

**Paper 98 — The Melchizedek Teachings in the Occident**

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*This chart is a revision of the 2010, 2011 and 2015 versions.*

Most endnotes and Urantia Book cross-references have been deleted to enhance readability.

**Sources for Paper 98, in the order in which they first appear**

- (1) William Kelley **Wright**, Ph.D., *A Student's Philosophy of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922, 1935)
- (2) Lewis **Browne**, *This Believing World: A Simple Account of the Great Religions of Mankind* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926)
- (3) E. Washburn **Hopkins**, Ph.D., LL.D., *Origin and Evolution of Religion* (New York: Yale University Press, 1923)

**Key**

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms occurring further apart, usually not in the same row.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the UB writer pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Blue** indicates original (or “revealed”) information, or UB-specific terminology and concepts. (What to highlight in this regard is debatable; the highlights are tentative.)
- (f) **Light green** indicates Bible passages or fragments thereof, which are not paralleled in the source texts.

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## PAPER 98 — THE MELCHIZEDEK TEACHINGS IN THE OCCIDENT

98:0.1 The Melchizedek teachings entered Europe along many routes, but chiefly they came by way of Egypt and were embodied in Occidental philosophy after being thoroughly Hellenized and later Christianized. The ideals of the Western world were basically Socratic, and its later religious philosophy became that of Jesus as it was modified and compromised through contact with evolving Occidental philosophy and religion, all of which culminated in the Christian church.

98:0.2 For a long time in Europe the Salem missionaries carried on their activities, becoming gradually absorbed into many of the cults and ritual groups which periodically arose. Among those who maintained the Salem teachings in the purest form must be mentioned the Cynics. These preachers of faith and trust in God were still functioning in Roman Europe in the first century after Christ, being later incorporated into the newly forming Christian religion.

98:0.3 Much of the Salem doctrine was spread in Europe by the Jewish mercenary soldiers who fought in so many of the Occidental military struggles. In ancient times the Jews were famed as much for military valor as for theologic peculiarities.

98:0.4 The basic doctrines of Greek philosophy, Jewish theology, and Christian ethics were fundamentally repercussions of the earlier Melchizedek teachings.

## 1. THE SALEM RELIGION AMONG THE GREEKS

98:1.1 The Salem missionaries might have built up a great religious structure among the Greeks had it not been for their strict interpretation of their oath of ordination, a pledge imposed by Machiventa which forbade the organization of exclusive congregations for worship, and which exacted the promise of each teacher never to function as a priest, never to receive fees for religious service, only food, clothing, and shelter. When the Melchizedek teachers penetrated to pre-Hellenic Greece, they found a people who still fostered the traditions of Adamson and the days of the Andites, but these teachings had become greatly adulterated with the notions and beliefs of the hordes of inferior slaves that had been brought to the Greek shores in increasing numbers. This adulteration produced a reversion to

IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

IV—*The Olympians* (Wright 112)

[contd] The Olympian deities, whose worship the city states made splendid and beautiful, were an inheritance from earlier times. They were the brilliant achievement of the age that produced the Homeric poems, the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. At a still earlier period the religion of the savage ancestors of the Greeks had been a low form of animism, with brutal and bloody rites (Wr 112).

a crude animism with bloody rites,

III—*The Religion of the Greek City State* (Wright 110)

There was a large variety of malignant spirits, *Keres*, who needed to be placated.... Human beings, probably **criminals condemned** to death, seem at least in early times to have been sacrificed for this purpose (Wr 112).

BOOK TWO: HOW RELIGION DEVELOPED IN THE ANCIENT WORLD (**Browne** 60)

IV: THE GREEKS (Browne 89)

1. The Minoan religion—how the Greek gods arose—the Olympian cult. (Browne 89)

Only with the coming of the Indo-European Greeks does the religion of the peninsula become better known to us. These **invaders** were of the same stock as the Hindus and other **Aryans**, and when they swept southward from Central Europe sometime before 1200 B.C.,

they **brought with them** their sky-god, Zeus Pater, and all their other old Aryan deities (B 89-90).

the lower classes even making ceremonial out of the execution of **condemned criminals**.

98:1.2 **The early influence of the Salem teachers was nearly destroyed by**

the so-called **Aryan invasion** from southern Europe and the East.

These Hellenic invaders **brought along with them** anthropomorphic God concepts similar to those which their Aryan fellows had carried to India.

This importation inaugurated the evolution of the Greek family of gods and goddesses.

And thus a new religion came into being. In part it was a fear-riddled, magic-mongering cult rooted in the half-civilization of the Minoans; and in part it was the shallow, light-hearted, myth-making cult of the barbaric Greeks (B 91).

XVI: RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY  
(Hopkins 274)

[The religion of pre-civilized (Aryanized) Greece] was essentially an earth-cult, with snakes, spirits of fertility, phallic males, reproductive mother-deities, many-breasted Artemis, Hera the cow-goddess, Demeter, mother earth, prolific as her rooting sow, a religion of dark secrets, of ghost and sex and fear and purifications, probably akin to the religion of the early Hebrews in some respects. This is what the Aryan invaders found as they swept down from the North upon these women-ridden natives of the Mediterranean.

They set their man-god Zeus of the bright sky over the cowering female divinities and made him the object of worship in all the ghost and grain mysteries, which had hitherto had no god at all or had been under some shadowy spirit.

Already head of his own pantheon, Zeus now became head of all the spiritual world ... (Ho 276-77).

Yet even so the Greek idea of Fate tended to reduce the idea of God. But in fact, as Greek religion never succeeded entirely in freeing itself from the under-world or in freeing its gods from their passions, the monotheistic idea did not descend below the poets and philosophers (Ho 278).

This new religion was partly based on the cults of the incoming Hellenic barbarians, but it also shared in the myths of the older inhabitants of Greece.

98:1.3 The Hellenic Greeks found the Mediterranean world largely dominated by the mother cult,

and they imposed upon these peoples their man-god, Dyaus-Zeus,

who had already become, like Yahweh among the henotheistic Semites, head of the whole Greek pantheon of subordinate gods.

And the Greeks would have eventually achieved a true monotheism in the concept of Zeus except for their retention of the overcontrol of Fate.

A God of final value must, himself, be the arbiter of fate and the creator of destiny.

#### IV: THE GREEKS (Browne 89)

1. The Minoan religion—how the Greek gods arose—the Olympian cult. (Browne 89)

[contd from 98:1.2] For many centuries the second element remained dominant. When the minstrels of classic Greece sang of the gods, they sang of glorified men: gay, lustful, brawling heroes, who sported about on Mount Olympus without giving the slightest heed to morality or property.

