

The Cult of Isis under the Empire

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS FOR THE M.A. EXAMINATION.

Beltrami

THE CULT OF ISIS IN ITALY UNDER THE EMPIRE.

1. Introductory. The Egyptian Isis - origin unknown - a primordial deity. Hieroglyphic texts prove her to have held a different position from all other goddesses, whose attributes she gradually absorbs until she becomes ● *ἡνὶ τὸ γυναικὸς καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐστὶν ἡνὶ*
2. The Hellenised Cult. "Le culte alexandrien qui se répandit dans le monde gréco-romain sortait du Sérapeum d'Alexandrie." Policy of Ptolemy Soter aimed at a religion acceptable alike to Greeks and Egyptians. His methods. The next stage - Serapis = Osiris - Apis. The story of Ptolemy's dream in Plutarch De Is. et Os. 28 and Tac. Hist. 4. Establishment of the new cult in the Serapeum, its immediate success. Characteristics : 1. syncretism, 2. philosophy (Plutarch) 3. personal salvation and immortality as offered by mysteries.
3. Diffusion. Very early communication between Italy and Egypt. Constantly increasing trade with E. Mediterranean. Introduced into Sicily and Delos, thence to Puteoli, from there finally to S. Italy, Naples and Pompeii. Chief media of dissemination were 1. merchants, 2. soldiers, 3. embassies, 4. importation of Egyptians and others for manual work. (Tac. Ann. 14.44)
4. The Cult in Rome and Italy - reasons for popularity - festivals and mysteries with special reference to Plutarch ~~2~~ and Apuleius.
5. The Cult in Rome and Italy. History from the founding of the College of Pastophores by Sulla in 80 B.C. to the destruction of the Serapeum at Alexandria in 391 A.D.
6. Relation to and analogies with Christianity. Why the "exitiabilis superstitio" finally triumphed.
7. Conclusion.

Bartram

THE CULT OF ISIS IN ITALY UNDER THE EMPIRE.

O great mother whose birth is not to be revealed, O great goddess mysterious, whom none know, O renewing that renews itself, great, whose veil has not been lifted, ah, raise thy garment, O hidden one.

Funeral Papyrus of the XXVIth dynasty

θεοῦ οὐ θείου τινὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐν εἴῃ, καθάπερ ἐκεῖ φασὶν τὰ τὸν πολλὸν
τούτων σεσωμένα χρόνον μέλη τῆς Ἰσιδος ποιήματα γεγονάαι.

Plat. Laws II.657.

θεοὺς γὰρ δὴ οὐ τὰς αὐτὰς ἀπαντες σέβονται πλὴν Ἰσιος
τε καὶ Ὀσίριος.

Hdt. II.42.

ἐγὼ εἶμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονὸς καὶ ὄν καὶ ἐσόμενον, καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν
πέπλον οὐδεὶς πω θνητὸς ἀπεκάλυψεν.

Plut. de Isid. 9.

In quidem sancta et humani generis sospitatrix perpetua semper
fovendis mortalibus munifica, dulcem matris affectionem miserorum
casibus tribuis. Nec dies nec quies ulla ac ne momentum quidem
tenue tuis transcurrit beneficiis otiosum quin mari terraque homines
protegas.

Apuleius Met. XI.25.

" From the banks of the Nile, from the deep valleys of Libya, from the plateaux of Asia Minor, from the vast neighbouring plains of Babylon and from the more distant lands of Irania divers cults were transported during the first centuries of the Christian era¹ to the countries of the West and North. These cults were not like the Graeco-Roman cults. They differed from them, not only in name and exterior aspect, but also and especially in the fundamental character of their divinities, of whom each, by his votaries, was imagined as being the divinity all-powerful, supreme, even unique."²

Thus that concise and able historian, M. Toutain, summarises in three sentences the diffusion of the oriental cults to Rome, their origin and character.

In attempting to consider the transference of modes of thought and feeling from one centre to another and their germination in the fresh milieu, three prime factors should be taken into account. They are: 1. the vitality of the ideas, 2. the channels or media of transference, 3. the susceptibility, or suitability, of the new environment.

That the religion " from the banks of the Nile" had extraordinary vitality is evidenced no less by its diffusion into almost every corner of the Graeco-Roman world, where it numbered among its adherents races as different as Germans and Greeks, as by its survival, in the first century B.C., of repeated persecutions and

1. More strictly, two, including the preceding centuries, with the installation of the black statue of the Magna Mater in the Temple of Victory, Nones of April, 204.

2. Toutain, " Les Cultes Païens sous l'Empire Romain." Ch. VII.

suppression, and its long persistence well on into the Christian era, outlasting all the other pagan cults, oriental or western.

Was there perhaps in this faith some secret, some inherent vitality quite apart from the varied nature of its appeal, which held it together and kept it alive through all those centuries, after its fellow pagan cults had vanished, co-existent for more than three hundred years with the only worship that could vanquish it, Christianity ?

The answer may be found in a necessarily brief glance at the religion of Egypt. Of immense antiquity, connected with one of the oldest civilisations of the world, of which it was an integral part, which it would almost be correct to say it dominated, it had in the course of thousands of years become immensely powerful. And of its puissant and venerable pantheon one of the oldest deities, and, the most universal, was she whom, thousands of years afterwards dwellers in a far-off land were to hail in a foreign tongue as "omnium elementorum domina ¹ sancta et humani generis sospitatrix ²," Isis of the Thousand Names.

Egyptologists can reveal nothing as to her origin, though she is very frequently mentioned in the hieroglyphic texts. One such significantly refers to her as "The goddess who began the divine births", upon which Pierret's comment is: "C'est un titre de divinité primordiale, analogue à celui de ' dieu grand, commencement du devenir ' porté par Ptah et ses similaires." ³ Indeed, as to her status in the

1. Ap. Met. XI. 5. 2. Id. 25. 3. Le Panthéon Egyptien.

Egyptian system there can be no doubt. An examination of the texts of all periods proves that she held in the minds of her worshippers a position entirely different from that of any other goddess, and though views varied from time to time, and certain aspects were more generally worshipped at one epoch than at another, she was, from the earliest period to the latest, the greatest goddess of the Egyptians. Long before copies of the Pyramid Texts were written, her attributes were well defined, and even when the priests of Heliopolis assigned to her the place which she held among their gods between B.C.4000 and 3000, the duties which she was thought to perform in connection with the dead were well-established and identical with those she performed in the cult of the Graeco-Roman period.

Her essential character of great and beneficent goddess and mother, whose influence and love pervaded heaven and earth and all things under the earth, the conception of the cosmic feminine creative power which conceived and brought forth every living thing "from the gods in heaven to the insect on the ground", so well attested by Hellenistic literature, had come down unchanged through the ages.

But she was not only the Creator, she was the preserver also, she legislated for¹ nourished² taught³ and healed⁴ the races of men - then as always in need of every such care- and protected them beyond the grave. (In the Book of the Dead she appears as offering food to the deceased.)

1 Diod.I.17 2. Id. I.13 3. Aug.de Civ. Dei XVIII.37 Varro Aut.frgt. apud Aug.de Civ.Dei XVIII 40 4. Diod.I.25, Tib. I.3, Galen De Comp.Med.V.773-4 to quote only a few.These late writers merely affirm her ancient functions.

Her general titles from Egyptian sources attest these high functions and qualities ; she is the divine one, the only one, the greatest of the gods and goddesses, the female Ra, (the eye of Ra, the crown of Ra), opener of the year, maker of the sunrise, lady of heaven, lady of the North wind, queen of the earth, most mighty one, queen of the South and North, lady of the solid earth, lady of warmth and fire, lady of life, lady of the green crops, the green goddess, lady of abundance, lady of joy and gladness, lady of love.¹

As was natural with so mighty a deity, she continually absorbed the attributes of others, thus increasing not only her functions and powers but also, of course, her sphere of influence geographically, so that by the time of the Saite & Greek periods (663 onwards) she was definitely universal. Sourdille in his fine study² summarises this process. "She (Isis) was, turn by turn, Neit at Sais, Bastit at Bubastis, Outit at Tanis; her domain, in a word, extended its bounds from day to day; in herself she united all the goddesses of Egypt, she condensed all their titles, all their functions, all their qualities, she was in truth " the goddess with a thousand names".

It would be possible, as her votary Apuleius has done, to sow with the whole sack, but sufficient will have been said at least to suggest the might of this deity, and the universality of her functions, who finally, together with her spouse and brother, Osiris (Serapis) and their son Horus (Harpocrates) were received "in templa Romana."³

1. Brugsch. Religion und Mythologie der alten Egypter p. 647

2. Herodote et la Religion del'Egypte.

3. Lucan. VIII 831

Egyptologists, owing as much to differences of point of view as to the insufficiency of documents, differ considerably as to how the Egyptian religion is to be regarded. Is it a homogeneous whole which in the three thousand year journey through Egypt's history has undergone little or no evolution? Has it, on the other hand, as Maspero and others think, developed considerably from its animistic and totem~~istic~~^{istic} origins? Or conversely, has it degenerated from a primary lofty monotheism,¹ becoming more gross, and penetrated to a greater extent by magical and superstitious elements?

What was this religion which, rising from an unknown source like the great Nile, overflowed its banks, until it finally "in Tiberum defluxit" ? Were "the gods of the Egyptians" really the divinities worshipped at Edfu, Memphis, Denderah, Sais and Abydos? Were the rites by which they were honoured in these great temples identical with the "Aegyptica sacra" which we find in the first century B.C. being performed at Capua, Beneventum, Puteoli, Pompeii and Rome?

The answer involves some enquiry in at least two directions.

"Un fait parait certain; le culte égyptien qui se répandit dans le monde gréco-romain sortit du Sérapéum d'Alexandrie"². The sentence is a good one, suggesting that the Serapeum was a kind of transformer through^{which} the Egyptian religion was passed, to emerge as something other than it had been, both losing and gaining in the process.

1. cf "Hymn to Divinity" trans. Pierret, who is the chief supporter of this view.

2. Cumont " *Les Religions Orientales dans le Paganisme Romain*" (1929, p. 69).

The Serapeum of Alexandria - what was it? And an anterior and bigger question - why was it?

"Αἰγύπτιοι"¹) says Herodotus "Θεοσεβείας περιστάς μάλιστα πάντων ἀνθρώπων, and Εργασκείας ἐπιτελέουσι μυρίας, ὡς εἶπεν λόγῳ It was to this ancient civilisation, built up and fostered by religious beliefs, to which the genius of Ptolemy Soter, very early recognising the need, applied itself. His task was a difficult and a delicate one. The history of Egypt under the Pharaohs showed that to incur the enmity of any of the powerful priestly guilds would be fatal. He must, if he were to achieve his vision of uniting the two races, Greek and Egyptian, destined to live under his rule, first lose in their eyes the character of "impure" which they attributed to foreigners, especially to Greeks. A hieroglyphic inscription found at Cairo in 1871, describing an incident illustrative of his methods, even when Satrap² of Egypt, to gain the allegiance of the priests, is worth quoting. "In the year 7, at the beginning of the inundation, under the government of the King Alexander ever-living, the friend of the divinities of the towns of Fe and of Tep.

It came about that His Holiness, who ruled likewise over the stranger lands, was in the interior of Asia : that was why there was in Egypt a governor of the name of Ptolemy. He was a man in the flower of his youth, strong of arm, strong of foot, wise, steadfast of heart, repulsing the most furious without turning his back.

That which his lips pronounced was irrevocable, and none

1.II.37. 2. Brugsch. Ein Decret Ptolemaios' des Sohnes Lagi des Satrapen, in Zeitschr. f. Aeg. Sprache, IX (1871), p.1-13.

equalled him among all the strangers. He had brought back the images of the divinities, as also all the gear and all the books which were the property of the temples of Egypt: he set them all back in their ancient place. For his residence he chose the fortress of the King Alexander, on the shore of the Ionian sea, at the place which aforetime was called Rhacotis,¹ He had assembled a great number of Ionians with their horses, and a quantity of ships with their equipment when he set out with his army for the country of the Syrians, who had entered into a war with him. He pounced upon them with a bold and powerful leap, like a vulture on little birds. When he had seized them all together, he brought into Egypt their princes, their horses, their fleet and all their works of art. When he returned to Egypt he had joy of heart, and this great Satrap was lavish in gifts to the gods of Upper and of Lower Egypt.

Then did one of his companions, with the elders of Lower Egypt, speak to him thus: 'The realm bordering the lake (the *Βουτηνὴ λίμνη* of Strabo XVII. 802) that men call Patanout, the King Khabbash did make of it a gift to the divinities of the towns of Pe and of Tep. This was, when His Holiness came to the towns of Pe and of Tep to visit the region bordering on the lake, which formed part of his domains, in order to enter the swamps and to learn to know all the branches of the Nile which go out into the sea,

Then His Holiness said to his companions: 'Let someone inform me of this domain bordering on the lake'.

1. Strabo XVII 792

And they spake in the presence of His Holiness as follows: "The domain bordering on the lake, which men call Patanout, was from time immemorial the property of the divinities of Pe and of Tep. But the hereditary enemy Xerxes changed the order of things, for he left of it nothing to the divinities of Pe and of Tep."

Then spake His Holiness: "Let the priests and the magistrates of Pe and of Tep be brought before me!" And they were presented to him with all diligence. Then said His Holiness: "I would know what importance have the divinities of Pe and of Tep, and what they did to the hereditary enemy Xerxes in return for the attack he made upon them, for it is said that the enemy Xerxes did wrong to Pe and to ^T Tep, and took away their possessions from them!" They replied to His Holiness: "The King our Master Horus,¹ the son of Isis and Osiris, the Master of Masters, the King of the Kings of Egypt, the avenger of his father, the lord of Pe, the beginning and the end of the gods, after whom there shall be no more a king, did expel the sacrilegious Xerxes from his palace with his eldest son, inasmuch as that day he made himself visible at Sais, a town of Neith, by the side of his holy mother!"² Then said His Holiness: "This god powerful among gods, after whom there shall no more be a king, he shall be the way and the rule of My Holiness, this I swear." Then the priests and the magistrates of Pe and of Tep said: "In that case, may it please Thy Holiness to decree that the domain bordering on the lake, which men call Patanout, be restored to the divinities of Pe and of Tep with all its revenues."

1. See infra

2. i.e. Isis, identified with Neith.

