus' own central idea of the Kingdom of God, and the continual quotation in a Messianic sense by New Testament writers of Old Testament passages dealing with the God-appointed King. Even in the Epistles of Paul, whose personal experience of Christ has largely shaped his Christian vocabulary, the term βασιλεία, in its Synoptic sense, occurs far oftener than is sometimes realized. In the Apocalypse, a typically Jewish book, and yet written in Asia Minor, βασιλεία and βασιλεύειν are found with noteworthy frequency. That this element was prominent in the Messianic status of Jesus comes out quite incidentally in all the accounts of His trial before Pilate. Luke describes the main accusation brought against Him as that of "perverting our nation and forbidding to pay tribute to Caesar and saying that he himself is Christ the King" (Luke xxiii. 2). Similarly the Fourth Gospel reports the Jews as shouting to Pilate: "If thou releasest this man, thou art no friend of Caesar's; every one that maketh himself a king, opposeth Caesar" (John xix. 12). At Thessalonica the mixed rabble describe the Christian missionaries Paul and Silas to the Politarchs as men who "act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus" (Acts xvii. 7). The Kingship and Kingdom of Jesus the Messiah must therefore have been powerfully emphasized in the apostolic preaching. And often the impression received by Hellenistic audiences would no doubt be exceedingly literalistic.¹

It need scarcely be said that no name was more expressive of the Christian attitude to Christ than that of κύριος,

¹ See an interesting note in Harnack, *Mission u. Ausbreitung d. Xtums.*, p. 191, note 2, in which he shows that the early Christians were accustomed to call Jesus βασιλεύς in the East, and in the West *imperator*.

Lord. Probably its full significance is exhibited in Philip-
 pians ii. 9, 10, where Paul, after describing the infinite
 condescension and lowliness of Jesus, declares that, as the
 result of this voluntary humiliation, "God highly exalted
 him, and gave him the name which is above every name,
 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things
 heavenly and earthly and beneath the earth, and that every
 tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the
 glory of God the Father." The universal Lordship of
 Jesus means universal adoration. Hellenistic Jews recog-
 nized in the title *κύριος* the Septuagint translation of the
 Old Testament Jehovah. Again and again the apostolic
 writers adduce quotations in which it stands for God.
 This was the designation which adhered to Christ in the
 early Church, as Harnack notes,¹ above all others.

It is interesting to observe that the title "Saviour,"
σωτήρ, which has had such a wide currency in Christian
 usage, is almost confined to the latest books of the New
 Testament. This may be entirely accidental, as it must
 be recognized that *σωτηρία*, "salvation," has a wide range
 in the New Testament writings. In any case, towards
 the close of the Apostolic Age, *σωτήρ* became a favourite
 title for Christ. And its vogue so largely increased that
 "in some Christian circles the designation 'Saviour' was
 exclusively used of Jesus" (Harnack, *Mission*, etc., p. 74,
 note 3).²

No reference has as yet been made to the very important
 appellation "Son of God" (*υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*). Obviously,
 the phrase has its roots in the Messianic conceptions of
 the Old Testament (e.g., such passages as Ps. ii. 7, Ps.

¹ *Dogmengeschichte*, i.² p. 153, note 1, in which he quotes a remark-
 able testimony from Novatian.

² Harnack points out that Irenæus (I. i. 3) reproached the Valentinian
 Ptolemæans for not consenting to call Jesus *κύριος*, but only *σωτήρ*.

lxxxix. 26, 27). But in the self-consciousness of Jesus, as disclosed by the Synoptic Gospels, and in the thought of writers like Paul, John, and the author of Hebrews, the idea has been infinitely deepened. Its significance for these writers is sufficiently elucidated by the fact that they all emphasize the pre-existence of Christ. The Sonship of Jesus means an altogether unique relationship to God. Its background stretches behind time. It postulates Divinity in the fullest sense.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the rarer designations of Jesus such as *ὁ ἀγαπητός*, *ὁ ἀρχηγός*, *ὁ εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ*, *ὁ πρωτότοκος*, and others, although all of these might be brought within the scope of our discussion.