And there seems to have been no thought of any compelling tie between the people and the gods. Even centuries later the philosopher Aristotle solemnly wrote, “to love God would be improper” (B 91).

[contd] But if the early Greeks did not love their deities, neither did they greatly fear them. The tales that are called Homeric reveal almost no trace of any terror of the gods.

The people seem to have regarded Zeus and his divine family with a measure of fondness, perhaps even with a measure of awe—but nothing more.

Perhaps this was because the priesthood never attained any great power in ancient Greece (B 91).

98:1.4 As a consequence of these factors in religious evolution, there presently developed the popular belief in

the happy-go-lucky gods of Mount Olympus, gods more human than divine,

and gods which the intelligent Greeks never did regard very seriously.

They neither greatly loved nor greatly feared these divinities of their own creation.

They had a patriotic and racial feeling for Zeus and his family of half men and half gods, but they hardly revered or worshiped them.

98:1.5 The Hellenes became so impregnated with the antipriestcraft doctrines of the earlier Salem teachers that

no priesthood of any importance ever arose in Greece.

The **images** of the gods were carved by artists who thought only of beauty, not by holy men bowed in terror or reverence (B 92).

Even the making of **images** to the gods became more of a work in art than a matter of worship.

IX: GREECE AND ROME (**Wright** 108)

IV—*The Olympians* (Wright 112)

[contd from 98:1.1] From such crude beginnings, there developed, through the agency of the Homeric poems, the **Olympian gods** and goddesses,—the most sublime beings that the mind of man has ever been able to produce, so long as it has continued to think of the divine in **anthropomorphic** imagery (Wr 112).

98:1.6 The **Olympian gods** illustrate man's typical **anthropomorphism**.

As [Homer's] purpose was to entertain, rather than to edify, he gave Greek mythology an **aesthetic rather than an ethical** form,—a characteristic which it always retained (Wr 112).

But the Greek mythology was **more aesthetic than ethic**.

Professor Gilbert Murray regards the creation of the Olympian gods as a great religious reformation. In place of the world conceived by earlier periods, "as merely subject to incursions of *mana* snakes and bulls and thunder-stones and monsters," it gave the Greek the conception of the world "as **governed by an organized body of personal and reasoning rulers**, wise and bountiful fathers, like man in mind and shape, only unspeakably higher" (Wr 113-14).

The Greek religion was helpful in that it portrayed a universe **governed by a deity group**.

V—*Attempted Reforms by Poets and Philosophers*  
(Wright 114)

[contd] A time came when Greek civilization progressed far beyond its level in Homeric times. Morality advanced with it.... It became difficult for the Greeks to continue to revere the gods, and yet to regard them as occasionally guilty of conduct that would have been blameworthy in men. The old notions of the gods needed to be revised (Wr 114).

But Greek morals, ethics, and philosophy presently advanced far beyond the god concept,

and this imbalance between intellectual and spiritual growth was as hazardous to Greece as it had proved to be in India.

## 2. GREEK PHILOSOPHIC THOUGHT

### IV: THE GREEKS (Browne 89)

2. The Olympian cult fails—the learned take to philosophy. (Browne 92)

[contd] But though that shallow, light-hearted cult managed to persist for a while, ultimately it had no alternative but to fade away and be forgotten.... It had too little of that commingled terror and hope, too little of that blasting fear and febrile yearning, which is the stuff whereof enduring faiths are made.

[A well-organized priestly caste inevitably succeeds in hammering the “fear of the gods” deeply—usually too deeply—into the hearts of the people. But no such caste ever existed among the Greeks (B 91).]

Essentially the cult was without point, without much value or helpfulness in the business of keeping alive. It held out neither a comforting hand nor even a threatening fist to man.

98:2.1 A lightly regarded and superficial religion cannot endure,

especially when it has no priesthood to foster its forms and to fill the hearts of the devotees with fear and awe.

The Olympian religion did not promise salvation, nor did it quench the spiritual thirst of its believers;

And therefore it could not possibly keep alive itself (B 92).

therefore was it doomed to perish.

But it did not die of a sudden. Already by the sixth century B.C. the vanity of the Olympian cult was sensed by the keener minds in Athens and the other city-states of Greece. But not until the fourth century did it really give up the ghost.

Within a millennium of its inception it had nearly vanished, and the Greeks were without a national religion,

the gods of Olympus having lost their hold upon the better minds.

98:2.2 This was the situation when, during the sixth century before Christ, the Orient and the Levant experienced a revival of spiritual consciousness and a new awakening to the recognition of monotheism. But the West did not share in this new development; neither Europe nor northern Africa extensively participated in this religious renaissance.

And during all those years of its slow disintegration, new approaches to salvation were being discovered by the Greeks. The learned took to philosophy, for they were far advanced in mentality and fully able to extract satisfaction from such a discipline.

The Greeks, however, did engage in a magnificent intellectual advancement.

Had primitive fear swirled higher around them, of course they would never have been capable of being sustained by philosophy. They would have resorted instead to magic spells for help, and gone clutching bewilderedly at mythical spirits. But the flood of fear had subsided, and only a slough of despond was left. It was not terror, therefore, so much as disquiet that spurred the learned folk of Hellas to go seeking salvation.

They had begun to master fear and no longer sought religion as an antidote therefor,

but they did not perceive that true religion is the cure for soul hunger, spiritual **disquiet**, and moral despair. They sought for the solace of the soul in deep thinking—**philosophy** and metaphysics.

The advance of the race out of the hazards of the primeval forest had already made life *possible*—but it had not yet made life *reasonable*. As a result, the Greek sages were intent not so much on **self-preservation** as on **self-realization**. . (B 93).

[contd] And that was why they turned from the childish vanities of the Olympian cult to the **rigors of philosophy**. Through philosophy, that trying discipline of the mind which indefatigably gropes and claws its way in the hope that at last it can uncover the *why* of all things—through philosophy the learned of Greece sought to attain that sense of **security** which we call salvation (B 93).

[Contrast Wr 116-17, 119.]

They struck off along paths that led to new gods, or rather, to a new idea of god, of the **One God**, whom their new-found logic told them must be the ultimate **source** of power in all the universe. [contd next pg.]

They turned from the contemplation of **self-preservation**—salvation—to **self-realization** and self-understanding.