Let the gift renewed to the divinities of Pe and of Tep be registered a second time under thy name, in recompense for thy generous conduct. Then the governor said: "A decree shall be drawn up in writing in the office of the royal clerk of the Treasury, in form as follows:-

' I, Ptolemy the Satrap, do restore the territory of Patanout to the god Horus, avenger of his father, Lord of Pe, and to Bouto, sovereign lady of Pe and of Tep, from this day henceforth and for ever, with all its villages, all its towns, all its inhabitants, all its fields, all its waters, all its animals, all its birds, all its flocks and herds, and all that is born and produced therein, such as it was aforesaid and with all that has been added thereto by the gifts of the King Khabbash. Let its boundary in the South be the town of Bouto and the town of Hermopolis in Lower Egypt as far as the place called Na-a-in-n-hap ; in the north the dune that runs along the shore of the sea; in the West, the windings of the river navigable as far as the dune; in the East the nome Sebennys. Its calves shall belong to the great hawks, its bulls to the face of the goddess Nebtani, its beeves to the living hawks, its milk to the glorious nurse, its fowl to him who is in the Sha-t¹ and who draws for himself his own life; and all that grows on its soil shall be for the altar table of Horus himself, the lord of Pe, and for Bouto, the Head of Ra-Harmachis, for ever.²"

Thus Ptolemy, strong of arm. Other documents show that he had

1. The inundation. 2. Trans. from Buché Leclercq. Histoire des Lagides p.105 ff.

temples repaired or rebuilt at Karnak, Luxor and in other places.¹

But this system of winning over the priests was merely a preliminary to a more daring piece of political enterprise whose object was to draw together Greeks and Egyptians into one faith. A cult, he saw, was needed—capable of Hellenisation if it were to attract the Greeks, but Egyptian in origin if it were to retain the Egyptians. Alexandria was obviously the focus indicated for the new worship, and it is here, very little later, that we find instituted the cult of Serapis, in one of the largest and most imposing temples of the world, the Serapeum, from which presently issued that syncretic religion which was destined to inundate the Graeco-Roman world.²

Who, then, was Serapis? For nearly a thousand years before the foundation of Alexandria Osiris-Apis had been venerated at Memphis under the form of a bull, so that at the period we mention, there already existed a deity called Osiris-Apis, with the attributes of Osiris, lord of the under-world and spirit of the Nile.—Osor-Apis, Sor-Apis, Ser (Sar-Apis).

An attempt, however, at the transplantation of this existing deity would have failed with the Greeks as being altogether too brusque a move. The next link in the chain is presented by the story—related also by Tacitus³, Clement of Alexandria⁴, and Cyril⁵ in Plutarch's "De Iside et Osiride". "Ptolemy"⁶ he says, "dreamed that he saw at Sinope the colossal figure of Pluto, who ordered him to bring the

1. Bouché Leclercq, op. cit., who gives data. 2. Indeed "through creeks and inlets" the process had already begun.
3. Hist. 4.84. 4. Protrept. 4.28. 5. In Jul. p. 13 ed. Spanheim.
6. Ch. 28 (summarised).

divine image with all speed to Alexandria. One Sosybius, a πολυπλάγης
 ἀνθρώπος told Ptolemy that he had actually seen this statue at
 Sinope, whereupon the King sent Soteles and Dionysius to the spot,
 οἱ πολλῶν χρόνων καὶ μόλις, οὐκ ἴδεν μὲντοι θείας προνοίας,
 ἦγχαρον ἐκκλεψάντες.

Manetho of Sebynnytus, one of Ptolemy's most intimate counsellors,
 and Timotheus the Eumolpid,² his interpreter, persuaded the King
 that it was no other than Serapis. After the statue³ was set up in
 Alexandria "it received the name that Pluto bore among the Egyptians,
 i. e., Serapis."

Tacitus here adds the interesting detail that the god embarked
 unaided on one of the ships that lay beached on the shore and
 accomplished the journey to Alexandria in three days, and that a
 temple was built for him "in accordance with the size of the city in
 a place called Rhacotis, where there had existed an ancient shrine
 of Serapis and Isis.

..... Many take the god to be Aesculapius, because he cured
 disease, others for Osiris, the oldest god of that people, some
 again, for Jupiter, as being the sovereign lord of the world, but
 most people, by his clearly-marked attributes,⁴ as father Dis - or
 so they conjecture."

1. Plut. loc. cit. 2. Who in Tacitus' version, Hist. IV. 83-4, had
 summoned him "ut antistitem caerimoniarum Eleusini!" He prefaces
 his account by saying that the vision appeared to Ptolemy "cum
 Alexandriae recens conditae moenia templaque et religiones adderet"
 Cf. Plut. loc. cit. 3. There is no reason why the statue of Pluto, (?)
 probably the work of Bryaxis, should not have been brought from
 Sinope. 4. Plut. loc. cit.

Macrobius,¹ if he is to be believed, carries the story a little further by saying that the worship of this deity was imposed on the Egyptians: "Nam illi (i.e. Aegyptii) neque Saturnum nec ipsum Serapim receperant in arcana templorum usque ad Alexandri Macedonis occasum; post quem tyrannide Ptolemaeorum pressi hos quoque deos in cultum recipere Alexandrinorum more, apud quos praecipue colebantur, coacti sunt."²

But whatever the difficulties which surrounded its inception, the new cult was, as proved by coins and inscriptions,³ immediately and continuously successful.

It had, indeed, all the elements which would make for success in the Hellenic world:-

1. A powerful trinity -Serapis(Osiris)-Isis-Horus (Harpocrates) Egyptian in origin, hence with all the prestige of an immemorial tradition, yet identified with Greek deities.
2. The offer, through the mysteries, of intimate mystical knowledge of the divinities worshipped.
3. A philosophy.

A good deal has been made by scholars of what was undoubtedly a fact, namely the very wide difference between the old Egyptian religion and the now hellenised cult. Preller⁴ says that only the "background" was Egyptian, the "clothing" essentially Hellenistic. Scott-Moncrieff, the extreme upholder of this view, calls the religion of Alexandria "a bastard offering". He stresses the crude

1. Sat. I. 7. 14. 2. Discussions on the origin of Serapis form a complete bibliography, a summary of which is given by Cumont, op. cit. (1929) p. 232. 3. G. Lafaye: Darenberg et Saglio, art. Serapis. 4. Rom. Myth.

and materialistic elements of the Egyptian cult,¹ the formalism- which became, undoubtedly, much modified- and the absence of any philosophical interpretation of the myths, such as that given by Plutarch.² In these respects he is quite right. Even a cursory study of some of the inscriptions and hymns of the earlier dynasties, and a comparison with those of Hellenic times reveals a marked difference in outlook and language. Such, for example, as an account in the Book of the Dead, dating from the 16th century B.C., of how the King lassoes and disembowels the gods, cooks them in his kettle and eats them:-

"Their great ones for his morning meal,
 Their middle-sized ones for his evening meal,
 Their little ones for his night meal."

could certainly have found no acceptance among the worshippers in any Serapeum.

But a religion, fundamentally, is based upon its God, and the worshipper's religious life consists in putting himself into relation ^{with} that God and of ultimately fusing his personality with Him. Ritualist or Quaker, each would acknowledge the goal, though the one would seek to attain it through a sacrament, led up to by ceremonial pageantry with its accompaniments of music and colour, and the other by striving in the silence to realise the Inner Light. Is it not just possible that this simple fact has been lost sight of? Osiris, detached very early from his totemic origin,

1. J.H.S. 1909. 2. And which would be current considerably earlier.

was always a great civilising deity, "the beginning of becoming", and his wife and sister Isis, through whose ministrations alone he is revived to become the "lord of eternity", always the greatest of the gods and goddesses, the most mighty one, and as such they continue until the ~~Sä N. A. D. A. U. R. U. N. G.~~ end.

Of the evolution of the religion during the ensuing centuries there is little evidence. But Plutarch's treatise combines and condenses the various Egyptian traditions¹ which, it is to be repeated, form the actual fabric of the worship, and at the same time it is penetrated by other elements which enrich the cult.

His narrative, necessarily abbreviated, is as follows:-

Osiris was the brother of Isis, with whom he was united even in the womb of their mother, Rhea.² When he was born "a voice proclaimed³ that the Lord of All had come upon the earth. From the beginning of his reign he redeemed the Egyptians from their privations and the depredations of wild beasts, gave them laws, showed them how to recognise plants good for food and taught them to honour the gods. Later, he set forth on a kind of civilising world tour.⁴ He had

seldom to have recourse to arms, *πειροὶ δὲ τοὺς πλείστους καὶ λόγῳ μετ' ᾧδῶν παιγῶν καὶ μουσικῆς θελγόμενος προσαγόμενον ὅθεν Ἕλλησι δόξαι Διονύσου τὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι.*

During the absence of Osiris,

1. He had read and he quotes every previous Greek writer on Egypt.
 2. Nut. 3. τῇ μὲν πρώτῃ τὸν Ὀσίριν γενέσθαι καὶ φωνῆν αὐτῷ τεχθέντι συνε-
 -πεσεῖν, ὡς ὁ πάντων κύριος εἰς φῶς πρόεισιν. Ch. 12.
 4. cf. Diod. Sic. I. 17.

his brother, the impious Typhon (Set), could make no move,
 διὰ τὸ τῆν Ἴσιν εὖ μάλα φυλάττεσθαι καὶ προσέχειν ἐγχερατῶς ἔχουσαν.¹

But on the King's return, Typhon, with the aid of seventy-two accomplices, further assisted by an Ethiopian queen called Aso, hatched a diabolical plot. He had secretly taken the measurements of Osiris, and had had a chest made to these, richly ornamented. Then, having invited Osiris and the conspirators (Isis apparently was not included) to the banquet, he jokingly said that he would make a present of the chest to anyone whom it fitted. All the guests lay down inside it in turn, until finally Osiris got in and stretched himself out. The conspirators rushed to close the chest, nailed down the lid, sealed it with molten² lead, carried it out and pushed it into the Nile, whence it was washed out to sea. All this happened on the 17th of the month Athyr.² Isis, informed of the terrible happening, wandered about in cruel anguish, questioning everyone she met. At length two children told her into which branch of the Nile the chest had been dropped, so that she was able finally to find it at Byblos.³ After certain adventures, she took the precious burden back to Bouto and left it in a retired spot while she went to look for Horus.⁴ Typhon, however, hunting by moonlight, found and recognised the corpse, hacked it into fourteen fragments and flung them to the winds.⁵ Isis then resumed her sad task and sought her

1. De Is. 13. 2. 13th Nov. of the Julian calendar. 3. A Phoenician town, celebrated for its cult of Adonis. 4. He was born of the ante-natal union mentioned on p. 15. 5. Diod. I. 21. gives a variant: (φασί) τὸ σῶμα τοῦ φανεθέντος εἰς ἑξ̄ καὶ εἴκοσι μέρη δύναι τῶν συνεπιτεμένων ἐκδοτῶ.

husband's body, journeying in a bark of papyrus, among the delta swamps. Each fragment as she found it she buried, and raised a tomb over the spot, allowing the priests of each sanctuary to imagine that theirs enshrined the whole body!

This ends the story of the "passion" of Osiris - τὰ δείκνυλα τοῦ παθόντος αὐτοῦ. ² The remainder of the drama, ^{since} ~~through~~ it formed an essential part of the autumn festival and of the mysteries, ³ ~~q.e.~~ ^{namely,} his resurrection, is treated cursorily and incompletely by Plutarch. "The priests," he says, ⁴ "to represent the mourning of the goddess, ⁵ cover a golden cow with a black linen shroud, and expose it for four consecutive days. On the evening of the fourth day they go down towards the sea carrying a sacred casket containing a small golden box into which they pour the river-water, ⁶ whereupon the bystanders raise a shout: "Osiris has been found!" ⁷ They then soak some sown earth with water, add perfumes and spices, and in the form of a crescent moon fashion a little figure which they dress and adorn." It is, of course buried, and with the germination of the seeds the resurrection of Osiris is complete.

1. μόνον δὲ τῶν μερῶν τοῦ Ὀσίριδος τῆν ἴσιν οὐκ εὐρεῖν τὸ ἀεδοῖον -- ὡστ' αὐτ' ἐκείνου μίμημα ποιησαμένην καθειρῶσαι τὸν φάλλον, ὃ καὶ νῦν ἐκτάξεν πρὸς Αἰγυπτίους.
cf. Diod. I.88 and Hdt. II.48.

cf. Diod. I.88, and Hdt. II.48, for the ithyphallic puppets carried by the women in the festival of Dionysus. 2. Hdt. II.171.

3. The fuller account and the part played by Isis will be given later

4. De Is. et Os. 39. 5. cf. Diod. I.85 and Hdt. II.129. 6. Osiris was imagined as being recovered in the water of the Nile. 7. εὐρήκαμεν.

The figure of Osiris¹ is a complex one, even in the Egyptian system, and an exhaustive interpretation would be needed to explain his diverse aspects. He was: a solar deity, the Nile, the fecundating principle, a corn-god probably,² as well as finally and particularly, lord and judge of the under-world and of the dead. But for Plutarch, as for other Platonists, beneath the myths lay profound cosmic truths. Osiris is not merely the Nile, but the male or first and energising principle of a duality, from whom Isis as the female or second and passive member receives imprints and forms "as wax receives the impression of a seal." ἢ γὰρ Ἴσις ἔστι μὲν τὸ τῆς φύσεως Θήλυ καὶ δεικτικὸν ἀπάτης γενεσέως, καθὼ τιθήνη καὶ πανθεχὴς ὑπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος, ὑπὲρ δὲ τῶν πολλῶν μυστικῶν κἀκαλεῖται διὰ τὸ ἄπασας ὑπὲρ τοῦ λόγου τραπεζομένη μυστικῶς δεχέσθαι καὶ ἰδέσθαι. In thus doing she carries out the will of the Logos, receives only the good, for which she has an innate love and longing, and repels the bad,⁵ forming in her womb Horus, the perceptible image of the sensible world.