The all-important fact to observe at the stage we have reached is that the chief names of reverence and adoration given to Him whom the Christian missionaries proclaimed on their journeyings as the sole Hope of humanity were precisely those accorded to the Emperors, dead and living, by the votaries of the Imperial cult. They also are worshipped under the appellations of *κύριος*, *σωτήρ*, *υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*, *εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ*, *θεὸς ἐπιφανής*, etc.

It may be well, before examining the facts more closely, to recall, in a few sentences, the historical process which led to this result. In oriental civilizations like those of Babylon, Persia, and Egypt, from an early time, the king was regarded as the son of a god. It may be impossible to determine all that was involved in the content of the conception. But the ideas associated with it became familiar to eastern peoples. In the Hellenic world probably the nearest approach to this cycle of thought was the super-human honour paid to those who, in their lifetime, had been pre-eminent among their fellows for bravery, patriotism, or some other impressive characteristic. Raised after death to the rank of "heroes," they had sacred rites

and festivals dedicated to them. A formula found in inscriptions is *θεοῖς ἠρωσι τε* (see Rohde, *Psyche*,² ii. p. 353, notes). These two currents of thought must inevitably mingle when the conquering genius of Alexander the Great brought East and West together in a common Hellenism. As a matter of fact, the deification of rulers takes very definite shape in the kingdoms of Alexander's successors. Thus in an inscription of Halicarnassus (perhaps about 306 B.C.) Ptolemaeus I. (Lagi) is named *σωτήρ καὶ θεός* (Dittenberger, O.G.I. xvi. 2, 3).¹ But not before 261 B.C. was he called *θεός* in Egypt (*ibid.* note 3). The various kings of Syria who bore the name of Antiochus receive the title *θεός* (see the very significant inscriptions in Dittenberger, O.G.I., 245, 264). The fourth, of notorious memory, is designated on his own coins *θεὸς ἐπιφανής*, the god who has appeared among men. Antiochus I. of Kommagene, at the opening of the famous inscription in which he recounts his own merits, names himself *θεὸς δίκαιος ἐπιφανής* (Dittenb., O.G.I., 383, 1). A step of immense significance for history was taken when titles of this description were given to Roman rulers. The custom seems to have begun in Asiatic communities, in the last century of the Republic, when temples, e.g., were erected to Roman proconsuls and generals.² This was partly due to the habit of cringing adulation, characteristic of Eastern races, which had become acclimatized in Asia Minor, and partly to genuine gratitude for the stability of Roman supremacy. Thus, an inscription of Ephesus (Dittenb. Syll.³ 347, 6) honours Julius Caesar in his lifetime as *τὸν ἀπὸ Ἄρεως καὶ Ἄφρο-*

¹ All our examples, unless otherwise cited, are from W. Dittenberger's splendid collection of Greek inscriptions, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. 2, 3 vols., Leipz., 1898-1901, and its supplement, *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, 2 vols., Leipz., 1903-1905.

² See Hirschfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 836.

³ See Kornemann, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

δείτης θεὸν ἐπιφανῆ καὶ κοινὸν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου σωτήρα, "the god descended from Ares and Aphrodite, who has appeared in human form, and the universal Saviour of the life of men." In 42 B.C., apotheosis was officially decreed for the dead Julius under the title *Divus* (not *deus*). For a time, at least, Augustus restricted the worship of Roman citizens to the *Divus Julius*, but accepted divine honours for himself from his Graeco-Asiatic subjects. Apparently the first temple dedicated to his worship was one at Pergamon, erected to "Rome and Augustus." Connected with the temple was a guild of choristers, *θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ καὶ θεᾶς Ρώμης*.¹ A similar temple at Ancyra in Galatia soon followed (Dittenb., O.G.I., 533, note 2). From this time onwards divine honours were showered upon Augustus in his Eastern dominions. At a later period he accepted deification even from Italian communities, e.g., Beneventum (about 14 B.C.). The Imperial cult was now an elaborately organized institution. Professor Ramsay has shown with masterly ability that this organized worship was the real basis of Roman provincial unity, and that that unity was the most influential idea in Asia (e.g., *Letters to the Seven Churches*, pp. 115, 127).