98:2.3 By **rigorous thought** the Greeks attempted to attain that consciousness of **security** which would serve as a substitute for the belief in survival,

but they utterly failed. Only the more intelligent among the higher classes of the Hellenic peoples could grasp this new teaching; the rank and file of the progeny of the slaves of former generations had no capacity for the reception of this new substitute for religion.

98:2.4 The philosophers disdained **all** forms of worship,

Almost without exception the sages seem to have been conscious of some such unifying God. Thales called Him “the Intelligence of the world.” The Stoics described Him as “the Helping of man by man.” Plato called Him “the Idea of Good”. And so most of the other philosophers. . . (B 94).

For the most part they did not even bother to discuss the old religion and the old gods. They simply shrugged their shoulders at their mention, and passed them by... (B 94).

#### IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

V— *Attempted Reforms by Poets and Philosophers* (Wright 114)

[contd from 98:1.6] The great poets of the sixth and fifth centuries attempted this task... Pindar described the gods as all wise and powerful, just and truthful... He believed in rewards and punishments both on earth and in a future life. Aeschylus emphasized the divine punishment that follows sin from one generation to another. Sophocles laid stress upon purity of heart and piety; he believed that the universe is moral throughout (Wr 114).

But the poets were unable to make a thorough reconstruction of religion... Moreover, they were primarily artists and not religious specialists (Wr 115).

notwithstanding that they practically all held loosely to the background of a belief in the Salem doctrine of “the Intelligence of the universe,” “the idea of God” and “the Great Source.”

In so far as the Greek philosophers gave recognition to the divine and the super-finite, they were frankly monotheistic;

they gave scant recognition to the whole galaxy of Olympian gods and goddesses.

98:2.5 The Greek poets of the fifth and sixth centuries, notably Pindar, attempted the reformation of Greek religion.

They elevated its ideals,

but they were more artists than religionists.

They failed to develop a technique for fostering and conserving supreme values.

[contd] The philosophers, too, sought to effect changes in religion. At the beginning of the fifth century B.C., **Xenophanes** had satirized anthropomorphic conceptions.... There is but one god in the universe, and he is not like a man.

It is not certain whether Xenophanes thought the one god to be identical with the universe (**pantheism**) or whether he believed this god to be an immanent being in it, who directs and controls it by his thought (Wr 115).

**Anaxagoras** (†428 B.C.) worked out a thoroughly **mechanical** conception of the universe, except that he found it necessary to posit an **initial god or mind** (*Nous*) to set the physical elements into motion (Wr 115).

**Socrates** (†399 B.C.) ... agreed with the Sophists that morality is subject to revision and criticism, but he maintained that its fundamental principles stand when thus criticized. **Virtue is knowledge**; honest inquiry both teaches what should be done and arouses the desire to do it.

**Goodness is health of the soul;**

**it is better to suffer injustice at the hands of others than to be guilty of it oneself,**

**and it is wrong to return evil for evil.**

He denounced all views or tales that represented the **gods** other than **wise and good** (Wr 116).

98:2.6 **Xenophanes** taught one God,

but his deity concept was too **pantheistic** to be a personal Father to mortal man.

**Anaxagoras** was a **mechanist** except that he did recognize a First Cause, an **Initial Mind**.

**Socrates** and his successors, **Plato** and **Aristotle**, taught that **virtue is knowledge**;

**goodness, health of the soul;**

**that it is better to suffer injustice than to be guilty of it,**

**that it is wrong to return evil for evil,**

**and that the gods are wise and good.**

For Plato, the virtue of the individual man is modeled on the plan of the city state; for the state is the individual writ large.... To be governed by reason, to be spirited in action, to exercise self control over passions and appetites, and to combine all in a symmetrical and well ordered life, is to possess the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Aristotle's moral conceptions rest on similar grounds (Wr 116).

X: JUDAISM (Wright 131)

I—Introduction (Wright 131)

[contd] The evolution of the Jewish religion furnishes a contrast to that of the Greeks and Romans (Wr 131).

[See Matthew Arnold, "Hebraism and Hellenism," Chapter 4 of *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).]

Their cardinal virtues were: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice.

98:2.7 The evolution of religious philosophy among the Hellenic and Hebrew peoples affords a contrastive illustration of the function of the church as an institution in the shaping of cultural progress.

In Palestine, human thought was so priest-controlled and scripture-directed that philosophy and aesthetics were entirely submerged in religion and morality. In Greece, the almost complete absence of priests and "sacred scriptures" left the human mind free and unfettered, resulting in a startling development in depth of thought. But religion as a personal experience failed to keep pace with the intellectual probings into the nature and reality of the cosmos.

98:2.8 In Greece, believing was subordinated to thinking; in Palestine, thinking was held subject to believing. Much of the strength of Christianity is due to its having borrowed heavily from both Hebrew morality and Greek thought.

98:2.9 In Palestine, religious dogma became so crystallized as to jeopardize further growth; in Greece, human thought became so abstract that the concept of God resolved itself into a misty vapor of pantheistic speculation not at all unlike the impersonal Infinity of the Brahman philosophers.

#### IV: THE GREEKS (Browne 89)

3. The masses take to magic—and the “mysteries”—the savior-god idea—how men tried to become divine. (Browne 94)

[contd] But the plain people, the masses, could not follow along the steep, narrow paths of hard reason up which the philosophers clambered.

Indeed, they sometimes resented the temerity of those philosophers, and violently dragged them down. They exiled Anaxagoras, and Protagoras, and put the great Socrates to death.... With them the vital problem was not self-realization, but still self-preservation. For they were still not at home in the universe. They were still afraid! . . . (B 94-95).

Secret cults of mystic salvation arose in every corner of the land, little sodalities preaching a religion of ecstatic hope and orgiastic practice. They were called “Mysteries,” (B 96) [*continues in 98:4.5*]

98:2.10 But the average men of these times could not grasp, nor were they much interested in, the Greek philosophy of self-realization and an abstract Deity;

they rather craved promises of salvation, coupled with a personal God who could hear their prayers.

They exiled the philosophers,

persecuted the remnants of the Salem cult, both doctrines having become much blended,

and made ready for that terrible orgiastic plunge into the follies of the mystery cults which were then overspreading the Mediterranean lands.

## IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

VI—*The Greek Mystery Religions* (Wright 119)

The **mysteries of Eleusis** ... were a recognized part of the established religion of the Athenian city state. They made use of the myth that Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, had been snatched away and taken down into Hades, from whence, as a result of her mother's efforts she was permitted to return to earth with the awakening life of the spring (Wr 120).