Typhon is aridity, emptiness, the enemy of the humid principle, and his hostility to Isis and Osiris represents the endless struggle of evil with good, of Ahriman with Ahuramazda, of the Powers of Darkness with those of Light. AN & KASALTE, Thus : οὐθ' ἠλίον οὐθ' οὐρανὸν οὐθ' αἴθρα οὐθ' οὐρανὸν Ἴσιριν ἢ Ἴσιν ὀρθῶς ἔχει νομίζειν οὐδὲ πῦρ Τυφῶνα πάλιν οὐδ' αἰχμὸν οὐδὲ θάλατταν, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς ὅσον ἐστὶν ἐν ταῦτοις ἀμετρον καὶ ἀτακτον ὑπερβολαῖς καὶ ἐνδείαις Τυφῶνι προσνέμοντες, τὸ δὲ κεκοσμημένον καὶ ἁγνόν καὶ ὠφέλιμον ὡς Ἴσιδος μὲν ἔργον εἰκόνα δὲ καὶ κίημα καὶ λόγον Ὀσιρίδος σεβόμενος καὶ τιμῶντες οὐκ ἐν ἁμαρτάνομεν.

1. It has been necessary to confine attention to him for the moment, since he is as inextricably linked in the mysteries particularly, as Demeter with Kore and Cybele with Attis. 2. Frazer. Adonis, Attis, Osiris, 277. 3. 40A, 51A. 4. De Is. et Os. 53-4. 5. Set-Typhon.

But this interpretation, interesting as it is from the point of view of the philosopher and the student of comparative religion was probably ignored by the majority of Isis-worshippers. A further conception, inserted almost casually and dealt with rather cursorily by Plutarch had a far greater influence, traces of which are even recognisable in Christianity. "Typhon, Isis and Osiris," he says ¹ invoking the authority of Plato and Pythagoras, "are more correctly thought of as great daemons!"

The earliest mention of these beings is in Hesiod's Erga: his daemons are men of the golden age who while living a blissful and deathless life are yet linked in sympathy with suffering humanity, "Ministers of good and guardians of men!" The doctrine was held, in some sense, by all the greater thinkers, Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Xenophanes. Pythagoras' school related it to purification and metempsychosis. Plato developed it considerably. For him, the gulf between God and man is spanned by a hierarchy of superhuman beings, who, compounded of mingled mortal and divine elements, ² act as intermediaries between them. Indeed, the "Jacob's ladder" ³ reaching from earth to heaven with angels mounting and descending is a very general conception.

1. Ch. XXV

2. 157.

2. Cf. Plut. loc. cit.

3. Cf. The Rainbow Bridge in Norse mythology.

By the 2nd century A.D. this multiplication of spiritual powers had progressed to such an extent that Maximus of Tyre¹ reckoned the heavenly host at thirty thousand, and Petronius² - speaking, no doubt a true word in jest- said that it was easier to find gods than men in his particular surroundings. Though not a special feature of Alexandrian religion as practised in Rome, this belief in the near presence of supernatural beings has a special bearing.

One obvious consequence is the faith that their aid can be invoked in guidance and healing - hence that surrender to magic of all kinds with ^{which} the religion became invested, the "Isiaci con-
-jectores"³ early succeeding to the "superstitiosi vates impudentesque harioli" of Ennius' time.

Though the philosophical interpretation, then, of the Egyptian legend, was essentially Greek, it yet had its Roman counterpart in the worship of innumerable divine powers. One cannot but feel that this, in itself, was only an aspect of another process, itself an expression of the tendencies of the age - the constantly developing process of syncretism. An inevitable accompaniment of a dawning internationalism, brought about by the constant ebb and flow up and down the Mediterranean basin of traders, of soldiers, of teachers of administrators and their staffs, it was equally a symptom of a widened religious consciousness, and entirely natural. Deities of the same religion, previously distinct and separately invoked, would fuse, the more powerful predominating, once their similarities

1. Diss. XIV.8. 2. Sat. 17: nostra regio tam praesentibus plena est numinibus, ut facilius possis deum quam hominem invenire.
3. Cic. De Div. 1.58.

had been perceived, as in the case of the absorption by Isis of various local goddesses. On the other hand, two divinities belonging to two different religions can be naturally assimilated and finally identified, once the similarities are perceived.

When the process first began is very doubtful. P. Foucart, in an admirable work¹ establishes to the satisfaction of most² a very early connection between the Egyptian and the Dionysiac and Eleusinian mysteries.³ In any case in the time of Herodotus, the identification of the triad Demeter-Dionysus-Apollo with Isis-Osiris-Horus is so fully established that he mentions entirely without comment

1. that at Busiris there was a great temple of Isis "who is in the Greek tongue Demeter"⁴ 2. that "in Egyptian, Apollo is Horus, Demeter Isis,⁵ and 3. "Osiris, they say, is Dionysus"^{5a}

In any case, by the time of Apuleius, we find Isis playing the role of all the principal goddesses in the Greek and Roman pantheon. Inscriptions, epithets and monuments all confirm this. Serapis, too, is already identified with Pluto as god of the dead, and with Dionysus as a nature god who is slain to live again. He is also Jupiter, the supreme deity,⁶ and Aesculapius.

1. Recherches sur l'Origine des Mysteres d'Eleusis.

2. Prof. Gardner (Art. Mysteries, Greek, in Hastings' E.R.E.) says that Foucart's theory "has met with little acceptance", a remark I cannot help thinking exaggerated, and his own refutation of it cursory.

3. The question will be discussed more fully later. 4. Ἴσις δὲ ἐστὶ κατὰ τὴν Ἑλληνῶν γλῶσσαν Δημήτηρ (II. 59) 5. Ἀπόλλων μὲν Ὡρεός, Δημήτηρ δὲ Ἴσις (II. 156). 5a τὸν (i.e. Ὡσίριος) Διόνυσον εἶναι λέγουσι. II. 42

6. Ἐἰς Ζεὺς Σάραπις, C.I.G. 7014. The inscription surrounded the profile on gems. See Lafaye, p. 306. A tablet bearing the same inscription was found in the Mithraeum of the baths of Caracalla, "Mithra" being scratched over the "Sarapis". (Cumont)

All these attributes naturally give the worship a tremendous influence, and all of them find their counterparts in Isis, who in the Roman period eclipsed her lord, becoming to her devotees all that Serapis, in the earlier period was to his. Plutarch describes him as *παντα κεινός*¹ and his contemporary Aristides, Serapis' most gifted and fervent devotee, who perhaps originated the formula quoted below, says that men invoke Serapis who alone is Zeus.² In the same way the Isis of Apuleius³ is "all things to all men," each nation finds in her its own great goddess: she is, in the phrase of the well-known and oft-quoted inscription of Capua "una quae est omnia."

Even to attempt a summary of the development of syncretism during the first four centuries of our era is beyond the scope of this paper. Sufficient that by the second century the process had so developed that "men seemed to have adopted the mythology of every race and to have superadded a new mythology of positively boundless fecundity." Inscriptions of the type of: "Jovi Junoni Minervae Soli Mithrae Herculi Marti Genio Loci Diis Deabusque omnibus"⁴ became common. Though it was Isis especially to whom the epithets *πολυώνυμος*, *μυριώνυμος*, *μυριόμορφος* applied, they might in a lesser degree have been used by many a worshipper to invoke his own particular divinity. It has well been described as "a movement of ideas",⁵ at once religious, philosophic and international, of which

1. De. Is. 4. 2. p. 21 *supra*. (Cumont p. 9)
 3. Op. cit. XI. 5. 4. C. I. L. VIII. 4578. 5. Toutain, op. cit.

the cumulative influence was far more than that of any of the individual worships which composed it. All the great empires brought their gods to the common stock: they ~~were~~ combined, assimilated and fused; they ~~share~~ ^{have} temples and dedications in common; to name one was to name another, and to name either to name all. Rome, in which all this now centered, was indeed the "melting pot", presenting a "crucible rather than a "conflict" of religions.

This was polytheism at its most varied and most vigorous, yet from it there was gradually emerging and taking shape what at a first survey looks like an opposite conception - monotheism- yet the consciousness of the One, of unity amid diversity, marks a stage in the spiritual perception only to be reached after the recognition of the many.

So it is possible for Saturninus of Thugga, Bishop of Africa, to write: "Gentiles, quamvis idola colant, tamen summum deum patrem creatorem cognosc^unt et confiteⁿtur!" And on the other side Maximus of Mandaura, the pagan correspondent of Augustine ^{argues:} "Equidem unum esse deum summum, ⁱⁿ ~~sub~~ initio, ⁱⁿ ~~sub~~ prole naturae, patrem magnum atque magnificentum, quis tam demens, tam mente captus, neget esse certissimum? Nam deus omnibus religionibus commune nomen est: Ita fit ut, dum eius quasi quaedam membra carptim variis supplicationibus prosequimur, solum colere profecto videamur!"

Perhaps not until this unity is realised at least partially can there arise that instinct, so characteristic of the worshippers of Isis, the desire to know and to become that which is worshipped. Only after Ikhnaton, like Spinoza, "a God-intoxicated man", a reformer

born out of his time, instituted in Egypt what might be called a sacerdotal revolution, erasing from every temple all the names of the gods and substituting one only, Aton, the visible sun, is there recorded any such hymn of intimate and personal appeal as he, and others under the same influence composed.

How manifold are thy works!

They are hidden before us,

O sole God, whose power none other possesseth,

Thou didst create the earth according to thy heart,

While thou wast alone.

Men live through thee,

Their eyes are upon thy beauty

Until thou settest.

Thou art in my heart.

The desire to know the godhead only intensifies the other deep-rooted human longing - or so indeed it used to be - the longing for immortality. And both must be accompanied by sanctification.¹ These further features are an essential part of the Graeco-Roman Isis-worship, and are the basis of its mysteries.

These various ^{elements} have been dwelt upon at some length in the attempt to estimate the greatness and power of the cult, however disfigured, as most religions at some point become, by accretions of superstition, savagery, (though the Isis cult is singularly free from this) and vice. It promised the fulfilment, as no other pagan worship did, of fundamental spiritual needs, and it might be maintained that, owing to its peculiar background, richness and depth to which these widely

1. De Is. et Os. passim.

differing elements contributed in their measure, this promise was fulfilled.

CHAPTER III

"Aux temps de l'hégémonie maritime des Ptolémées, Serapis et Isis, dieux politiques, partirent d'Alexandrie sur des vaisseaux de guerre avec les mercenaires égyptiens; ils débarquèrent à Chypre, Antioch, Delos, Athènes et en Sicilie, où on leur eleva des temples. Ils traversèrent encore la mer sur des vaisseaux de commerce, et leur culte fut propagé par les marchands et les marins qui tous vénéraient Isis, étoile de la mer, protectrice des matelots. Des ports de la Méditerranée hellénique, les galères d'Egypte gagnèrent les côtes d'Italie, de Gaule, d'Espagne, introduisant partout la dévotion spéciale d'Isis, attestée par les statuettes retrouvées çà et là dans le pays."

M.A. Moret's ¹dramatic little summary of the diffusion of the cult of Isis and Serapis is substantially correct, and only needs filling out and elaborating. The first contacts, however, of the Egyptian divinities with Greeks and Italians were made about a thousand years before the Serapeum was built. As early as the fourteenth century B.C. bands of Sicilians, Etruscans and Sardinians had crossed with their wives and families to the Delta, and were retained by the Pharaohs. ²There they would come under the influence of a religion far more powerful than their own, which would be primitive if not inchoate. ³Greek mercenaries served very early in the Egyptian armies. By the seventh century trade was well established between

²Lafaye, *Culte des Divinités d'Alexandrie hors de l'Egypte*, p. 38.

³Foucart, *op. cit.* who quotes Plat. *Crat.* 397 C.

¹*Rois et Dieux d'Egypte*.

Phoenicia and Etruria, traces of the Egyptian influence appearing particularly at Byblos.¹ Images, obviously copies of the pharaonic ones, were made at Tyre and Sidon, and transported in the ships of merchants (probably not as merchandise, but as mascots) to Etruria and Latium.² The year 350 is important. It was probably then that Egyptian merchants were granted the special privilege of raising temples to their gods in the suburbs of the Peiraeus.³ Half a century, however, was still to elapse before the strange gods were given a local habitation and a name in the city of Cecrops. Nor is this surprising, for it must be remembered that the cult introduced by these Egyptians was not that which issued from the Serapeum, but one which, externally, at least, would be entirely antipathetic to the Greek mind. In any case, foreign religions were disallowed in the capital, and their introduction punishable by death. The comic poets of the period made Egyptians and their ways the butt of their ridicule, though, judging from the few remaining fragments, the satire seems harmless enough. Both Antiphanes and Timocles wrote an *Αἴγυπτιος*, and Anaxandrides in his has some amusing verses pointing out contrasts in the way animals were used by the two nations, introduced by three lines in a true "East is East and West is West" strain :-⁴

οὐκ εἰς δονείμην συμμαχεῖν ὑμῖν ἐγώ·
 οὐθ' οἱ τέβποι γὰρ ὁμοῦσι, οὐθ' οἱ νόμοι
 ἡμῶν, ἀπ' ἀλλήλων δὲ διέχουσι πολὺ.

1. Luc. De Dea Syr. 5-8. 2. Perrot: Hist. de l'Art. III, 475, 526, 751-812. 3. C.I.A. II. 168. 4. Frag. ed. Meineke, p. 426.

But during these decades, the worship must undoubtedly been increasing, and though not officially recognised, have begun to be taken as a matter of course, particularly after the foundation of Alexandria and of the Serapeum. In 250 we have records of a fully organised association (ἑσπῆς) of Sarapiasti,¹ presided over by a woman, (προερανήστρια), which though still holding its meetings near the Piraeus temple marks a definite point in the development of the cult. It is generally agreed² that it was during the reigns of one of the first two Ptolemies that Isis and Serapis were first admitted inside the city walls. The authority for this is Pausanias³ who in his description of Athens says that the traveller descending to the lower part of the city "comes upon a statue of Serapis, whose worship was introduced from Ptolemy". He adds "Of the Egyptian sanctuaries the most famous of all is at Alexandria, the oldest at Memphis. Into this neither stranger nor priest may enter until they bury Apis."

About this time Nicocreon of Cyprus introduced the worship of Serapis into his dominions. Our authority for this information is Macrobius⁴ : "Accipe nunc, quod de sole vel Serapi pronuntiatur oraculo. nam Serapis, quem Aegypti deum maximum prodiderunt, oratus a Nicocreonte Cypriotum rege, quis deorum haberetur, his versibus sollicitam religionem regis instruxit"

οὐκ ἔστι θεὸς τοῖσδε μάθειν, οἷον κ' ἔγω εἶπω.
 οὐρανὸς κόσμος κεικλή, γαστήρ δὲ θάλασσα,
 γαῖα δὲ μοι πόδες εἶσι, τὰ δ' οὐρατ' ἐν αἰθέρι κεῖται,
 ὅμεια δὲ τυλαυγῆς ἀμυγρὸν φάος ἡελίοιο.