We are now in a position to set side by side the earliest Christian designations of Christ, as proclaimed by the apostolic missionaries, and those of the deified emperors in the opening centuries of our era. It is scarcely necessary to call attention to so obvious a fact as the conflict between the Christian idea of βασιλεύς and βασιλεία, and that universal throughout the Graeco-Roman world. The former was central for the teaching of Jesus, and must have been prominent in early Christian preaching, even apart from its implication in the conception of the Messiah. Harnack refers (*Mission u. Ausbreitung*, p. 191, note 2) to an inter-

¹ See Kornemann, op. cit., p. 99.

esting passage in Justin Martyr (*Apology*, i. 11): "You (i.e. the Pagans), having heard that we expect a kingdom (*βασιλείαν*), have, without discernment, supposed that we speak of a human kingdom." On this point, as we have hinted above, an issue must early have been raised by loyal subjects of the Emperor throughout the Hellenistic world, who gave their liege lord this very title of *βασιλεύς*. We shall have occasion to return to this subject in discussing the idea of the Christian and Pagan Messiah.

Still keener would be the controversy roused in Greek-speaking audiences by the constant description of Jesus Christ as *κύριος* on the part of the Christian missionaries. We know what the term meant for the Apostolic Church. It expressed the claim of the risen Christ to the sole worship of men. The title *ὁ κύριος* is sometimes given to the gods in the hieratic inscriptions, although it is not very common. Professor Ramsay (*Expos. Times*, x. 5, p. 209) is inclined to attribute it to Semitic influence, particularly to "the old Semitic spirit of early Anatolian religion."¹ Something of this flavour will have probably adhered to it when used of the emperors. In any case, for our purpose, the usage is highly significant. In a decree of the inhabitants of Acraephia in Bœotia, in honour of Nero, he is styled *ὁ τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου κύριος*, "Lord of the whole world" (Dittenb. Syll.² 376, 31). It is easy to realize the profoundness of the antagonism between the Imperial worship and the new faith when, over against such appellations we place utterances like Acts x. 36, *οὗτός (i.e. Christ) ἐστὶν πάντων κύριος*: 1 Cor. viii. 6, *εἰς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*: and Apoc. xvii. 14, *κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων*. The epithet *ὁ κύριος* is constantly found attached to the names of the emperors, and often in the interesting form

¹ Compare the extraordinary importance of the *Baalim* (Lords) in Semitic religions (W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 92 ff.).

ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν, e.g. of Antoninus Pius (Dittenb., O.G.I., 706, 5), of Commodus (*ibid.* 708, 1), of Caracalla, and others. Asiatics, Greeks, and Romans had, therefore, already a very definite connotation for the phrase ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν, a phrase which occurs on every second page of Paul's Epistles, and which must have been equally common in his preaching. How much was involved in the Imperial designation becomes clear from such noteworthy collocations as τῶν μεγίστων καὶ θειοτάτων κυρίων ἡμῶν αὐτοκρατόρων, "our absolute Lords, most mighty, most divine" (Dittenb., O.G.I., 515, 10-11). And it is worth while comparing with this the combination so frequent in the Apocalypse, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, "the Lord God omnipotent," a combination already found in the Septuagint. That, in turn, brings into bolder relief the full content of κύριος as applied to Jesus Christ.