The first and crudest of [the Greek mystery cults] was the **worship of Dionysus** (Bacchus),—the Thracian god of the grape and of wine,—which became popular as early as the sixth century B.C. (Wr 119).

The mysteries of Orpheus are supposed by some to have been the result of a reform movement within the Dionysiac cult. In these the divine presence was identified with the heightening of a consciousness afforded by aesthetic pleasures, especially music,—a great advance in spirituality over alcoholic stimulation. The **Orphic movement** was spread by missionaries and gathered its converts into societies, which celebrated initiatory rites and sacraments, and were guided by inspired scriptures. It was, in its way, a religion of redemption, offering a more spiritual life to its adherents, through their worship of the god who would sustain and support them by his presence within them, and afford to them a share in his immortality (Wr 119-20).

The **Eleusinian mysteries** grew up within the Olympian pantheon, a Greek version of the worship of fertility;

**Dionysus nature worship** flourished;

the best of the cults was

the **Orphic brotherhood**, whose moral preachments and promises of salvation made a great appeal to many.

98:2.11 All Greece became involved in these new methods of attaining salvation, these emotional and fiery ceremonials. No nation ever attained such heights of artistic philosophy in so short a time; none ever created such an advanced system of ethics practically without Deity and entirely devoid of the promise of human salvation; no nation ever plunged so quickly, deeply, and violently into such depths of intellectual stagnation, moral depravity, and spiritual poverty as these same Greek peoples when they flung themselves into the mad whirl of the mystery cults.

98:2.12 Religions have long endured without philosophical support, but few philosophies, as such, have long persisted without some identification with religion. Philosophy is to religion as conception is to action. But the ideal human estate is that in which philosophy, religion, and science are welded into a meaningful unity by the conjoined action of wisdom, faith, and experience.

### 3. THE MELCHIZEDEK TEACHINGS IN ROME

#### V: THE ROMANS (Browne 100)

1. Original worship of household spirits—the state religion arises—and is intensified. (Browne 100)

[contd] The religious history of Rome ... began, of course, in the universal primitive belief that all objects are animated by resident or roving spirits. But the chief of these spirits were of a peculiar type in Rome, being not tribal but **family deities**. That was because the early Romans were a farming folk divided not into large units like tribes, but into small families (B 100).

Harried by continual attacks of enemy tribes, the little family groups were forced to consolidate into the city-state of Rome; and then a state religion arose. It centered chiefly around a **god of war** who was called **Mars** (it was just like the Romans to make a god of war their chief deity), and included the worship also of other gods, especially a sky-god, Jupiter, the Roman version of the Greek Zeus-pater (B 101).

But there was no great fervor in the cult, for it was far **more a political** than a religious institution (B 101).

98:3.1 Having grown out of the earlier religious forms of worship of

the **family gods**

into the tribal reverence for **Mars**, the **god of war**,

it was natural that the later religion of the Latins was **more of a political** observance

than were the intellectual systems of the Greeks and Brahmins or the more spiritual religions of several other peoples.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

A distinct change did occur, however, about the sixth century B.C.

It came as an after-effect of the invasion of the Etruscans, a race with apparently higher capacities for civilization than the original Romans. They took over the state religion and made it a thing of far greater importance than ever it had been before. New gods were introduced: Minerva, Diana, and others. A college of priests was founded, and the priesthood was organized under a chief who was called Pontifex Maximus.

For the first time in the history of Rome temples were built, and images of the gods were placed in them and worshipped (B 102-03).

[contd] But even then the state religion remained in large part a formal affair.... The gods demanded that the vows the people made to them should be most scrupulously observed; but they insisted on very little else. They were not immoral or venal, like the gods of the Olympian religion,

but neither were they puritanically moral or tyrannically strict, like, for instance, the God of the Hebrews (B 103).

URANTIA PAPER 98

98:3.2 In the great monotheistic renaissance of Melchizedek's gospel during the sixth century before Christ,

too few of the Salem missionaries penetrated Italy, and those who did were unable to overcome the influence of

the rapidly spreading Etruscan priesthood

with its new galaxy of gods and temples,

all of which became organized into the Roman state religion.

This religion of the Latin tribes was not trivial and venal like that of the Greeks,

neither was it austere and tyrannical like that of the Hebrews;

it consisted for the most part in the observance of mere forms, vows, and taboos.

## IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

VII—*Religion in the Roman Republic* (Wright 120)

Southern Italy was Greek in culture and religion, and when this region was conquered by the Romans, the latter came into contact with the Greek gods.

The worship of these was gradually adopted in Rome, and in many cases Greek gods were identified with old Roman deities who thus took on the anthropomorphic characteristics of the Olympians (Wr 121).

II—*Family Religion* (Wright 109)

[contd] An important feature of the life of the early Greek home was the worship of the **hearth and the fire upon it** (Wr 109).

In time, the values conserved by the sacred fire came to include the moral purity of the home. The conservation of moral purity required a personal deity, and thus arose the idea of a **goddess of the hearth, Hestia**, a beautiful virgin, who stood for moral purity, and protected domestic relations (Wr 109).

Among the Romans, **Vesta** was the central figure in the worship of the **home** (Wr 110).

98:3.3 Roman religion was greatly influenced by extensive cultural importations from Greece.

Eventually most of the Olympian gods were transplanted and incorporated into the Latin pantheon.

The Greeks long worshiped the **fire of the family hearth**—

**Hestia** was the virgin **goddess of the hearth**;

**Vesta** was the Roman goddess of the **home**.

Zeus became Jupiter; Aphrodite, Venus; and so on down through the many Olympian deities.

III—*The Religion of the Greek City State* (Wright 110)

In other religions, adolescents experience some kind of spiritual awakening and are initiated or confirmed into the faith of their fathers. Greek and Roman youth at this age were solemnly received into citizenship with religious rites. Religious awakening with them was a conscious consecration to the service of the state (Wr 110-11).

The Greek city state employed religion in the endeavor to conserve all of its values.... “Important acts of State were accompanied by sacrifice; the religious oath was administered to magistrates, jurymen and other officials; the admission of youth into the ranks of the citizens was a religious ceremony” (Wr 111).

Oracles were always consulted in crises, and whenever an important political decision had to be made.... Athens and other Greek cities were thronged with altars, shrines and temples (Wr 111).

[contd] The city state also made provision for the worship of lesser supernatural beings. Heroes were men, who according to tradition had founded cities or families, or done great deeds. Their bones were carefully preserved, and were revered at their tombs (Wr 111).