1. C. I. A. II. 1. 617. 2. Lafaye, p. 34. 3. Cumont, Les Religions Orientales dans le Paganisme Romain 3. I. 18. 4. Sat. I. 20. 17. 5. Drexler in Roscher's Lexicon (art. Isis) gives exhaustive referen-
 -ces

Traces of its existence in the next two centuries have been discovered at Antioch, Smyrna and Halicarnasus, next in the islands, Rhodes, Samos, Ceos, Lesbos, finally it reached the coasts of Thrace, then spread southward to the Chalcidic peninsula, thence south again to Corinth, and the Peloponnese.¹ The diffusion throughout Magna Graecia of Orphic and Pythagorean doctrines would have prepared the way for the not dissimilar teachings of the Egyptian mysteries.

But of all the Greek world it is at Delos that the worship of Isis had the greatest influence. It was officially recognised there by Athens in 220, but had been introduced some fifty years earlier. The abundant inscriptions² give precise detail as to the different types of clergy and the wealth of the sanctuaries. In view of the fact that there were Italians on Delos before 166 B.C., and that they eventually became the strongest nationals, the existence of this centre is most important. Praetors and consuls paid annual visits, further, there was a brisk trade between Delos and Puteoli. This town also being the chief entrepot of trade with Alexandria, was therefore undoubtedly the most ready channel for the introduction of the Egyptian worship into Italy - particularly of Isis, for it was under the epithet Isis-Pelagia that the sailors would most frequently invoke her. From Puteoli, then, the cult early penetrated to Malta and Sicily, finally to South Italy, Naples and Pompeii, and again it spread over Campania and Etruria, and finally, at an unknown date, reached Rome.

At Puteoli there was a temple of Serapis before 104 B.C., as

1. Drexler in Roscher's Lexicon gives exhaustive references.
2. Roussel has collected sixty: vid. Les Cultes Egyptiens a Delos.

proved by a municipal mandate authorising works to be done in front of the Serapeum.¹ As the worship must have been going on privately for some time, it is safe to say that it had been introduced some fifty years earlier. It appeared about this time in Sicily also, as evidenced by coins of Syracuse and Panormus.² The First Iseum of Pompeii was founded about the middle of the second century³ - so that before the beginning of the first century Isis and Serapis were firmly established in Italy.

Exactly at what date the first statues of Isis and Serapis were set up in Rome itself is unknown. It has been acutely pointed out by Sir S. Dill that the years at the end of the 3rd century and well into the second B.C. were years of "strange religious excitement in Italy. In 204 the "sacrum lapidem," quam matrem deum incolae dicebant"⁴ had been welcomed at Ostia by Rome's best citizen, Scipio Nasica, and conducted by virtuous matrons amidst the acclamations of the crowd to the Palatine, where she was solemnly installed near the statue of Apollo. This, though a strategical move, was doubtless made possible by the interest in and excitement over the Sibylline prophecies. In any case, only five years after the erection of the first temple to Cybele, the decree for the suppression of the Bacchanalian scandal was passed, in which seven thousand persons were implicated, it is said.

1. C.I.L.X. 1781 and 1577. 2. Lafaye, op. cit. See also Cic. Verr. Act. II. 66. 3. Nissen Pomp. Stud. p. 174 4. Dill, Rom. Soc. fr. Nero to M. Aurelius, 564. 5. Livy, 10.

Events certainly did seem to prove that something which in modern days would be likened to a religious revival was in the air. The finding, five years later still, of the apocryphal books of Numa, discovered to be forgeries and publicly burnt, and the fact that they were written on papyrus, till then unknown in Italy, and contained Pythagorean teachings, is very significant in view both of the Pythagorean elements in the Alexandrian cult, already mentioned, and of the identity of Osiris with Dionysus and the affinities of their mysteries. The suggestion of Sir Samuel Dill that "perhaps some eclectic Alexandrian, half Platonist, half Buddhist, devoted to the Isiac worship, yet ready to connect it with the Dionysiac legends of Delphi, Cithaeron and Eleusis penned the secret scrolls and buried them in the garden on the Janiculum"¹ is as convincing as it is brilliant and imaginative.

A further record, seemingly unimportant, is used by Lafaye² as an indication of the date. The story, which has a certain humour, is recounted by several authors, including Cicero, Livy, the Elder Pliny and Valerius Maximus, of the F. Cornelius Scipio Nasica who was consul in 136. Valerius' account is concise and may be quoted:

"Eximiae nobilitatis adolescens Cornelius Scipio, quum plurimis et clarissimis familiae suae cognominibus abundaret, in servilem Serapionis appellationem vulgi sermone impactus est quod nominis victimario tam similis erat. Nec illi aut morum probitas aut respectus tot imaginum, quominus hac contumelia aspergeretur, opitulata sunt."

This Scipio is first mentioned in 140 B.C. when he was sent with

1. Dill, loc. cit. 2. Rev. de l'Hist. des Relig. Tom. II. 327-9.

Gn. Scipio Hispallus to demand from the Carthaginians the surrender of their arms, so that it was no doubt at about this date, when he was quite a young man (adolescens) that the nick-name to which, with his aristocratic tendencies he fiercely objected, was applied to him. If the name Serapio was current at that time, it had probably been introduced earlier. (It is an interesting coincidence, just worthy of mention, that this Scipio's grandfather, P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica, had been detailed as the best citizen of the state to receive the Magna Mater at Ostia.)

Concurrently, communication between Rome and the capital of Ptolemy's Empire was continually increasing. Between 204 and 100 B.C. no fewer than ten embassies were exchanged between the two capitals¹ and the relations necessarily became closer and closer until the battle of Actium.

As a further result an ever-increasing stream of artists, poets, rhetoricians and teachers flowed from Alexandria into Rome - Catullus' own teacher, Valerius Cato, was the man pre-eminently who introduced the Alexandrian poets into Rome; he was the

Cato grammaticus, Latina siren

Qui solus legit ac facit poetas²

Catullus himself represents Varus' mistress as asking for the loan of some bearers, because she wished to go to the temple of Serapis.³ This is one of the earliest references in Latin literature.

1. Lafaye, op. cit. 2. Prof. Wright's Catullus, p. 10
3. X. 128. Volo ad Serapim deferri.

To return to our chronicle: the first definite date to which we can refer is 80 B.C. Apuleius¹, whose authority is unquestioned, ~~re~~ refers to the Isiac guild of Fastophori as having come into existence in the time of Sulla. The fact that the ^{re}fractionary dictator was forced to this recognition is a sign of the popularity that the cult must have by then attained.

The history of the first sixty years after the authorisation of their College by Sulla was one of conflict for the priests and worshippers of Isis; the forces of conservatism and a strict nationalism were up in arms against the unarmed invaders from the East, whose only weapons were the sistrum, the situla and the holy water, whose battle-cries were chants and hymns. No doubt the scandals in connection with the Bacchanalian rites, though not immediately recent, had prejudiced the authorities against any foreign cult, however innocuous. On the other hand, conditions at Rome at the Sullan epoch were in general entirely favourable to the strange Isis-worship. The State religion was practical, unimaginative and intensely national: it allowed for no expansion of spiritual needs, fulfilled no aspirations. Society was changing, from senator to slave - even the slave himself often represented another and a wider culture - and it failed to respond any longer to such crude appeals as "Rue, lue, Marmar," such simple ones as "Matutine pater, seu Janes libentius audis!" The animistic force had faded, the religion was formal, cold and dead, without outward attraction for the many, or subtler appeal to the few.

1. Met. XI. 30. Collegii vetustissimi et sub illis Sullae temporibus conditae.

Such marked results followed this changed attitude, that by the end of the Republic the temples were neglected and even falling to pieces (it is of course well-known that one of Augustus's first tasks was to restore them.) and priests only to be recruited with difficulty. Varro at the beginning of the Antiquities, expresses the fear that "the gods will perish, not by the attacks of foreign enemies, but through the negligence of the citizens." The belief in immortality, that instinctive "non omnis moriar" found no satisfactory stimuli or response in the vague, contradictory notions, based on Greek mythology, which were then current. Yet though Cicero and Seneca, Juvenal and Plutarch dismissed the dim after-world of Greek legend, with its Cerberus, its Styx, its Chaemaera, as old wives' tales, three of them at least still looked to another world where the broken arcs are mended. They rejected Greek anthropomorphism as they had rejected Roman animism, yet their knowledge - which was the current knowledge of the educated - of Pythagorean, Platonic and Stoic teaching gave them the idea not only of a future life but of a future birth - the conception, in fact, as mirrored in the sixth Aenid.

To the cultured, then, the Egyptian religion supplied in another form beliefs they already held, to the vast majority it offered something immeasurably superior to the vague, colourless and primitive conceptions then current. To the crowd also, men and women by now of mixed blood, it offered other powerful attractions. There was something not only to attract, but to gladden in the colour and novelty of an Isis procession as it wound its way through the streets of Ostia, perhaps, to the sea.

Imagine such a procession in spring-time, that of Isis in her guise as protectress of navigation and of sailors: the sun shines, the birds sing, "flowers appear on the earth" and all is joy. First, a masquerade: a spearman, a hunter, a person in a robe of silk and socks of gold, walking with a swaying feminine gait, long hair upon his head, a magistrate with his rods and purple, a philosopher with long goat's beard, a tame bear in matron's dress, carried on a seat, an ape wearing a bonnet, - the Phrygian Ganymede this, with his golden cup - an ass with wings attached, - the Pesagus of an old Bellerophon. (*Rideres utrumque.*)

Next follows the procession proper, in white robes and flower wreaths, strewing blossoms along the way. Others carry combs to dress the goddess's hair, and others again, sprinkle the road with perfumes. Follows a mixed company of men and women bearing torches, candles, and lamps in honour of "her who was the offspring of the stars!" Music is provided by pipe and flute, then follows a fair and chosen band of youth, singing a beautiful hymn, the composition of some clever poet.¹ Trumpeters, dedicated to Serapis, herald those in white array, the initiates, men and women of all ages and stations, the women with their heads covered, but the men with their shaven crowns shining,² shaking the sistrum. Next, the priests in long white robes bearing the sacred symbols of all the most powerful gods, a lantern, sacrificial pots, a palm tree, the Caduceus, a

1. Demetrius of Phalerus is known to have composed such a hymn.
2. *magnae religionis terrena sidera !*

deformed left hand, symbol of equity, a gold vessel shaped like a breast,¹ dripping milk, a winnowing fan and a wine jar. Finally, the gods deign to walk among men, -Anubis with his dog's head, and the cow Hathor, walking upright. A priest follows, carrying the holy secrets² of the faith in a casket, and yet another bearing in his bosom the symbol of the goddess, a gold vessel with a narrow jutting mouth and a large handle containing the water of the Sacred River, an emanation of Osiris. This closed the procession. Then, on the sea-shore the high priest solemnly blesses and dedicates the sacred vessel. The faithful bring their offerings and load them on and pour libations of milk upon the waters. The ship spreads her sails- white sails with golden letters- and amid the prayers and blessings of the crowd is borne away over the sea to bring fair fortune to all mariners.³

Even to watch such a procession passing by, with its music and its perfume, its provocations to laughter, ecstasy and awe would be a great experience in the drab lives of many; to take part in it an even greater one, an opportunity for "release" for which they had unconsciously yearned. To have been a worshipper of Isis in those days would have been to enjoy an inner life, rich in that colour and emotion which the outer life so lamentably lacked.

Small wonder then, that before 58 B.C. there were not only shrines behind the house walls, but altars, reared by devotion, on the Capitol itself. The Senate viewed them with grave distrust, and

1. Cf. Mac. Sat. I. 20. (Isidis) continuatis uberibus corpus omne densari etc., and Minut. 21. 14 Diana.. Ephesia mammis multis et uberibus extruata. 2. cista secretorum capax. It is not known what this contained-possibly ears of corn. 3. After Ap. Met. XI. II.

decreed that they should be broken up and the statues thrown down.¹ These orders were carried out under the supervision of the consuls Piso and Gabinius. Wissowa quotes in this connection the interesting emendation of Ziehen to Cic.Ad.Att.II.17.2."ut prae hoc Isis curiana stare videatur". (for phocis curiana). But the altars sprang up again as if by magic, and again in 54 B.C. the order went forth for their destruction.^{1a}

However, in 50 a similar decree had again to be passed, but by this time the cult of Isis and Serapis had apparently attained such power that no workman dared attack their shrine on the Capitol, and the interesting spectacle was presented -no doubt to a tense crowd- of the consul Aemilius Paulus laying aside his toga and catching up the axe to give the first blow.²

But in 48 there they were again, and were again destroyed.³

Caesar's infatuation for Cleopatra gave a great fillip, and a lasting one, to the always growing worship of her gods. As Pontifex Maximus, when he consecrated the temple of Venus Genetrix, he had Cleopatra's golden statue placed beside that of the goddess.⁴ Cleopatra herself, as is known, came to Rome, and in her train doubtless hundreds of Isis-worshippers. It is significant that in the

1. Tert. Ap. 6 (Cf. Ad Nat. X) Serapidem et Isidem et Arpocratem cum sup Cynocephalo Capitolio prohibitos inferri, id est curia deorum pulsos Piso et Gabinius consules, non utique christiani, eversis etiam aris eorum abdicaverunt, turpium et otiosarum superstitionum vitia cohibentes. 1a. Dio Cass. XL. 47. τὸς γὰρ ναὸς ἀπέσταν, οὐδ' ἰδίᾳ τινας ἐπέσταντο, καθελθὲν τῇ βουλῇ ἐδόξεν.