In a few passages, belonging almost entirely to the latest books of the New Testament (Phil. iii. 20, Tit. i. 4 ? 2 Pet. i. 11, ii. 20, iii. 2, 18), κύριος is coupled with σωτήρ, usually in the phrase τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος. The noun σωτήρ is curiously rare in the New Testament, with the exception of the Pastoral Epistles and Second Peter. This may be wholly accidental, as we have seen, for the cognate words σωτηρία and σώζειν are widely current among New Testament writers. And in the passages in which σωτήρ does occur it seems impossible to discover in it a shade of meaning different from that belonging to its kindred terms. This, in our judgment, has been established by W. Wagner in an exhaustive article (*Zeitschr. f. N. T. Wissenschaft*, vi. pp. 20 ff.), in which he comes to the conclusion that "σώζειν and its derivatives in the technical sense do not describe deliverance from any casual trouble, but deliverance from spiritual or eternal death to a new religio-ethical or eternal life" (p. 229). The conception

of salvation (*σωτηρία*) is, of course, the very core of New Testament Christianity. It is virtually identical with that of Eternal Life, the final goal of the Christian career. Its basis already appears in the redeeming mercy of God in the Old Testament, and Jesus deliberately describes His own mission as "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10).

At the same time it is possible that Harnack¹ and Wendland are not wholly mistaken in associating the appearance of the actual noun *σωτήρ* in the later New Testament writings with its prominent position in the Imperial cult. The subject has been so thoroughly discussed by Wendland (*Zeitschr. f. N.T. Wissensch.* v. pp. 335 ff.), that all we can do is to state concisely the salient positions of his article. It makes little difference to our discussion whether the early Christians were actually influenced in their application of *σωτήρ* to Christ by the Imperial worship or not. The fact that they used the title, a title which in any case lay close to their hands, reveals another sharp point of conflict between them and the State-religion.

The word *σωτήρ* constantly occurs in the LXX as a translation of the Hebrew *יְשׁוּעָה* or of *יְשׁוּעַ*, as applied to God. It has also had an important place in Greek religion. Zeus, Apollo, Asklepios, Hermes, etc., are all worshipped under the title of *σωτήρ*. Then it was applied to heroic men who received divine adoration, and particularly to the successors of Alexander, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. Finally, it was ascribed again and again to Augustus, as, e.g., in

¹ In his *Mission u. Ausbreitung*, etc., Harnack strongly emphasizes the missionary preaching of the early Church as the Gospel of the Physician and Saviour (*Heilandes, Healer*), and in this connexion most interestingly traces the enormous expansion of the cult of Asklepios, the god of medicine, into that of the *σωτήρ par excellence*, the Helper in every time of need, the friend of mankind, *φιλανθρωπίστας* (pp. 74, 76, 77). I have not been able to consult his *Reden u. Aufsätze*, i. pp. 301-311, which contains a paper, "Als die Zeit erfüllt war. Der Heiland."

an inscription of the island of Philae, which says of the Emperor: *ὁ σωτήρ Ζεὺς ἀνέτειλε μέγας*, "who arose a Saviour, Zeus, most mighty" (Wendland, loc. cit., p. 343). Wendland shows that the designation emphasizes the clemency and grace of the Emperor, qualities peculiarly valued by his subjects in the Provinces, who call his birthday, probably not insincerely, "the beginning of existence and life" for them (inscription of Priene).¹ *Soter* is the helper in time of need, the bringer of deliverance and salvation. Thus Hadrian is described as *σωτήρι ῥυσαμένῳ καὶ θρέψαντι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ Ἑλλάδα*, "the Saviour who rescued and nurtured his own Hellas" (Dittenb. Syll.² 383, 1). Wendland is disposed to think that expressions like *ὁ σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου* in John iv. 12, 1 John iv. 14, *τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ σωτήρος* in 2 Tim. i. 10, *ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ σωτήριος* in Titus ii. 11, and a few others, suggest a more or less conscious adoption of ideas by Christian teachers from the Imperial cult. The question appears to us impossible of decision, although we cannot deny that there are good grounds for speaking of "the complete mosaic of ideas from the sphere of the Hellenistic Imperial worship revealed in these two passages, from the Pastorals" (Wendland, loc. cit. p. 349). Thus, for example, the phrase quoted above from 2 Timothy i. 10, *τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ σωτήρος*, receives a new significance when we remember that *ἐπιφανής* was the stereotyped epithet applied to the deified King or Emperor to express the idea of divinity made visible in him to humanity. And unquestionably the suggestion would wonderfully illuminate Paul's words in Philippians iii. 20, "For our citizenship (*πολίτευμα*) is in heaven, from whence we truly expect a Saviour (*σωτήρα*), the Lord Jesus Christ." A supreme test of loyalty for citizens of the Empire was adherence to the worship of the Imperial ruler who was *κύριος, σωτήρ*,

¹ See also Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 115.

and *θεός*. The Christian Commonwealth also has a *κύριος* and *σωτήρ*. But the commonwealth and its Lord belong in reality to the unseen world.