The Christian saints who ultimately replaced these local heroes, to this day conserve much the same values for the populations of village communities in Mediterranean lands (Wr 112).

98:3.4 The religious initiation of Roman youths was the occasion of their solemn consecration to the service of the state.

Oaths and admissions to citizenship were in reality religious ceremonies.

The Latin peoples maintained temples, altars, and shrines and, in a crisis, would consult the oracles.

They preserved the bones of heroes

and later on those of the Christian saints.

## V: THE ROMANS (Browne 100)

2. Why the state religion failed—the coming of the mysteries—Cybele—Attis—the other foreign cults. (Browne 103)

[contd] Of course, such a religion, clean but not very exciting, proper but not very compelling, could not persist for long. Between 500 and 200 B.C. it deteriorated and sank into almost complete bankruptcy (B 103).

As early as 200 B.C. the cult of Cybele, “the Great Mother of the Gods,” was brought to the city.

Imported from Asia Minor, where it may have developed out of the old Babylonian worship of Ishtar, this mystery found its chief sanctuary on the Vatican Hill—almost on the precise spot where the basilica of St. Peter's now stands. There, and wherever else in the empire the cult had a following, spring festivals of almost unbelievable bestiality were held (B 104).

The Roman legions had gone out to conquer all the world, only to come back conquered by all its gods (B 104).

Indeed, it is quite impossible to give a definitive account of all the mystery gods and goddesses whose cults were permitted to flourish in imperial Rome (B 106).

98:3.5 This formal and unemotional form of pseudoreligious patriotism was doomed to collapse,

even as the highly intellectual and artistic worship of the Greeks had gone down before the fervid and deeply emotional worship of the mystery cults.

The greatest of these devastating cults was the mystery religion of

the Mother of God sect,

which had its headquarters, in those days, on the exact site of the present church of St. Peter's in Rome.

98:3.6 The emerging Roman state conquered politically but was in turn conquered by the cults, rituals, mysteries, and god concepts of Egypt, Greece, and the Levant.

These imported cults continued to flourish throughout the Roman state

3. Augustus restores the state religion—the god-emperor—the reaction—the Cynics. (Browne 107)

It was solely in order to make [his] empire firm that [Augustus] set himself the task of **reviving the old religion**. He could not possibly use the alien mysteries to attain that end, for those mysteries were in their very nature a divisive and not a cohesive force.... So Augustus saw no reason to favor the mysteries. On the contrary, he sought to drive them out of existence by lending all his power and prestige to the moribund state religion.

[In **earlier** times there had been a single god who, **above all** others, protected the state,—Jupiter Stator. [Etc.] (**Wright** 122)]

He **built great temples** everywhere, equipping them with **beautiful idols** of the old gods.

He thoroughly **reorganized the priesthood**, **making himself its head**.

Then he went further—a long, long way further.... By a decree of his own as Emperor, he **made himself the Deity Supreme!** He commanded that the guardian spirit of his own person, his “Genius,” be worshipped in every city throughout the empire; and poets and writers were hired to invent legends telling how he, Augustus, had been originally fashioned in heaven and **miraculously brought to the world** to save it.

up to the time of **Augustus**,

who, purely for political and civic reasons, made a heroic and somewhat successful effort to destroy the mysteries and **revive the older political religion**.

98:3.7 **One of the priests of the state religion told Augustus of the earlier attempts of the Salem teachers to spread the doctrine of one God, a final Deity presiding over all supernatural beings; and this idea took such a firm hold on the emperor that**

he **built many temples**, stocked them well with **beautiful images**,

**reorganized the state priesthood**, re-established the state religion, **appointed himself acting high priest of all**,

and as emperor did not hesitate to **proclaim himself the supreme god**.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 98

And as long as he lived, this religion he built around himself flourished everywhere in the empire—

98:3.8 This new religion of Augustus worship flourished and was observed throughout the empire during his lifetime

everywhere save, of course, in Palestine, where dwelt the Jews (B 107-08).

except in Palestine, the home of the Jews.

[contd] But even the revival under Augustus could not stay the debacle of the old religion. On the contrary, it may perhaps have hastened it. It but opened the way for one more corroding element: the human gods. Succeeding emperors emulated Augustus, deifying themselves, and sometimes also their wives, their mistresses, even their lewd boy-companions.

And this era of the human gods continued

In time there were almost forty names on the roster of these monstrous gods! (B 108)

until the official Roman cult had a roster of more than twoscore self-elevated human deities,

all claiming miraculous births and other superhuman attributes.

[contd] There seemed to be but one sane element left, the Cynics... The Cynics of that time were preaching philosophers,

98:3.9 The last stand of the dwindling band of Salem believers was made by an earnest group of preachers, the Cynics,

exalted souls who felt themselves called upon to drag the people out of the sinkholes of superstition in which they floundered.

These Cynics stood on the corners of the market-place, or on temple steps, and harangued the people to abjure the wild existences they were leading and go back to the simple, natural life. They assured them there was but one way of Salvation: common sense (B 108-09).

who exhorted the Romans to abandon their wild and senseless religious rituals

and return to a form of worship embodying Melchizedek's gospel as it had been modified and contaminated through contact with the philosophy of the Greeks.

4. Why decadent Rome took to the mysteries—Mithras—its significance. (Browne 109)

[contd] But, despite all their devotion and eagerness, it was impossible for those Cynics to work any profound change in their fellow-men. The people could not be satisfied with the little joys afforded by common sense.... They wanted passion, excitement! . . .

And so now even more than before they took to the mysteries (B 109).

But the people at large rejected the Cynics;

they preferred to plunge into the rituals of the mysteries, which not only offered hopes of personal salvation but also gratified the desire for diversion, excitement, and entertainment.

#### 4. THE MYSTERY CULTS

IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

IX—*Mystery Religions in the Roman Empire* (Wright 123)

[contd] The masses of people in Roman imperial times, as well as the classes, had lost much of the earlier faith in the old gods of family and state religion.

And they were not intellectual enough to gain help from philosophy.

So they turned to the extravagant and imposing religious cults that came into the Graeco-Roman world from Egypt and the Orient (Wr 123).

98:4.1 The majority of people in the Greco-Roman world, having lost their primitive family and state religions

and being unable or unwilling to grasp the meaning of Greek philosophy,

turned their attention to the spectacular and emotional mystery cults from Egypt and the Levant.

[contd] The Romans of the empire were attracted to mystery religions through much the same motives that had influenced Greeks in the same direction from an earlier time—desire for personal **immortality** and for some assurance of divine favor and support **in this life**.