2. Val. Max. I. 4. L. Aemilius Paulus consul, cum Senatus Isidis et Serapidis fana diruenda censuisset eaque nemo opificum adtingere auderet, posita praetexta securim arripuit templique eius foribus inflixit. 3. Dio C. XLII. 26. 4. Suet. Caes. 61.

year 43 the aedile Volusius, who had been proscribed, was able to make his escape through the streets of Rome to the camp of Brutus disguised as a white-robed initiate begging for alms.¹

The same year, according to Dio Cassius,² the triumvirs decreed the building of temples to Isis and Serapis out of State funds. This was obviously a political move, and it is doubtful if the decision was ever carried out. A fresh starting point, however, is thus provided, and it is from this point onwards that we find those very frequent allusions to the Egyptian deities, particularly Isis, in the writings of the poets of the day. The Delia of Tibullus³ was a serious devotee and an initiate, and when he is himself ill the poet invokes the goddess's aid, pleading Delia's rigorous devotion to the discipline- chastity, ceremonial cleansing,⁴ attendance at the daily services,⁵ the brandishing of the sistrum.⁶

Inspired probably by his mistress Tibullus composed what amounts to a hymn to Osiris, pictorial if superficial.⁷ He is, apparently, sympathetic to the fashionable cult, but Propertius less so. In a disagreeable poem⁸ he girds at Cynthia for making the "puri Isidis dies" an excuse for not fulfilling her promises.

1. Val. Max. VII. 3-8. M. Volusius aedilis pl. proscriptus adsumpto Isiaci habitu per itinera viasque publicas stipem petens, quisnam re vera esset, occurrentibus dinoscere passus non est eoque fallaciae genere tectus in M. Bruti castra pervenit. 2. XLVII. 15.
3. I. 3. 23-32. 4. pureque lavari/ Te, memini, et puro secubuisse toro
5. bisque die resoluta comas tibi dicere laudes. 6. illa tua totiens aera repulsa manu. 7. VII. 27-48. 8. IV. V.

After the battle of Actium there was, naturally, a reaction, and in the higher strata of society at least, things and ways Egyptian became anathema. The feeling is very well mirrored in the work of Virgil, Horace,¹ Propertius and Ovid. Opinion became for the moment fiercely national, so that Virgil could write (to quote some well-known lines)

regina in mediis patrio vocat agmina sistro | omnigenumque
 deum monstra et latrator Anubis | contra Neptunum et Venerum²
 contra que Minervam | tela tenent²

To which, on "deum monstra" Servius is compelled to add: "ideo monstra dixit, quia sub Augusto necdum Romani Aegyptia sacra susceperant, et admittebat locus pro laude Augusti aliquid etiam in deos inclementius dici."

Ovid, not to be outdone, has:

Noxia Alexandria, dolis aptissima tellus.³

The only action that was taken, however, was the banishment of the worship to outside the pomerium⁴ in 28, but seven years later Agrippa, who had been left in charge while Augustus was absent on a tour of the provinces, expelled it to a mile further out still.⁵

So far there had been no real hardship. But in 19, under Tiberius, there was an extraordinary scandal, as a result of which a serious effort was made to destroy the worship root and branch.

The account of it given by Josephus is that a Roman knight, Decius Mundus, bribed a freedwoman and the high priest of Isis to

1. Od. I. 37. 2. Aen. VIII. 696. 3. Am. III. 13. 4. Dio C. LIII 2-4 τὰ μὲν ἱερά τὰ Αἰγυπτια οὐκ ἔδεξαντο εἰς τὸ πόμυριον.
 5. Dio C. LIV. 6.

allow him, under the guise of the god Anubis, to spend the night in the temple with Paulina, a respectable matron, a devotee of the goddess. Paulina, thinking the invitation a great honour, after obtaining her husband's¹ permission, complied. Later, the story of the pseudo-Anubis was revealed, and the matter carried to the emperor. He apparently thought it called for strong measures: exiled Mundus, crucified the priests and the freedwoman, and had the temple of Isis destroyed and her statue thrown into the Tiber, and all the priestly paraphernalia burnt.

Tiberius' decrees are historically certain, since both Suetonius² and Tacitus³ mention them. But it is strange that neither mentions the story as told by Josephus, (one that Suetonius would not have avoided,) referring merely to the suppression of the ^Erites, Tacitus adding that four thousand persons were to be exiled to Sardinia, where, if they ~~ex~~ survived the climate, they could usefully suppress brigands, and that Jews shared in the banishment.

Apart from the psychological question as to the possibility of such reactions on the part of both Paulina and the husband, the fact that Tacitus and Suetonius omit any reference even to some scandal unspecified throws grave doubt on the veracity of Josephus. The exiles to Sardinia have left their traces in a grotto near Cagliari.⁴

But now the Egyptian religion, having taken root not only in Rome, but in many other parts of Italy, was too widespread for any but a superhuman power to dislodge it. Caligula annulled the edicts,

1. Ant. Jud. XVIII. 3. 2. Tib. 36. 3. ANN. II. 85.
4. C. I. G. 5759, C. I. L. X. 2. 7563 sq.

and in contradistinction to his predecessor recognised the Isis-worship. Claudius, though severe on the Jews, and deploring "the preponderance of foreign superstition"², had arranged for the El²usinian mysteries to be transported to Rome, and hence was tolerant of a system with which these had affinities.

Meanwhile development went on apace, particularly under Nero. This emperor, although he rejected and despised most religions in turn, yet had, probably, a soft spot for things Egyptian.³ In his reign Isis and Serapis were quite definitely recognised and accepted, and evidences of them were everywhere to be seen. "nos in templa tuam Romana accepimus Isim!"^{3a}

Some mention should be made at this point of the appearance of the statues of Isis, now so familiar. Nothing is more striking than the difference between the rigid, but very regal Egyptian figure and the gracious, softly-modelled Graeco-Hellenic one. The tight garment gives way to the flowing robe and fringed cloak, knotted at the breast,⁴ the enormously tall head-dress, consisting ~~with~~ of ram's horns⁵ containing the solar disc,⁶ to one on a much reduced scale. The Egyptian Isis holds in her right hand the sistrum and in her left the ankh or tau cross, the symbol of life. In the Graeco-Roman representations, though the sistrum is retained, the other emblem is frequently replaced by the sacred vessel.⁷

1. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~. Wissowa, Relig. und Kultur der Römer
 2. Suet. Gaius 57. 3. / Nero 40-47. varia agitavit, anvel Aegyptii
 praefecturam concedi sibi oraret. 3a Luc. VIII. 831.
 4. The Isiac knot was a distinguishing mark. 5. An attribute
 borrowed from Osiris. 6. Not the lunar, for which it was mistaken
 7. As in the statue now in the Capitol.

When identified with Fortuna¹ or with Ceres she naturally adopts ~~th~~ their attributes. Often the head-dress consists only of the uraeus and ears of corn or flowers, sometimes the lotus, and she wears the disc on the forehead.² Her hair falls on her shoulders in curls.

The sistrum was a curious instrument consisting of a handle, often in the shape of a head, (sometimes the cow Hathor) into which a bronze arch fitted, spanned by three or four bars with metal rings round them, which rattled when the instrument was shaken. Its motion was supposed to cause the ebb and flow of the Nile.³ With it the goddess could deprive of sight any who displeased her.⁴

Seneca describes as if it were a common sight the "linteatus senex medio lucernam die praeferens."⁵ Temples were consecrated and new ones built, including that on the Campus Martius.⁶ The festivals could now be celebrated quite openly, and their dates were inserted in the calendars.⁷ But it was Otho who first showed his sympathy openly by not only protecting the priests, but by actually officiating publicly himself.⁸ Vespasian, according to Tacitus,⁹ consulted Serapis in his temple in a lonely vigil of the night, and in obedience to a dream-command performed miracles of healing.

Once again the humble linen robe was to save a life - this time of a future emperor. When, in the civil war of 69 A.D., Vitellius'¹⁰ troops stormed and burnt the Capitol, a "service" of Isis was actually

1. Cum. pl. 2 2. Ap. XI 3 super frontem... argumentum lunae emicabat. id. crines uberrimi et sensim intorti per divina colla.
 3. Serv. ad Aen. VIII. 696 patrio vocat agmine sistro- Isis autem est genius Aegypti, qui per sistri motum quod gerit in dextra, Nili accessus recessusque significat. 4. Ov. Ex. Pont. I. 50-4 and Juv. XIII 91. decernat quodamque volet de corpore nostro/ Isis, et irato feriat mea lumina sistro. 5. De Vit. Beat. XXVI 6. Mommsen, C. I. L. I. p. 406 col. 1
 8. Suet. Otho 12. 9. Hist. 81-4. 10. Tac. Hist. III. 74

in progress and Domitian disguised as a priest made his escape among the crowd of temple servers and got safely away to Transteverum. Domitian in gratitude had the temple rebuilt on a magnificent scale in 92 and consecrated it himself.¹ Hadrian, probably for decorative purposes only, had the statue of Serapis included in the Canopus of his villa at Tibur, and his favourite Antinous became an Egyptian divinity. Commodus walked in procession, head duly shaved, carrying an image of Anubis with which, in his zeal, he used to prod the back of the priest in front of him! Caracalla, also, built temples, two at least, possibly more, and after the great massacre of Alexandria - oppressed, possibly by a sense of guilt - asked healing from Serapis from all his ills and consecrated his sword to him.² Alexander Severus "decenter ornavit"³ the temples built by his predecessors, adding statues and vases. Septimius, his campaign against the Parthians ended, used his first leisure to go to Egypt and become initiated.

The tide, however, had reached its full, and now receded perceptibly. The power of Isis, Queen of heaven, began to wane in Italy. The solemn processions still continued, even though Mithraism ^{had gained} ~~was gaining~~ in popularity over the older worship. In 391 the end came. Theodosius "forbade" paganism and destroyed the Serapeum at Alexandria, and the Bishop Theophilus built a church there in honour of S. John the Baptist.

1. Lafaye, p. 61. n. 8. 2. Spart. Carac. 9 Id. Sev. 17 3. Spart. Alexander Severus Isium et Serapium decenter ornavit additis signis et deliacis et omnibus mysticis Id Sev. 26. ~~4Carm. Cont. Pag. 91-5~~

Yet still not quite the end. Devotion to the gods of Egypt lingered on into the reign of Justinian until it finally, like a stream running dry, became lost to view in the sixth century.

Chapter IV.

It has been seen that Isis and Serapis-particularly Isis- had been adopted all over the Roman world.[‡]As to exactly what influence the religion had on Roman society, apart from slaves and freedmen, there is a difference of opinion. Toutain's view, with regard to the provinces, at any rate, is that the Egyptian practices "n'ont pas modifié sensiblement ni les idées ni les pratiques religieuses de l'immense majorité des habitants." He differs from Cumont who calls the diffusion "ce grand mouvement de conversion qui devait bientôt faire adorer Isis et Serapis depuis la lisière du Sahara jusqu'au vallum de Bretagne et des montagnes d'Asturie jusqu'aux bouches du Danube." In respect of the provinces the former savant is no doubt right- though probably only as far as concerns those regions to which the cult had been conveyed "as from a second foyer" from Rome, at a later date, than the first diffusion from Alexandria.

Under the Empire, beginning with Hadrian & extending up to the time of Alexander Severus, it penetrated into the central and northern parts of Italy and into the provinces. It was, as the fashionable cult, taken as far as the garrison towns of the Roman

world, to the frontiers along the great routes, reached from Italy and the Mediterranean, and ~~and~~ to other points, further from the frontiers, where Orientals lived. It was disseminated through Carthage into Africa direct from Egypt, and then into Caesaraea, Gaul, and the Rhine-lands.¹

But the large military centre of Lambaesus "the richest Isiac pantheon that the Roman world has bequeathed to us," and the garrison-towns of Pannonia and Dacia imported it direct from Italy.

The worship of Isis also reached the Spanish provinces and even Britain.²

But in Rome, the great cosmopolitan capital, many other forces were at work. Here the Isis-worship did not have to act, isolated, on a barren and unreceptive soil - as that, say, of Britain or Germany would be - but it was, as has been explained, caught up & blended, in various of its aspects, with other shades of thought and religious life - with Stoic philosophy, with Hellenistic culture, with the existing mysteries. It became a part, and a very important part, of that philosophico-religious universal syncretism which was the definite mental and spiritual background, as far as there was one, at Rome in the first three centuries A.D. It was something, as Toutain himself admits, the influence of which cannot be measured by the popularity or otherwise of the different elements. It is definitely to be doubted whether Christianity could have conquered, unless the way had been paved by the very cult that its apologists attack so fiercely, and whose best elements

1. Toutain op. cit. p. 16 ff. 2. There is a humble pot in the London Museum inscribed AD FANUM ISIDIS LONDONII.

it quietly absorbed. Lafaye, too, takes this view, *passim*, and M. Cumont, as also Sir Samuel Dill,. There can be very little doubt, apart from the fact that few notable names appear on record, whose owners had adopted the white robe, that the worship of Isis and Serapis was a force to be reckoned with.

Isis especially. In Egypt, though the most powerful goddess, she was, it must be admitted, second to her husband Osiris, though to him only. But in Rome, especially A.D., she is the more prominent. The fact that the women under the Empire were completely enfranchised may have had some bearing on this. Isis is the goddess par excellence of love, of birth and of death. Has she not herself experienced the pangs of all three? "She knows about it all, she knows, she knows!" Yet she has transcended the sorrow inherent in those experiences, and lives and waits, ready to welcome and to guide the suffering to the haven. She instituted the mysteries, Plutarch tells us, for this very reason.¹ Such hymns, invocations and expressions as those employed in the ceremony of the Finding of Osiris² would have a special appeal. Yet the orgiastic, or even the merely sensual element is definitely absent. The fact that Cynthia and other gay ladies were fervent devotees does not constitute a bad point for Isis, but a good one for them. If her temples, as the jaundiced mind of Juvenal³ and the sophisticated one of Ovid⁴

appendix 40

1. De Is. et Os. 27. 2. See the interesting ceremonial prayer trans. by Budge, The Hieratic Papyrus of Nesi-Amsu. Osiris is invoked in terms of great tenderness, passion and beauty. 3. Juv. VI. 489. *Isiacae sacraria lenae.* 4. Am. I. 8. 73/4. II. 2. 25/6.

suggest, were used for assignations, as was no doubt the case, there was nothing in the whole system to countenance anything of the sort, and the standards of Roman society must be held responsible rather than the Egyptian religion.

The two great festivals of the year were the blessing of the sacred vessel on the 5th March (*Navigium Isidis*) and the finding of Osiris, (*Inventio Osiridis*), 1st - 3rd November. The first¹ was a popular festival of a carnival nature; as heralding the re-commencement of navigation it had great importance in the coast towns. The second ceremony is of a different character. It was to mark the anniversary of the death and resurrection of Osiris. The first three constituted a period of mourning, the last of joy (*Hilaria*). Until Rome was thoroughly familiar with the strange scenes, the writers^{1a} never tire of commenting on them. But after Lucan, no more mentions appear until the Christian apologists come along.