There remains the important New Testament designation of Christ as *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*. It is needless to give examples of its occurrence. As early as the famous inscription on the Rosetta Stone (B.C. 196), Ptolemaeus V. (Epiphanes) is called *εἰκὼν ζῶση τοῦ Διός*, "the living image of Zeus."¹ In the Roman Empire, the living Ruler is regarded as the incarnation of *Sol Invictus*, the invincible Sun-God.² Domitian desired to be worshipped as Divine Providence in human shape.³ The inscriptions abound with the direct title *θεοῦ υἱός*. Thus, in an inscription of Olympia not later than 27 B.C., Augustus receives this designation (Dittenb. Syll.³ 351, 1). A favourite appellation is *αὐτοκράτωρ θεοῦ υἱὸς Σεβαστός* (numerous examples in Dittenberger). An inscription of 31 A.D. denominates Tiberius as *θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ υἱός, θεοῦ Ιουλίου υἱωνός* (Dittenb. O.G.I. 471, 1). Deissmann, who believes that *υἱὸς θεοῦ* is a translation of *divi filius*, so common in Latin inscriptions, cites an interesting inscription in honour of Augustus, bearing this title, from the city of Tarsus, in which, he suggests, the youthful Paul may, for the first time, have come across the idea of the Son of God "long before the words for him were filled with a different content" (*Bibelstudien*, p. 167, note 2). In this case, of course, no hypothesis is admissible as to a possible derivation of the phrase from Hellenistic usage. But it is easy to picture the impression made on the inhabitants of the Roman Provinces, whether Greeks or Asiatics, as they listened to the humble yet ardent missionaries of the new faith heaping upon its

¹ See Kornemann, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

² See Wendland, *Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur*, p. 97.

³ See Ramsay, *Church in Roman Empire*, p. 275.

Founder the highest titles which adorned the Imperial Ruler, that Ruler whose worship was the most important symbol of all that they valued in their political life. The effect must have been startling; and the result, either the creation of a bitter antagonism or the awakening of a mysterious interest in Christ and His religion.

For this latter aspect of the situation must not be left out of sight. Each fresh investigation of the life and thought of the Empire makes a new contribution to the significance of Paul's phrase, "the fulness of the time." It was not indeed mere flattery which led to the apotheosis of the Imperial Rulers, as the *foci*, so to speak, of Roman dominion. The *Pax Romana* was an inestimable boon to regions which had been for centuries the arena of bitter and deadly strife. There is rich significance in the words of an inscription of Halicarnassus: ¹ *εἰρηνεύουσι . . . γῆ καὶ θάλαττα*, "land and sea are at peace" (qu. by Wendland, loc. cit., p. 344). But this boon of material order and stability left unstilled the religious cravings of the people. Emperor-worship was at best a superficial expression of feeling, of feeling that was not religious at all. As Professor Ramsay has shown, in Asia, the gods of Pergamon, Dionysus Kathegemon and Asklepios, and Artemis the goddess of Ephesus, were brought into prominence for the purpose of satisfying this need.² More remarkable still was the welcome given to all manner of Oriental cults, which had esoteric doctrines to impart and mystic sacraments to communicate to their devotees.³ The Christian faith came into the arena as one of those competing views of life. But it refused to compromise with the State-religion. It claimed for

¹ Brit. Museum Inscr. 894.

² *Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 230.