Three **mystery religions** had wide popularity and influence. In order of increasing importance these were:

the cult of **Cybele and her son Attis**, which had originated in **Phrygia**;

that of **Isis and her son Osiris**, two **Egyptian** deities;

and that of **Mithra**, which was probably of **Persian** origin.

In each of the first two mentioned the central idea is this: the goddess had lost her son by death, and had succeeded in effecting his resurrection;

those who are **properly initiated into the mysteries** and **celebrate the anniversary of the god's death** with mourning and that of his **resurrection** with rejoicing

thereby become partakers of his divine nature and immortality.

The ceremonies connected with the **Phrygian** religion were **imposing** and emotionally exciting; unfortunately they retained gross features of their savage origin (Wr 123-24).

The common people craved promises of salvation—religious consolation **for today** and assurances of hope for **immortality** after death.

98:4.2 The **three mystery cults** which became most popular were:

98:4.3 1. The **Phrygian** cult of **Cybele and her son Attis**.

98:4.4 2. The **Egyptian** cult of **Osiris and his mother Isis**.

98:4.5 3. The **Iranian** cult of the worship of **Mithras** as the savior and redeemer of sinful mankind.

98:4.6 The Phrygian and Egyptian mysteries taught that the divine son (respectively Attis and Osiris) had experienced death and had been resurrected by divine power,

and further that all who were **properly initiated into the mystery**, and who reverently **celebrated the anniversary of the god's death and resurrection**,

would thereby become partakers of his divine nature and his immortality.

98:4.7 The **Phrygian** ceremonies were **imposing** but degrading;

their bloody festivals indicate how degraded and primitive these Levantine mysteries became.

#### V: THE ROMANS (Browne 100)

2: Why the state religion failed—the coming of the mysteries—Cybele—Attis—the other foreign cults. (Browne 103)

Closely associated with this orgiastic worship of Cybele there was also the worship of her lover, Attis. This god Attis was believed to have been conceived immaculately in the womb of a virgin, and was said to have died of self-immolation at the base of a tree.... His “passion” was enacted every spring in Rome, much as the “passion” of Osiris was enacted annually in Egypt. The festival began with a “day of blood”—the pagan Black Friday—commemorating the death of the young god;

and after three days it reached a climax in the “day of joy,” commemorating the god’s resurrection. . . (B 106).

#### IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

IX—*Mystery Religions in the Roman Empire* (Wright 123)

[contd from 98:4.4] The religion of Isis was more refined, coming as it did from an older civilization. Its ritual was beautiful and impressive, its temples imposing; the secrecy of the ceremonies aroused the awe of the initiates; there were elements of spirituality in the worship (Wr 124).

The most holy day was Black Friday, the “day of blood,” commemorating the self-inflicted death of Attis.

After three days of the celebration of the sacrifice and death of Attis the festival was turned to joy in honor of his resurrection.

98:4.8 The rituals of the worship of Isis and Osiris were more refined and impressive than were those of the Phrygian cult.

## IV: THE GREEKS (Browne 89)

3. The masses take to magic—and the “mysteries”—the savior-god idea—how men tried to become divine. (Browne 94)

[contd from 98:2.10] and almost without exception they circled around the idea of a god who died and was resurrected.

As we have already seen, that idea was obviously inspired by the sight of the annual death and rebirth of the crops (B 96).

A man had only to eat the flesh and guzzle the blood of the animal sacred to his savior-god, whirl around in orgiastic passion, hack at his own flesh in madness, and shout, scream, howl to the skies, and then in a moment of frenzy—an “enthusiasm” it was called in Greek—he was of a sudden overwhelmed by the conviction that he actually *was* the god! (B 97)

## V: THE ROMANS (Browne 100)

4. Why decadent Rome took to the mysteries—Mithras—its significance. (Browne 109)

[contd from 98:3.9] It is true that the cults of Cybele, Isis, and Bacchus began to wane a little in their popularity; but that was only because a new cult had come to take their places. It was the cult of Mithras, (B 109) [continues in 98:5.2]

This Egyptian ritual was built around the legend of the Nile god of old,

a god who died and was resurrected,

which concept was derived from the observation of the annually recurring stoppage of vegetation growth followed by the springtime restoration of all living plants.

The frenzy of the observance of these mystery cults and the orgies of their ceremonials, which were supposed to lead up to the “enthusiasm” of the realization of divinity, were sometimes most revolting.

## 5. THE CULT OF MITHRAS

98:5.1 The Phrygian and Egyptian mysteries eventually gave way before the greatest of all the mystery cults, the worship of Mithras.

## IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

IX—*Mystery Religions in the Roman Empire*  
(Wright 123)

[contd from 98:4.5] The mysteries of Mithra appealed primarily to soldiers.

Legions were doubtless often recruited in the east, where the religion had its home, and wherever these legions were later sent, the disciples of Mithra in them became active propagandists. So ruins of Mithraeums are found to-day all along the former frontiers of the Roman empire (where there were military camps), as well as in the city and seaport of ancient Rome itself (Wr 124).

## V: THE ROMANS (Browne 100)

4. Why decadent Rome took to the mysteries—Mithras—its significance. (Browne 109)

It was in all respects a purer mystery than those that had proceeded it. It had a distinct ethical content, and showed little tendency to encourage riotous and orgiastic practices.... Though equally fervent, it was less hysterical than its rivals; though just as certain of its validity, it was far less given to emotional excess (B 111).

[contd from 98:5.1] imported from Persia, where it had arisen out of those primitive elements which the prophet Zoroaster had failed to stamp out (B 109).

The Mithraic cult made its appeal to a wide range of human nature and gradually supplanted both of its predecessors.

Mithraism spread over the Roman Empire through the propagandizing of Roman legions recruited in the Levant, where this religion was the vogue, for they carried this belief wherever they went.

And this new religious ritual was a great improvement over the earlier mystery cults.

98:5.2 The cult of Mithras arose in Iran and long persisted in its homeland despite the militant opposition of the followers of Zoroaster.

[See 95:6.7, and compare George Foot Moore's *History of Religions*, Vol. 1 (1913), p. 598ff.]

But by the time Mithraism reached Rome, it had become greatly improved by the absorption of many of Zoroaster's teachings. It was chiefly through the Mithraic cult that Zoroaster's religion exerted an influence upon later appearing Christianity.

IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

IX—*Mystery Religions in the Roman Empire* (Wright 123)

Mithra was a mythological deity who sprang miraculously into life from a rock

98:5.3 The Mithraic cult portrayed a militant god taking origin in a great rock,

and performed all sorts of heroic deeds, such as would appeal to the admiration of soldiers. He overcame the sun god and made him his faithful vassal and ally. His chief exploit was a painful journey to kill a bull that was working great destruction to mankind (Wr 124).

engaging in valiant exploits,

In the course of his exploits he struck a rock with arrows and water gushed forth.

and causing water to gush forth from a rock struck with his arrows.

Later on, there came a flood, from which one man, secretly advised by the gods, built a boat and escaped with his cattle.

There was a flood from which one man escaped in a specially built boat

Mithra celebrated a Last Supper with the Sun God and other companions, after which he ascended into the heavens (Wr 124-25).

and a last supper which Mithras celebrated with the sun-god before he ascended into the heavens.

[Compare: In the age when the great gods of western Asia, especially the warrior gods, were being identified with the sun, Mithra followed the fashion ... *Sol Invictus Mithras* is his common title in Latin inscriptions, and as the day of the Syrian solar Baals waned, *Sol Invictus* without a name meant Mithras.... In the reliefs in the Mithræa, however, Mithras is distinct from the sun god, with whom he is frequently represented in converse; the myth had been fixed before the identification was thought of (George Foot Moore, *History of Religions*, Vol. 1 [1913], p. 597).]

This sun-god, or *Sol Invictus*, was a degeneration of the Ahura-Mazda deity concept of Zoroastrianism.

## V: THE ROMANS (Browne 100)

4. Why decadent Rome took to the mysteries—Mithras—its significance. (Browne 109)

Mithras grew up to be the most strenuous champion of the sun-god in his war against the god of darkness,

and the climax of his career was a life-and-death struggle with a mythical sacred bull. By finally slaying this bull and letting its blood flood the earth, Mithras gave life to the soil, and earned immortality for himself.

Straightway he was exalted to the abode of the Immortals, and there he dwelt as the divine protector of all the faithful on earth. . . (B 110).

[contd] Long before the advent of Christianity we find a significant religion and an elaborate ritual crystallizing around that legend of Mithras. To this day there exist along the Danube and in Northern Africa certain subterranean caves in which are statues and carvings depicting scenes in the tale. Those caves were the secret churches of the Mithraists,

and in them all manner of magic rites were once performed.

Three times a day, with especial elaborateness on the Sun-day

Mithras was conceived as the surviving champion of the sun-god in his struggle with the god of darkness.

And in recognition of his slaying the mythical sacred bull, Mithras was made immortal,

being exalted to the station of intercessor for the human race among the gods on high.

98:5.4 The adherents of this cult worshiped in caves and other secret places,

chanting hymns, mumbling magic, eating the flesh of the sacrificial animals, and drinking the blood.

Three times a day they worshiped, with special weekly ceremonials on the day of the sun-god

and the twenty-fifth of December, the Mithras priests offered services in the caves. Libations were poured, bells were rung, hymns were chanted, and many candles were burnt. Above all, holy sacraments were administered to the initiated. The flesh of a sacrificial animal was eaten, and its blood was drunk, and thus the celebrants were thought to take on the divinity and immortality of the blessed lord, Mithras.

By a primitive process of reasoning which we have already described in connection with the Cybele cult, the Mithraists galloped to the comforting conclusion that the mere consumption of the supposed flesh and blood of the god assured them of life everlasting.

When they died on this earth they expected to ascend to Heaven through seven gates, unlocked by seven keys which the Mithras priests possessed, and in Heaven they hoped to dwell with Mithras until the final Judgment Day.

All the unbaptized, both living and dead, were to be totally annihilated on that Judgment Day. Only the redeemed were to be saved, and Mithras, come to earth a second and final time, would administer to each of them a last sacrament, and then cause them to inherit the world in peace and blessedness forevermore. . . (B 111).

and with the most elaborate observance of all on the annual festival of Mithras, December twenty-fifth.

It was believed that the partaking of the sacrament ensured eternal life,

the immediate passing, after death, to the bosom of Mithras, there to tarry in bliss until the judgment day.

On the judgment day the Mithraic keys of heaven would unlock the gates of Paradise for the reception of the faithful;

whereupon all the unbaptized of the living and the dead would be annihilated upon the return of Mithras to earth.

## IX: GREECE AND ROME (Wright 108)

IX—*Mystery Religions in the Roman Empire*  
(Wright 123)

[contd from 98:5.3] When a man dies, his soul goes to face Mithra after death, and he is judged according to his deserts.

At the end of the world, Mithra shall summon the dead from their graves and hold a Last Judgment.

The wicked shall be consumed in fire, while the faithful shall reign with Mithra forever (Wr 125).

Only men were initiated into these mysteries.

It was a kind of free masonry; there were seven different orders into which the worshipper might successively be initiated (Wr 124).

The fact that ruins of temples of the Great Mother are often found in proximity to those of Mithra has led to the supposition that the wives and daughters of the followers of Mithra worshipped Cybele and Attis (Wr 124).

It was taught that, when a man died, he went before Mithras for judgment,

and that at the end of the world Mithras would summon all the dead from their graves to face the last judgment.

The wicked would be destroyed by fire, and the righteous would reign with Mithras forever.

98:5.5 At first it was a religion only for men,

and there were seven different orders into which believers could be successively initiated.

Later on, the wives and daughters of believers were admitted to the temples of the Great Mother, which adjoined the Mithraic temples.

The women's cult was a mixture of Mithraic ritual and the ceremonies of the Phrygian cult of Cybele, the mother of Attis.

## 6. MITHRAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

I—*Introduction* (Wright 108)

98:6.1 Prior to the coming of the mystery cults and Christianity,

Among both Greeks and Romans, religious endeavor, so far as it ever became really effectual, was a function of the family and the city state. It conserved the values of these institutions, and was chiefly of aid to the individual in relation to them. Thus subordinated, religion did not develop as an independent institution.

personal religion hardly developed as an independent institution in the civilized lands of North Africa and Europe;

it was more of a family, city-state, political, and imperial affair.

Religious worship never became centralized.

The Hellenic Greeks never evolved a centralized worship system;

Each local shrine had its own ritual, handed down by tradition from one priest to his successor.

the ritual was local;

The priesthood never became a special professional class like the Brahmins. No great order like the Buddhist brotherhood arose.

they had no priesthood

There were no sacred books like the Vedas, and no authoritative body of doctrine (Wr 108).

and no "sacred book."