Osiris, it will be remembered, had been torn to pieces by Typhon, and the fragments of his body scattered. In the festival, Isis wanders in frenzied search, followed by the devotees, beating their breasts and wailing shrilly or mournfully. On the third day the god is found and resurrected² and the joy of the beholders is signalled by loud

1. See *supra* p. 34f 1^a Verg. *Aen.* IV. 609 "ululata per urbes," and Serv. ad. loc. "ululatus sicut in Isidis sacris, ubi est imitatio inventi Osiridis." Juv. VI. 534 "plangentis populi currit derisor Anubis". Lucan. VIII. 831-33. (Ov. *Met.* IX. 692) Nos in templa tuam Romam accepimus Isim (Nunquam satis quaesitus Osiris) semideosque canes et sinistra iubentia luctus et quem tu plangens hominem testaris, Osirim, Juv. VIII 29. "exclamare libet, populus quod clamat Osiri invento."

2. Twenty days later were accomplished the "Hilaria" of Attis.

cries of joy, of which the burden is *εὐρίκαμεν, συγχάρισμα!* In Egypt this was, as far as we know, the kernel of the mysteries.² Herodotus tells us of these happenings in connection with Sais, *καὶ* which he visited. "At Sais is the burial-place of one whom I scruple to name. On the lake (by the temple) the Egyptians represent by night the sufferings undergone by him, and this representation they call mysteries. All the proceedings in these mysteries are well known to me, but my lips shall piously refrain from mentioning them."

It was, however, through *its* mysteries, ^{other than these} that the religion of Isis had the most hold on its adherents - much was demanded, much was given. There are two lines of investigation open to us. One is to examine the account, such as it is, given by Apuleius, of his initiation and the preliminary requirements, and the other, less safe, but interesting, to try to reconstruct it from what is known of the mysteries as performed in Egypt.

Very briefly, the facts with regard to Apuleius are these:

1. He lives with the priests and joins them in the practice of their ceremonies and abstentions, waiting for a sign.
2. Isis at last gives it in a dream.
3. He joyfully hastens to the temple and takes part in the morning sacrifice.
4. He is escorted by the faithful to the sacred font near the temple and receives baptism by plunging.
5. He is taken back to the temple and prostrates himself before the statue.

1. Firm. Mat. De Err. P. R. II. 7. Athenag. Ath. XXII. 6.

2. What may be an interesting survival is the ceremony of burying with lamentations and resurrecting with joy the little "Kalojan" figure in Roumania.

6. The ineffable words are communicated to him.
 7. For ten days he remains in retreat, eating no animal food, touching no wine and abstaining from carnal pleasures.
 8. The faithful come to the temple and offer gifts to the neophyte.
 9. He keeps a lonely night vigil in the inner sanctuary.
 10. A drama is enacted before his eyes.
 11. He is submitted to the most searching and awful tests, (calcato Proserpinae limine), but finally,
 12. Comes to a place of light and joy and blessed visions.
- With the dawn, the ceremony becomes public again. The crowd throng into the temple, the new initiate is seen on a dais, a crown of palm-leaves on his head and a lighted torch in his right hand. He is ceremonially clothed in twelve sacred robes and a cloak, and then, his tribulation ended, can give himself up to a three-day feast.

Reviewing the stages of Apuleius' progress to the final attainment, it is fairly easy to determine which are vital. They are, obviously, those indicated as 6, 10 and 11, consummated by 12, - the secret words communicated, the drama enacted, the tests, and finally the emergence into a place of light and beauty. If these elements of the initiatory process are kept in mind, it will help in the consideration immediately following.

Reference has already been made to M. Foucart's book in which he posits an Egyptian origin for the Eleusinian mysteries. Without following his interesting arguments, it will be helpful to note the

1. Recherches sur l'Origine des Mysteres d'Eleusis.

points of contact between the Greek mysteries as described by him, and Apuleius' account. Three factors were necessary for the complete mystery, τὰ δρώμενα, τὰ δεικνύμενα, τὰ λεγόμενα. Apuleius mentions what corresponds to all three.

The mysteries, it will be remembered, were always concerned with the life after death. Plutarch¹ brings this out very explicitly. "The soul at the moment of death undergoes the same experience as those who are initiated into the great mysteries: the word resembles the word as the act the act: we say τελευτᾶν and τελεῖσθαι. First are wanderings and painful straying from the way, anxious journeys and unending through the darkness. Then, before the end, complete horror; shuddering, trembling, sweat and fright. But after this a marvellous light meets the soul and pure places and meadows are traversed, voices and dances, sacred words, divine appearances inspire religious awe. Then the man perfect at last and initiated celebrates the mysteries with a crown upon his brow and lives with men who are pure and holy."

Now the statement of Apuleius "accessi confinium mortis et calcato Proserpinae limine" etc. expresses just this. We may, therefore, following M. Morets² suggestion, conjecture with some certainty that simulated death plays some part, may even be the central point, of the mysteries. The candidate would be led into a dark room, perhaps decorated with funeral scenes and asked to contemplate either paintings or statues or else tableaux or dramatic representations

¹ Frag. V. ed. Didot.

² Rois et Dieux d'Egypte.

of the dismemberment of Osiris and his rehabilitation by the magic rites of Isis and Nephthys. And perhaps, too, most terrifying of all, (for it would take him completely by surprise) be subjected to a mimic death.¹ This was actually done in Egypt, as Moret points out, not only to mummies but to living Kings.

The importance² of undergoing "death" in the mysteries is its over-coming, so that the real thing can be faced with confidence when a representation of it has been endured so many times before. Also, as has been said, in "dying" one follows the god and is therefore spiritually linked with him, sharing, naturally, his re-birth, which is the assurance of immortality.³

In addition to the two annual festivals, there were two daily ones. As practised in Egypt the first of these was very elaborate and performed with meticulous care. It was not only in the festivals that the worshippers of Isis were called upon to participate. Just as in a Christian community, the devotee could, if he wished, begin each day with worship, ^{but in his case this} ~~which~~ not only renewed his own spiritual life, but also served to keep alive the holy statue, and so to ensure the goddess' ever-present help. This was a materialistic conception in accordance with ancient Egyptian belief. The gods, gods though they were, required protection. "They suffer from hunger, thirst, old age, disease, fear, and sorrow. They perspire, their

1. Two skulls were found in the temple at Pompeii; they are believed to have been used in the mysteries. 2. Cf. Wilmhurst, *The Masonic Initiation*, p. 52. 3. An interesting statuette reproduced in M. Cumont's book (pl. V) would confirm this argument. It is of an initiate a young woman. The lower part of the body is swathed, as of a mummy. *from Cyrene*

"head aches, their teeth chatter, their eyes weep, poison¹ takes possession of their flesh even as the Nile takes possession of the land."^{1a} Though this crude anthropomorphism was no doubt quite lacking in a devotee such as Apuleius, remnants of it still persisted in the daily ritual. The rite itself, based on one which dated back to an extremely remote antiquity, was performed with scrupulous care. It was magical, and the least word, the slightest gesture, was of importance.

There were two² services (or offices as they are not inaptly called), the *Apertio Templi*³, celebrated an hour before sunrise, and the Adoration of the Holy Water, at two in the afternoon. Apuleius has left an account of the first, a fresco of Herculaneum gives a striking picture of the second.

Before dawn the priest entered the temple by the side entrance and threw back the doors. He, or an acolyte, lighted the sacred fire, and made libation of Nile-water.⁴ The faithful were admitted. The priest mounted a small staircase at the side of the shrine, unsealed it, (it was sealed each night) and drew back the white curtains,⁵ revealing the statue of the goddess. He then solemnly awakens her, calling her in the Egyptian tongue.⁶ Isis, now awake,

1. According to a very ancient legend, Isis gained her power by poisoning Ra and healing him only when he had told her his true name. 1a. Le Page Renouf: Hibbert Lectures 1879, Ch. III.

2. Tib. I. 3. 31. *bisque die resoluta comas tibi dicere laudes Insignis turba debeat in Pharia.* 3. Ap. Met. XI. 20. *Matutinas Apertiones templi* and XI. 22 *Rituque sollempni apertionis celebratis ministerio.*

4. Ap. loc. cit. *e penetrabili fontem petitum libat.* Serv. ad Verg. Aen. IV. 512. *In templo Isidis aqua sparsa de Nilo esse dicebatur* and cf. Juv. VI. 517 *aquas ut spargat in aede Isidis.* 5. Ap. loc. cit. *vetis caudentibus reductis.* 6. Porph. de Abst. IV. 9.

was greeted by her worshippers with chants and the shaking of the sistrum. Then, although Apuleius does not mention it in this connection¹, the statue was probably dressed and adorned, since in the Egyptian rite this was carried out in great detail.² With a cry the faithful greet the risen sun, and remain, if they wish, in contemplation

Again at two o'clock³ sounds of worship could be heard. No texts have been discovered describing this ceremony, but the scene - a striking one - can be reconstructed without difficulty from the wall-painting before mentioned.⁴ It is the adoration of the holy water, symbolising the life-giving power of Osiris.

In the portico of a temple on the top of a flight of steps flanked by sphinxes and palms the priest stands, a priestess on either side. He holds breast-high, in the folds of his robe, the sacred vessel⁵ containing the holy water. At the foot of the steps is an altar, and a priest fanning the flame. The worshippers, men and women, stand in^{two} rows, right and left, singing; two priests shake the sistrum and a flute-player performs in the foreground.

It can easily be recognised what a powerful influence these constantly repeated services had upon the people.

1. But cf. his account of the procession, ch. 9. *pectines eburnos ferentes gestu brachiorum flexuque digitorum ornatum atque oppexum crinium regalium fingerent.* 2. A. Moret, *Le Rituel du Culte divin journalier.* 3. *Mart. X. 48. 1. nunciat octavam Phariae sua turba juvencae.* 4. *Mad. Pompeii 171, 2* 5. *Ap. X. religionis argumentum ineffabile.*

CHAPTER V.

Any attempt to review here the philosophico-religious thought of the 3rd. and 4th. centuries would be doomed to failure. The elements are too complex, the field too vast, the aspects too numerous for any but a detailed analysis.

"The Hellenes", said Themistius to Valens, "have three hundred ways of honouring the divinity which rejoices in the diversity of their homage." M. Cumont presents the picture graphically in the last chapter of his book. ¹ "Supposons que l'Europe moderne ait vu les fidèles désert^r les églises chrétiennes pour adorer Allah ou Brahma, suivre les préceptes de Confucius ou de Bouddha, adopter les maximes du Shinto; représentons-nous une grande confusion de toutes les races du monde, où des mollahs arabes, des lettrés chinois, des bonzes japonais, des lamas tibétains, des pandits hindous ~~xxx~~ prêcheraient à la fois le fatalisme et la prédestination, les cultes des ancêtres et le dévouement au souverain divinisé, le pessimisme et la délivrance par l'anéantissement, où tous ces prêtres élèveraient dans nos cités (des temples d'une architecture exotique et y célébr^{er}aient leurs rites disparates; ce rêve, que l'avenir réalisera peut-être, nous offrirait une image assez exacte de l'incohérence religieuse où se débattait l'ancien monde avant Constantin!" Sir S. Dill has exactly the same thought: he compares the conditions with modern America. That syncretism which was by now the normal religion of

¹op. cit. p. 181-2

Rome - though the worship of the rustic deities was doubtless continued - had developed to an extraordinary degree of complexity. As we have seen, every race and religion had contributed to it, philosophies no less, and the result was a peculiar reservoir whence each could draw the draught he needed, were it rare wine or heady mead or only ψυχρὸν οἶνον. This system - which was yet no system hence its inevitable withdrawal to Christianity - this movement was surrounded and overlaid with an incredible mass of superstition, since in addition to the native Roman collection which was considerable, each oriental cult had contributed its own specialities. Thus Cumont, commenting on a magic papyrus, describes its contents. "Recettes empruntées à la médecine et à la superstition populaires, pratiques primitives rejetées ou délaissées par les rituels sacerdotaux, croyances repudiées par une religion progressivement moralisée, plagiats et contrefaçons de textes littéraires ou liturgiques, incantations où sont invoquées au milieu d'un baragouin inintelligible les dieux de toutes les nations barbares, cérémonies bizarres et déconcertantes forment un chaos où l'imagination se perd, un pot-pourri où il semble qu'un syncrétisme arbitraire ait abouti à une inextricable confusion." †

But it must be remembered that to this welter it was the mystery-religions that contributed the largest, most influential part, the religions of Demeter, of Dionysus, of the Magna Mater, of Isis and Serapis, of Mithra, and that therefore, in considering that pagan syncretism "in whose bosom Christianity was born", certain conclusions emerge, and particularly that their analogy with Christianity depends largely on the sacramental character of the mystery-faiths.

In general the position of an initiate and the requirements he had to meet before being received were much the same as those of the aspiring Christian. In each case, although ostensibly open to all, the attainment was yet only by special vocation and had to be accompanied by an appeal to the "grace of God", requiring a preliminary probation and a special discipline consisting of abstinence of various kinds and purificatory rites. Then, led up to by instruction, comes the revelation from beyond, the fulfilment of the holy promise. "Zagreus devoured and returned to life, Attis mutilated, dead and resurrected, Osiris killed and dismembered by Set and restored to life by Isis, Mithra sacrificing the Bull for the creation of beings, Christ, dying for man's salvation and risen in the glory of the Father have originated the divine fact by virtue of which are saved all those who, believing in their name, will re-commence mystically in the rites of the sacred initiation the experience of the divine trial and the divine triumph."¹

The fact that the mystery-religions had unconsciously prepared the way for Christianity is by now almost universally admitted. Boissier,² after enumerating the monuments of Mithra and Cybele and mentioning the altars of Isis and Serapis which had existed in Ostia remarks, "Ostia therefore appears to have been a soil quite prepared in advance for Christianity. It is known that the most religious are those where it most quickly established itself."³ Angus affirms that "They (i.e.

1. Loisy: Les Mystères Païens et le Mystère Chrétien, 16 ff.

2. Rome et Pompeii. 3. Relig. Quests of the Graec.-Rom. World, 85.

"They (i.e., the mystery-religions) have not only left their mark upon our religion, but they so operated upon it and upon the mentality of the New Testament that they effected the transformation of Christianity into a mystery-established religion of their own order", and quotes Wendtland¹ : All the religions advancing from the Orient rendered pioneer service to Christianity Dean Inge², again, admits that "the Catholic conception of sacraments as bonds uniting religious communities and as channels of grace flowing from a corporate treasury was as certainly part of the Greek mystery-religions communities as it was foreign to Judaism."