³ See an admirable brief statement in Heinrici, *Der litterarische Charakter d. N. T. Schriften*, pp. 6-17: fuller discussions in Cumont, *Les Religions Orientales dans le Paganisme romain*: Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*.

its central Figure the highest prerogatives which had ever been assigned to the Emperor. Jesus also had been man, but finally had been "declared Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, as the result of His resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). Was it of no moment that these inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world were accustomed to hear at all their national festivals the very names by which He was named? If the person who symbolized that power on which their national prosperity depended was greeted as Lord, Saviour, and Son of God, must it not have been easier for them, through the spiritualizing of these very terms, to rise to the understanding of Him in whom their souls could find the living God and be satisfied?

But over and above this strange parallelism between the Imperial Ruler and the risen Christ, we must note the fact that each was the centre of a new order. The Christian missionaries proclaimed that in Jesus the wonderful Messianic forecasts of the earlier revelation were perfectly realized. The moment for which the world had been waiting was come. There is a remarkable similarity in the thrill of joyful expectancy which greeted the accession of Augustus. The Roman people were sick of bloodshed and slaughter. The awful proscriptions were an indelible memory. Those who were most sensitive to the currents of history saw in the establishment of the Empire the opening of a new era, the advent of a Golden Age which should wipe out the stains of crime and cruelty. Many passages might be quoted from classical writers to exemplify this outlook. A most interesting conspectus is given in Wendland's brilliant work, *Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur*, pp. 88-89, notes. Probably the most famous of these passages is the Fourth Eclogue of Vergil, which has been the subject of such keen controversy. We are not concerned here with the detailed interpretation of the so-called Messianic

idea of the poem, although we are persuaded that Professor R. S. Conway and others are right in holding that Vergil had in view the birth of a son to Octavius, which was expected in 40 B.C.¹ Of chief importance is the poet's reference to the boy "who shall put an end to the age of iron and cause the age of gold to arise for the whole world" (lines 8-9). That this expectation belongs to the hopes kindled by Octavian, as founder of the Empire, is plain from other passages in Vergil, e.g., *Aeneid*, vi. 791-794 :

This, this is he, so oft the theme
Of your prophetic fancy's dream,
Augustus Caesar, god by birth ;
Restorer of the age of gold
In lands where Saturn ruled of old (Conington).

With these lines may be compared *Aeneid*, i. 291-296. But this welcome of a better and brighter age echoes throughout the poetry of the time. Thus Horace in the *Carmen Seculare*, 57 ff., can sing : " Now Faith and Peace and Honour and ancient Modesty and neglected Virtue dare to return, and Plenty appears to view, rich in her full horn." The fifth ode of Horace's Fourth Book is a Hymn to Augustus, resounding with the same note of glad security, relief from the burden of lawlessness and vice, and the restoration of purity to the world. Numerous parallels might be quoted from the literature of the opening decades of the Empire.

It is, therefore, no exaggeration to call Augustus a Pagan Messiah, the inaugurator of a " Messianic " Age. Indeed, many passages occur in Vergil and Horace in which the imagery has a remarkable resemblance to the prophetic pictures of the Messianic era in the Old Testament. The parallelism, as we know, made so powerful an impression upon the Fathers of the Church that Vergil, at least, was ranked among the prophets. But apart from this, the

¹ See Conway in the *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1907, p. 318.

facts are surely full of significance. Must not this spirit of the time have worked powerfully in favour of the Christian missionaries who announced that the Messiah was indeed come, and this a King, whose pathway had not been prepared by force and bloodshed like that of Augustus, whose kingdom, on the contrary, was "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"? This was the very ideal, as Conway admirably shows, which Vergil extolled, "the conception of peace by forgiveness, of conciliation instead of punishment,—in a word, the ideal of mercy" (loc. cit., p. 324). It corresponds to the *φιλανθρωπία*, "humane conduct" (*benignitas*), the *χάρις*, or "grace" (*clementia*) of the Emperor, so frequently lauded in inscriptions. And these are precisely the ideas emphasized in Titus iii. 4: "When the kindness (*χρηστότης*) of our Saviour God appeared (*ἐπεφάνη*, the word used of the visible deity of the Emperors, *ἐπιφανής*), and his love towards men (*φιλανθρωπία*)." Equally suggestive is Titus ii. 11: "For there has appeared (*ἐπεφάνη*) the grace (*χάρις*) of God, bringing salvation (*σωτήριος*)." In view of these facts it is not surprising that among Patristic writers we come upon statements like that of Origin *c. Celsum*, ii. 30, which estimates the situation from a kindred, while slightly varying, standpoint:¹ "In Jesus' days righteousness arose and abundance of peace: they began with His birth. God was preparing the peoples for His doctrine, and ordained that the Roman Emperor should rule the whole world. . . . It is well known that the birth of Jesus took place in the reign of Augustus, who had united most of the peoples into a single dominion. The presence of a number of kingdoms would have hindered the diffusion of Jesus' doctrine over the whole earth, not merely on account of the causes already named, but also because the peoples would then have been compelled to

¹ See Harnack, *Mission u. Ausbreitung*, etc., p. 13.

wage war and defend their fatherland. . . . How, in that case, could this peaceful doctrine, which does not for a moment permit revenge upon one's enemies, have penetrated and found a reception, if the circumstances of the world in every direction had not taken a more peaceful shape at the time when Jesus appeared? " We will not dwell on this most noteworthy feature of the situation which Professor Ramsay has made so familiar to students of early Christianity, the unity of the Empire, expressed in the Imperial cult, as a wonderful preparation for a universal religion and a universal Church.¹

Enough has been said to indicate some of the positive as well as negative bearings of Emperor worship upon the apostolic preaching and its influence. The antagonism between the Imperial cult and Christianity must have been enormously intensified by the very fact that Christ and the Emperor were worshipped under synonymous titles which established identical claims upon the adoration and devotion of the worshippers. But this identity must, in turn, have opened up avenues in the Hellenistic mind for the entrance of the highest Christian conceptions. Moreover, the quasi-Messianic significance of the new Imperial order, which ultimately led to Emperor worship, was the counterpart of the new dispensation of grace which was heralded by the Christian missionaries in the name of Jesus the Christ. And, finally, the unification of the Roman provinces, a process whose basis was the State-religion, was unconsciously preparing the way of the Lord. Even externally, although this consideration opens up a vista into another far-reaching branch of the subject, the intimate relationship of the two orders can be maintained. "It

¹ *Letters to the Seven Churches*, pp. 29, 115, 127, etc.; *Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 133, 192, 362, etc.; also, Wendland, *Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur*, pp. 93 ff.; L. Hahn, *Rom und Romanismus*, pp. 99-104, 169-176.

is a remarkable testimony," says Hirschfeld,¹ "to the continuity of all human development, even when, to all appearance, it is accomplished in sharp contrast to its past, that the Christian Church in no small measure derived the outward forms, titles, and insignia for its councils and priests from that provincial Emperor worship which, for three centuries, had constituted the Pagan emblem of Roman Imperial unity in the East and in the West."

H. A. A. KENNEDY.

A FOURTH-CENTURY LYCAONIAN BISHOP.

II.

THE biography, in nineteen condensed lines, of a Roman country gentleman who served as a military officer in a Provincial governor's train under the Emperor Diocletian, who suffered many tortures under Maximin rather than be disloyal to the Christian faith, and who afterwards administered an important bishopric during a period of peculiar romance in the history of the early Christian Church—the period of the first Emperor who took up arms for Christianity, and of the last armed champion of paganism—is preserved to us in the Epitaph of Bishop Eugenius, found last summer at Laodiceia Combusta, and published in the *EXPOSITOR* for November of last year. The sketch given there of the career of Eugenius in its historical setting, and the attempt made to appraise the bearing of the evidence contained in his epitaph on our knowledge of the relations between Church and Empire was necessarily brief and inadequate. It is only with time, and with close study of the history of the period, that the full significance of a miniature autobiography from the hand of a man who lived through such an epoch of disruption and recon-

¹ *Loc. cit.* p. 862.