The mysteries supplied not only ideas but a vocabulary. Clement of Alexandria³ illustrates this in a striking passage:

"My torch is to look at the Heaven of God, I become holy, initiated; the Lord is the hierophant, He marks, in initiating him, the mystic with His seal, He puts into the hands of the Father him who has had faith and is eternally under His protection. Here, if you like, are the transports of our mysteries. As to yourselves, become initiated, and you will dance in the choir of angels around God uncreate, imperishable, who alone truly exists, while the Word of God sings with us holy hymns."

Not that the Christian apologists as a whole had either the culture or the detachment to acknowledge this fact. They

1. Rom. Hell. Kultur p. 254. 2. Outspoken Essays p. 227.
3. Protrept. XII. 20.

viewed the pagan faiths with derision or hatred, and with a complete lack of understanding. Members one of another, they had little brotherliness to spare for that benighted species of heathen who "worshipped a crocodile rather than the living God."³ Incidentally, what was looked upon as the "worship" of animals had always been a stumbling-block. It shocked the Roman's sense of dignity, and seemed so meaningless. "Quid autem dicis", asks Cicero, "si dii sunt, quos colimus et accepimus, cur non in eodem genere Serapim Isimque dicimus? Boves igitur et equos, ibes, accipitres, aspidas, crocodilos, pisces, canes, lupos, feles, multas praeterea beluasin deorum numero reponemus?" The concept¹ ion was quite oriental and therefore difficult of assimilation by the Western mind. A great authority summarises it thus:²

"Animals were first worshipped as animals, either as possessing a force, skill and courage superior to man's, or because they rendered service to man and made his life easier. Later the idea was modified and the animal ceased to be the god and became the living tabernacle, body and dwelling of the god, into which he put down a fraction of his divinity. The gods were then represented sometimes under their animal, sometimes under their human form." This modification had undoubtedly come about fairly early, long before the Hellenistic epoch. Philostratus² in a conversation upholds it. "I think," he makes Thespasian say, you slight our mode of worship before you have given it fair examination. For surely what we are speaking of is wise, if

1. Maspero: Hist. Anc. des Peuples p. 28. 2. Vit. Apoll. VI. 19.

3. Tert. Adv. Marc. ii. 3: *Aegyptus foedissima, superstitiosa, Crocodilem colens citius quam deum verum.*

" ~~you slight our mode of worship before you have given it fair examination. For surely what we are speaking of is wise, if anything Egyptian is so; the Egyptians do not venture to give any form to ~~ex~~ their deities, they only give them in symbols which have an occult meaning that renders them more venerable!~~ Porphyry¹ enlarges on the pantheistic conception, Porphyry whom Firmicus Maternus describes as "is defensor simulacrorum, hostis dei, veritatis inimicus, sceleratum omnium magister!" Always the dualism of the closed and the open mind. Clement of Alexandria, usually of the latter category, is brought up short here. With what exact amount of truth we cannot say he gives a description of an ^{Egyptian} ~~Isiac~~ holy of holies, and his reaction. "Their shrines are veiled with gold-embroidered hangings; but if you enter the penetralia of the enclosure and, in haste to behold something better, seek the image that is the inhabitant of the temple, if any priest of those that offer sacrifice there, looking grave and singing a poem in the Egyptian tongue, remove a little of the veil to show the god, he will furnish you with a hearty laugh at the object of worship. For the deity that is sought, to whom you have rushed, will not be found within, but a cat or a crocodile or a serpent, or some such beast, unworthy of a temple but quite worthy of a hole, a den or the dirt. The god of the Egyptians is revealed a beast rolling on a purple couch!"

The early Christians indeed were too near to their Founder, whose second Advent, for the first two centuries they had been anxiously awaiting, too sure of having embraced "the Way, the Truth and the Life" to be able or inclined to trace affinities between their faith

1. Abst. IV. 9.

and any of the pagan ones. The cry of "Christiani ad leones" rang too loudly in their ears, the iniquities of Roman society were yet too lurid for the dispassionate survey, "sine ^{ira} ~~via~~ et studio", which would place their own faith in unbiassed relation to those anterior to it.

But seen in truer perspective striking similarities present themselves, alike in the persons of the deities and the truths connoted by them, in the worship with its sacraments and daily offices, as well as in the outer organisation.

The first and most obvious likeness, though perhaps not the most profound, is the similarity of Isis to the Virgin. Each was a type of suffering womanhood, and through suffering transcended, each could heal and comfort those who should pass through like trials. "Tu... dulcem matris adfectionem miserorum casibus tribuis" is how Apuleius addresses his sovereign goddess, words which could equally well be addressed to-day to the Virgin Mary by a devotee. A comparison of Apuleius' hymn, ingeniously arranged by Lafaye in verses, with extracts from some early Latin hymns to the Virgin, will bring out certain similarities:

① Gaudium mundi, nova stella coeli,
procreans solem, pariens parentum,
da manum lapsis, fer opem caducis,
virgo Maria.

Te deo factam liquet esse scalam,
qua tenens summa petat altus ima,
nos ad excelsi remeare coeli
culmina dona.

(All from Daniel's Thesaurus.)

② Alma coelestium, Regina civium,
 Parens terrestrium, Maria salve!
 Vita credentium, mater viventium,
 Spes poenitentium, Maria salve!

③ Ave praeclara maris Stella, in lucem gentium, Maria, divinitus orta.
 Virgo decus mundi, regina coeli, praelecta ut sol, pulchra lunaris
 ut fulgor: agnosce omnes te diligentes.

Apuleius' Hymn to Isis: -

Te superi colunt
 Observant inferi.

Tu rotas orbem,
 Luminas solem
 Regis mundum
 Calcas Tartarum.

Tibi respondent sidera;
 Redeunt tempora,
 Gaudent numina,
 Serviunt elementa.

Tuo nutu spirant flamina,
 Nutriunt nubila,
 Germinant semina,
 Crescunt germina.

Statues of Isis with the child Horus were very common under the early Empire-though less so later- and were no doubt in some instances ~~ex~~ even retained and worshipped as the Holy Mother and Child.

Drexler,¹ after Trede,² gives a list of assimilations.

Isis Pelagia	Regina Maris.
Isis Nike	Madonna della Vittoria.
Dea potens, praepotens	Madonna Madonna della Potenza.
Isis Soteira	Notre Dame de Bon Secours.

It could no doubt be amplified. Beauregard goes so far as to affirm "Isis enfin serait par ses perfections, une copie exacte et fidèle de la vièrge Marie des croyances chrétiennes si la vièrge Marie l' eût précédée."³

Perhaps this would be the point at which to say we cannot agree with him. Both, certainly, are mothers, both overflow with pity for the mortals who can invoke their aid, both may be considered as "gratia plena"-but there the resemblance ceases. The attributes of Isis⁴ are those of an extremely powerful numen. She united in herself the two first aspects of the Trinity, being Creator as well as Preserver of beings. In the legend the birth and existence of Horus is only secondary, though he avenges his father, so that Set, the Evil One, is kept in place, though not annihilated.

1 In Roscher's Lexicon, col. 429. 2. Das Heidentum in der römischen Kirche. 3. Les Divinités Egyptiennes quoted by Drexler, loc. cit.
4. See p. 5 supra.

Powerful enough indeed before,¹ in Graeco-Roman times she shared the functions of Serapis. Apuleius bestows on her all the functions & qualities which Aristeides² attributes to him.

The power of the Virgin, on the other hand, is derived. None of the many hymns to her that have been examined can really bear sustained comparison with Greek hymns or with Apuleius' Latin one.³ There is much more resemblance in the fine hymn of Prudentius beginning: Deus ignee, fons animarum | duo qui socians elementa.

Isis is "Queen Isis, greatest of the gods, the First Name," she is the "sure shield of the wind and diadem of life," it is she who has "created all the elements, wet and dry, warm and cold, of which the universe is composed," she is "the mistress of all things for all³ time." The only canticle that could compare with this hymn or with Apuleius', for that matter, is a Te Deum. The conception of Mary, gracious as it is, is relatively colourless.

The first hymn quoted continues
 Quem tremunt caeli, metuunt abyssi,
 Fluminum g^urettae, maris et procellae,
 laudat occasus, veneratur ortus.

stringis in ulqis

It is as the Mother of God, pre-eminently, that she is venerated. The cosmic touch is lacking.

It must be said that a greater resemblance exists between Serapis and Christ. Serapis is at once a powerful and gracious figure.

1. See supra, p. 3. 2. Sacr. Onat. 3. All from Hymn in Oxyrrhynchus Papyrus XI.

In his person he combines the function of "Osiris, lord of Eternity" with many others that he had acquired even before his re-birth in the Serapeum of Alexandria. He had become identified both with Zeus and with Dionysus, and his benign and bearded countenance, crowned with curls, surmounted by the calathos was a familiar one to Roman eyes. The Egyptians, more than any people set precious store on the "life everlasting" that supervened upon this transient one. "They call their houses hostelries," Diodorus says, on account of the short time during which they inhabit them, but their tombs they call eternal dwelling places! On which Le Page Renouf¹ comments: "The latter part of this is strictly and literally true, "pa t'eta," "eternal dwelling place"² is an expression which is met with at every instant in the inscriptions of the earliest period....the word anchin³ which literally signifies "living" is in innumerable places used emphatically for the departed who are enjoying everlasting life. The notion of life everlasting," he adds, "is among the few words written upon the wooden coffin in the British Museum of King Mykerinos of the 3rd Pyramid. In the very ancient inscription of Una, the coffin is called "hen en anchin," the chest of the living." In the Christian faith the same idea is too obvious to need mention. "here we have no continuing city," but look to the heavenly Zion, the "city not made with hands" etc.

But as the Egyptian was a mystery faith, this immunity from death was only to be obtained through union with the deity, who

1. Hibbert Lectures, 1879.

2 Cf. domus aeterna, Cumont p. 248.

himself has died and risen again. (Isis, it is true, had not herself undergone this, but she is so closely linked with Osiris that it is as if she shared his Passion.) . So that on tombs/^{in Egypt}appears with variants the inscription "As truly as Osiris lives so truly shall his followers live, as truly as Osiris is not dead, he shall die no more."

and on tombs in the Graeco-Roman world is found constantly the pious wish εὐφύχεται μετὰ τοῦ Ὀσίριδος. Rom VI.5, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall^{be}/also ~~be~~ ~~ἐκστασθῶμεν~~ in the likeness of His Resurrection" echoes the first, and many parallels, such as "O rest in the Lord " can be found for the second.

Still another facet of Serapis' complex godhead is his identification with Aesculapius. The figure of Aesculapius - he has been called on of the last competitors of Christ is peculiarly attractive. He had been established in Rome as early as B.C. 290, when he had been summoned from Epidaurus to stay a pestilence. By the second century his power had increased to such an extent that he became a saviour god¹, and the sanatoria attached to his temples were in universal repute². Aristoides, his gifted and fervent devotee, calls him "lord", "Healer", "Gentle One," Many cures, some miraculous, are recorded in these institutions. The comparison with the Great Healer "who went about doing good" is again obvious.

"Subveni Christus tu solus medicus" has been found as an inscription. The healing powers of Isis were of course well-known.

¹ Farnell - Asp. Grk. Rel. p. 123. ² Paus. II 26.2. For the identification, Lafaye, art., 90, 128, 2 Ann. Marc. xxii. 14.

many men and women being living and walking testimonies to her gracious influence!¹ It is recorded that Cyril of Alexandria² had to establish the worship of two Christian saints in Meunthi in Egypt to induce the people to forget the cures of Isis wrought in the temple there, near Canopus. But to return to Serapis. The change, among the more adaptable at any rate must have been easy, for we have Hadrian making the statement that "those who worship Serapis are Christians and those who call themselves³ bishops of Christ worship Serapis."

In general, then, the two religions undoubtedly underwent an exchange of influences, and further the resemblance was very striking in certain of the sacraments.

Baptism, to begin with, was, in the mystery-faiths, an essential preliminary to initiation. Ceremonial purification was not unknown to the Romans,⁴ but this baptism was symbolic, signifying the cleansing away of moral as well as physical stains. Apuleius speaks of being re-born as a result of this rite, and its sacramental nature is clearly recognised by Tertullian.³ It was performed, as in the early Church, by complete immersion. In the latter, confirmation, or the laying on of hands, followed by the first communion was usually part of the same ceremony, in each case preceded by abstinence and fasting. The parallel is very close. Both aspirants were admitted into a brotherhood prepared to live a life dedicated to

1. Diod. I. 25. 2. Hist. Aug. Script. VI. 2. 2. Legge ch. IV. 4. Cic. Legg. II. 19. 24.
 4. 5. Sacris quibusdam per lavacrum initiantur, Isidis alicuius aut Mithrae.

the deity.

The Egyptian religion was the only one which had instituted daily services, and it is more than probable that the ^{offices of the} Church were at least suggested by these. The adoration of the holy water, described elsewhere, has a very close parallel in the elevation of the Host.^{1.} A papyrus has been found in which the element is wine, and the priest pronounces^{no} over it the words "Thou art wine, yet thou art not wine, but the members of Osiris" - definitely transubstantiation. On a par is the incantation used in a love-charm: "May this wine become the blood of Osiris!" The contemplation which seemed to be part of the daily routine of the Egyptian temple-worship found its counterpart, much developed, in the rule of the Contemplative Orders. St. ~~Ra~~ Pachomius, the founder of monachism in Egypt, was, it has been established,² a recluse of Serapis in his youth, and it is more than probable that the system and rules inaugurated by him was to a large extent modelled on the results of his experience in the older religion.

An organised priesthood, possibly with certain rites of ordination, though we have no record of them, was an important feature of the Egyptian religion, recalling in its grades the various ranks of the clergy. Under the high priest-

1. This did not escape the attention of Firm. Mat. "Frustra tibi hanc aqua, quam colis, putas aliquando prodesse. Alia est aqua qua renovati homines renascuntur. De Err. Prof. Rel. II. 5.
2. Gibbon ed. Bury vol. IV App. 3. The tonsure was undoubtedly adopted.

~~prophet~~ - ¹ summus sacerdos, sacerdos maximus, primarius, who, according to Apuleius, was a "vir gravis, sobriae religionis observatione famosus" were his assistants, called prophetae. Next were the ² stolists, men and women who robed and disrobed the statues, and finally the ³ pastophori, who carried in the processions the little shrines wherein the statuettes dwelt, of whom it is said that they guard in their souls as in a casket the holy doctrines pure from superstition and uncontaminated by alien influences." There were also interpreters of dreams, ³ choristers, and scribes. The scribe was an important person. He was, after the high priest, the principal ⁴ depository of wisdom, and acted as director of ceremonies. It was the high priest who gave instruction to candidates before initiation and who officiated at it as hierophant. Apuleius speaks of this dignitary with the greatest respect and affection.⁵ This friendly and filial relationship no doubt ~~represented~~ represented that of the Christian flocks to the bishops and later to the priests. Tertullian actually proposed them as a model for the Christian communities.

Their lives, as indeed those of all devout worshippers, had to be free from reproach. Plutarch's description, half Stoic in feeling, might well serve, as perhaps it did, as a pattern for many a devotional Order.

1. Ap. 2. Judging from the treasures of gold and jewels listed, the office was most responsible. 3. CIG 5896.
4. Lafaye. 5. XI.26: complexus Mithram sacerdotem et meum jam parentem.

"She, (Isis) communicates her holy creed to those who by their perseverance in a temperate life, withdrawing themselves from the pleasures of the senses and from the passions, yearn to participate in the divine nature: who observe sedulously in the temples severe rules and rigorous abstinence, that they may know the supreme and sovereign being whom the spirit alone can understand, whom the goddess invites us to seek in herself, in the sanctuary where He abides!"¹

It is interesting that with the gradual general improvement in conduct which came about in the 3rd century, the sense of sin grew. The "better" men became, the "worse" they felt themselves to be. Religion -for the religious, that is - had ceased to be formal or obligatory, and had become an intimate and mystical relationship between worshipper and worshipped. But the sense of impotence developed, the longing for a saviour, the impossibility, without divine intervention, of salvation.

This element, almost completely absent from the mystery cults, developed increasingly in Christianity. The hymns are full of it, of man's weakness, misery and sin.

Altis suspiriis, ad te pro viribus
 Adae progenies clamamus salve!
 Perfusi lacrymis, depressi debitis,
 Clamamus exules, Maria salve!

Dum in interitum extendunt laqueum
 Phalanges daemonum, clamamus salve!

1. De Is. et Os. II.

Tu ad nos miseros converte oculos

Hoc nostrum suscipe, Maria salve!

continues the hymn quoted earlier -

A new ideal of sanctity, as Reville¹ points out was growing. He quotes inscriptions where the epithet sanctus is applied to the gods, e.g. Diis sanctis Liberis et Liberæ,²

Matri D.M. Idae sanctæ.³

Soli sanctissimæ⁴. Dianæ sanctissimæ.⁵

This brought with it a desire to expiate the faults and regain the lost purity.

Here Christianity offered itself as the religion par excellence of redemption. Christ, more than any of the deities even of the mystery faiths, was the self-constituted Redemptor, Salvator, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, who rejoiced over the lost sheep, without whom none came to the Father,ⁱⁿ whom to believe was to have eternal life. The vivid sense of sin that it helped to produce by incorporating the Eden-story, the Church proceeded to relieve by the efficacy of belief in the Cross, in repentance and in prayer. And there was a certainty, an intolerant fanaticism about Christianity found in none of the other religions, which gave it an advantage over them. "Paganism essayed to meet the religious situation by a process of selection and assimilation of the best elements and by toleration; Christianity by intolerance and repudiation of surrounding culture as the

1. La Religion à Rome sous les Severes. The whole subject is finely treated. 2. C.I.L.VIII. 9016. 3. VIII. 8023. 4. VI. 710. 5. V. 5090

wisdom of this doomed aeon."¹.

"Without the Church no salvation", said Cyprian. Yet the invitation was for all and for the humblest. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat." This was true, even materially. There were no "entrance fees," as for the various initiations, and the Christian communities were the first to provide charitable funds. "non epulis nec potaculis dispensatur, sed egenis alendis humandisque"^{1a}.

The dogma, particularly in the early Church, was simple, the moral force and enthusiasm behind the movement intense. But it was the fact that Christianity had a historical basis, that the Founder's personality, so gracious and compelling, and His death and resurrection were so near, that really spelt the victory of the new religion. It gave it an originality, above all a youth² that the others lacked, that assured its triumph.

All the same, the decline and fall of paganism was very gradual. The Theodosian code enacted curtly "~~cesset~~ superstitio, sacrificiorum aboleatur insania" and closed with the death penalty against anyone who still continued to take part in the abominable practices. Yet for long the imperial government was only half-hearted, and in 394 Flavianus as consul celebrated the mysteries of Isis and the procession passed through the streets of Rome.³ The old religion was waning, even in Egypt; Isis was dying.

¹. Angus: The Relig. Quests of the Graeco-Roman World. p. 106.
^{1a} Tert. Ap. 39. ². Rev. Op. cit. ³. Carm, cont. Pag. (Anthol. Lat. I p. 20)

Mournfully the Sibyl prophesies her end:

1 Ἴσι, θεῶ τριτάταινα, μενεῖς ἐπὶ χεύματι Νείλου
 μούνη, μαινὰς ἀτάκτος ἐπὶ ψαμάθοις Ἀχέροντος,
 κοῦκ ἔτι σοῦ μενεῖ γέ μενεῖ κατὰ γαίαν ἔπασαν,

and in 560 the great temple at Philae was closed by order of Justinian.

Fair were the gifts she had brought to the men and women of the West, light and learning, healing and joy and newness of life; a "means of grace and a hope of glory" to all - and how many were there - whose lips breathed "excrucior!" "Ad perennis vitae fontem mens sitivit arida"², and freely she bestowed the waters of comfort, the ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ of the Orphic hymn.³

Like an insubstantial pageant faded, her festivals are past and gone, yet the remembrance of her has not departed utterly from the earth, nor ever will.

By virtue of her greatness she too can say:
 μνάσασθαι τινα -- καὶ ὑπερον ἀμμένων,

nomenque erit ~~indelibile~~ nostrum.
 indelebile

1. Orac. Sib. V. 484-6 2. S. Peter Damiani.
 3. I. G. Sic. et Tar. 1488, etc. (P. Foucart) cf.

Δοίγη σοι Ὀσιρις
 τὸ ψ. ὕ.

APPENDIX I.

THE TEMPLES.

The Serapeum at Alexandria has been described at length by Rufinus. It was of immense size, comprising besides quarters for priests and recluses a magnificent library. so that it was not only a temple but a monastery and a centre of culture. It was approached by a hundred steps, the vaulted lower part, lighted from above, being divided into separate vestibules which served for various mysterious purposes. The naos in the centre was supported by marble columns, and the interior walls were overlaid with gold and silver. This contained the colossal image of the god, the work, probably, of Bryaxis. It was of wood decorated with metal, of such vast proportions that the hands could touch the walls in each direction. After the Capitol it was the most imposing building in the world.

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1. II. RR. 24. 2. AM. MARC. XXII. QU: duo bibliothecae inestimabiles
3. diversis ministeriis et clandestinis officiis.
4. ex omnibus generibus metallorum lignorumque compositum.
5. Am. Marc. loc. cit. post Capitolium... nihil orbis terrarum
ambitiosius cernas.
-

POMPEII.

The temple of Isis at Pompeii was comparatively small, its dimensions having been estimated at from fifty to sixty Oscan feet. The ~~first~~ ruins still standing are the remains of the second temple, the first, on the same site, was destroyed in the earthquake of 63. The later building appears from inscriptions on the pedestals of statues to have belonged to the City Council.

In the middle of the court, which is surrounded by a colonnade, is the oblong cella, approached at the Eastern end by a portico supported by six columns. In the opposite corner is an enclosure, probably a small chapel: near this are two altars, a third stood close to the shrine and there are five others between the columns.¹ On the South side is a small irregular area containing five rooms, presumably for the priest's use. The architecture has nothing Egyptian about it, yet it deviates from the ordinary with its bright painted walls and gaudy stucco ornaments. There were two pedestals for statues at the rear of the cella, and niches for others, both outside and inside. In front of the shrine was found a charred wooden bench. Two skulls were discovered, the significance of which has already been mentioned.¹

1. See Mau, Pompeii, 172ff.

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TEMPLES AT ROME.

At Rome the chief centre of Isiac worship was the Iseum on the Field of Mars.¹ It was probably built by Caligula about 38², though the first mention of it is in ~~XX~~ 71, when Vespa-⁴an and Titus spent the night there. As has been said, it was burnt in 80, re-built in 92 by Domitian and restored by Diocleitian.

It occupied the space between the Saepta, the Minervium and the baths of Agrippa, on the line of the present Via del Collegio Romano: the position has been ~~determined~~^{determined} by the Egyptised sculptured^{4a} discovered in the neighbourhood since the fifteenth century.⁵ Lanciani's account of his own and previous excavations enables us to form some idea of the magnificence of this building. The sanctuary, we are told, contains the propylaea, or pyramidal towers, with a gateway flanked by obelisks at each end of the dromos or sacred avenue which led⁶ to the double temple. This dromos was lined with masterpieces of Egyptian sculpture, while the peristyle enclosing the sacred area built (or re-built) by Domitian was in the purest Graeco-Roman style prevailing in his day, and exactly like the enclosure wall of his own Forum Transitorium. The double cella of the temple, of pure Egyptian architecture, was constructed with the

1. Ap. Met. XI. 26: de templi situ sumpto nomine Campensis.
 2. Wissowa op. cit. p. 353. 4. Eutrop. VII. 23. 4a. Jordan Topog. III. 568. 5. Ruins & Excav. Anc. Rome, 502 (summarised)
 6 i.e., of Isis and Serapis.

materials of an old sanctuary brought over piece by piece from the banks of the Nile to those of the Tiber. Among the monument¹ enumerated by Lanciani are a mystic casket, a sphinx of green granite, a group of the cow Hathor suckling the young Pharaoh, a column of the temple with high reliefs representing an Isiac procession, ~~and~~ a capital carved with papyrus leaves and lotus flowers, Later a sphinx of black basalt came to light, together with two cynocephalae in black porphyry and a crocodile in red granite.

Jordan² adds that down to the seventeenth century a marble arch belonging to this temple stood over the entrance of a neighbouring villa, and that among the remains was a bronze-spouted fountain which in the Middle Ages gave its name to neighbouring churches.³

XXXX _____ XXXX

1. Cumont Pl. '2 VI. 2. op. cit. 3. Now in the Giardino de la Pigna. Frag.59 of the F.U.R. shows the ground plan of the circular fountain.

TEMPLE OF ISIS AND SERAPIS IN THE THIRD REGION.

It is certain that a sanctuary of the Egyptian gods existed here, though the date of its foundation is unknown. It appears to have been known as the Metellinum, so that it was presumably founded by a Metellus. Pollio speaks of the house of the Tetrici being "in Monte Caelio, inter duos lucos, contra Isium Metellinum." Hundreds of fragments were discovered in 1888 under a house at the corner of the Via Labicana and the Via Machiavelli. They include representations of Jupiter-Serapis, Isis crowned with poppies and spicae, Isis veiled, the crescent on her forehead, the cow Hathor, her symbol, in very rare spotted granite. Lafaye¹ thinks that the church of Santa Maria in Navicella takes its name from a small ship on a pedestal in front of the portico, the emblem of Isis-Marina.²

TEMPLE OF ISIS IN THE FIFTH REGION.

On the Esquiline, in the fifth region, the chronicles mention an "Isis patricia" of which however nothing is known.

TEMPLE OF ISIS IN THE TWELFTH REGION

In this region, near the baths of Caracalla there existed a temple of Isis Athenodoria. A colossal marble sandal was discovered there in 1872.³

1. 1.Lanciani. 2.op.cit.p.200. 3.op.cit. p. 197.

6

APPENDIX II.

HYMNS.

Isis and Nephthys call Osiris back to life.

(The women with flowing hair shall say:)

Hail, come in peace, King, come in peace, thy son Horus avenges thee.

Lay all thy great pain upon thy two images, who weep for thee at thy sepulchre.

Ah, how lovely will it be to see thee! Come, come to us, mighty one, strengthen thou for us our love.

... O ye gods in heaven, O ye gods on earth, O ye gods in the underworld, O ye gods in the watery deep, O ye gods who are among the followers of the deep, we follow after the lord, the lord of love.

Brother, lord of love, hail! Come to me.

Messenger from heaven to earth, hail! May we come to thee.

Thou makest fruitful the women in the town who seek our lord.

The limit of the desire of my heart is to see thee, heir, king, beautiful one.

Hail, lord of love, come to me, lord, that I may see thee daily, come, brother, that we may see thee.....

Come thou to thy wife in peace, her heart flutters through her love for thee, she will embrace thee, and not let thee depart from her.....

4

Thy mother Nut comes to thee with peace-offerings, she builds thee up with the life of her body! Thou art endowed with a soul thou art endowed with a soul, thou art established, thou hast a soul, O thou Lord of women that makest women fruitful... Exalted art thou, therefore, Osiris, (at this point he comes to life) exalted art thou, exalted art thou in peace. Isis, lady of the horizon, comes to thee, inasmuch as she has conceived the One, who is the guide of the gods.¹

1. Budge, the Hieratic Papyrus of Nesi-Amsu (last Stanzas) chanted, accompanied by the tambourine.

8

GREEK HYMNS.

Six hymns in all have so far been discovered, they have recently collected and very fully commented upon by Peek.¹

By far the longest and most interesting is the long prose litany of the Oxyrrhynicus Papyrus². It begins with a long invocation to the goddess in over a hundred and twenty different places in Egypt and Magna Graecia (also Rome) under different epithets, and concludes with an enumeration of her functions and virtues.

The other five hymns are aretalogies, the goddess in praise of herself. The hymn of Andros³ in Hexameters (1st cent. B.C) is one the most interesting. The others are; the hymn given in Diodorus,⁴ probably from Bubastis, the prose hymn of Ios,⁵ the hymn in dactylic verse of 103 A.D. found at Cyrene and lastly the hymn discovered by Salac at Cyme,⁶ the copy of a stele in the Hephaistion at Memphis.

1. Isis-Hymnus, 1930. 2. XI. 1380. 3. I Gr. XII. 5. 739.
4. I. 27. 5. I. G. XII. 5. 14. 6. J. H. S. 1926.