But the problems of associated life presently became complex and irreducible to the simpler conceptions of life in the earlier family and city state; individuals came to feel spiritual needs too profound to be conserved through anthropomorphic gods and goddesses, no matter how lovely in aesthetic form. The old pagan religions of Greece and Rome were unable to meet these problems, and collapsed. Their failure was chiefly due to their lack of a satisfactory *Agency* for the conservation of their higher values (Wr 108-09).

V—*Attempted Reforms by Poets and Philosophers*  
(Wright 114)

[See Wr 118-19.]

IX—*Mystery Religions in the Roman Empire*  
(Wright 123)

From the second to the fourth century, A.D., the most vigorous rival of Christianity was probably the religion of Mithra (Wr 124).

If in the second or third century A.D., a visitor had entered a place devoted to the worship of Mithra, and then one devoted to the worship of Christ, he would have found many similar features.

Much as the Romans, their religious institutions lacked a powerful driving agency for the preservation of higher moral and spiritual values.

While it is true that the institutionalization of religion has usually detracted from its spiritual quality, it is also a fact that no religion has thus far succeeded in surviving without the aid of institutional organization of some degree, greater or lesser.

98:6.2 Occidental religion thus languished until the days of the Skeptics, Cynics, Epicureans, and Stoics,

but most important of all, until

the times of the great contest between Mithraism and Paul's new religion of Christianity.

98:6.3 During the third century after Christ, Mithraic and Christian churches were very similar both in appearance and in the character of their ritual.

In each case, the place of worship would have been likely to have been **underground**.

There would have been a nave and side aisles, and an upraised place where stood the altar. Behind the **altar**, or above it, there would probably have been a work of art **depicting the suffering** on the part of a god in human form, suffering through which it was thought salvation comes to men (Wr 125).

On entering either Mithraeum or Christian church, worshippers **dipped their fingers into holy water**.

Initiates to both religions were **baptized**, and **partook of the bloodless sacrifice of bread and wine** (Wr 125).

[Mithraism] probably differed chiefly from Christianity in putting more emphasis on physical courage and other masculine virtues, and less upon more feminine virtues like love, meekness, pity, and endurance.... It also differed from Christianity in making more of loyalty and devotion to the empire and emperor. Above all, it differed in emphasizing the **military virtues**, whereas the Christians of those times were often **pacifists** and thought all warfare wrong (Wr 125-26).

A majority of such places of worship were **underground**,

and both contained **altars** whose backgrounds variously **depicted the sufferings** of the savior who had brought salvation to a sin-cursed human race.

98:6.4 Always had it been the practice of Mithraic worshippers, on entering the temple, to **dip their fingers in holy water**.

And since in some districts there were those who at one time belonged to both religions, they introduced this custom into the majority of the Christian churches in the vicinity of Rome.

Both religions employed **baptism** and **partook of the sacrament of bread and wine**.

The one great difference between Mithraism and Christianity, aside from the characters of Mithras and Jesus, was that the one encouraged **militarism** while the other was **ultrapacific**.

But the very tolerance of Mithraism prevented it from developing into a completely spiritual religion. It could not free itself wholly from primitive superstitions.

Mithraism's tolerance for other religions (except later Christianity) led to its final undoing.

But the deciding factor in the struggle between the two was

With no room for women to participate in its worship, it lacked the support of those who always have been the mainstay of Christianity ("last at the cross and first at the tomb")... [Christianity's] communion included women as well as men (Wr 126).

the admission of women into the full fellowship of the Christian faith.

98:6.5 In the end the nominal Christian faith dominated the Occident.

X—*The Debt of Modern Religion to Greece and Rome* (Wright 126)

Nevertheless, the present-day religions of the west, both Christian and Jewish, owe a very great deal to the Greeks and Romans.

First, on the side of the recognition of values. The Old Testament and the New, taken literally, contain no such clearly developed conceptions of social and political justice as are to be found in the teaching of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. [Etc.] (Wr 127)

Greek philosophy supplied the concepts of ethical value;

On the side of ritual, the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper are strikingly similar to the mystery religions. [Etc.] (Wr 128)

Mithraism, the ritual of worship observance;

[[The] ultimate failure of Greek and Roman religions was one of inadequacy in finding an Agency through which to seek the conservation of their socially recognized values (Wr 127).]

and Christianity, as such, the technique for the conservation of moral and social values.

## 7. THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

98:7.1 A Creator Son did not incarnate in the likeness of mortal flesh and bestow himself upon the humanity of Urantia to reconcile an angry God but rather to win all mankind to the recognition of the Father's love and to the realization of their sonship with God. After all, even the great advocate of the atonement doctrine realized something of this truth, for he declared that

[To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19).]

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.”

98:7.2 It is not the province of this paper to deal with the origin and dissemination of the Christian religion. Suffice it to say that it is built around the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the humanly incarnate Michael Son of Nebadon,

BOOK SEVEN: WHAT HAPPENED IN EUROPE (Browne 257)

II: CHRIST (Browne 276)

2. The story of Saul of Tarsus. (Browne 279)

*Christos* is the Greek word for “Anointed One,” and Saul, whose mother tongue was Greek, built his whole personal faith around that word (B 281).

4. Jesus becomes the Christ—the compromises with paganism—the superiority of Christianity—the writing of the Gospels—persecution by Rome. (Browne 284)

known to Urantia as the Christ, the anointed one.

Christianity was spread throughout the Levant and Occident by the followers of this Galilean,

There was a zeal, a missionary ardor, in the early church that was largely unknown in the older cults (B 286).

and their missionary zeal equaled that of their illustrious predecessors, the Sethites and Salemites, as well as that of their earnest Asiatic contemporaries, the Buddhist teachers.

98:7.3 The Christian religion, as a Urantian system of belief, arose through the compounding of the following teachings, influences, beliefs, cults, and personal individual attitudes:

98:7.4 1. The Melchizedek teachings, which are a basic factor in all the religions of Occident and Orient that have arisen in the last four thousand years.

98:7.5 2. The Hebraic system of morality, ethics, theology, and belief in both Providence and the supreme Yahweh.

[Compare G.F. Moore, *op cit.*, and 170:1.]

98:7.6 3. The Zoroastrian conception of the struggle between cosmic good and evil, which had already left its imprint on both Judaism and Mithraism. Through prolonged contact attendant upon the struggles between Mithraism and Christianity, the doctrines of the Iranian prophet became a potent factor in determining the theologic and philosophic cast and structure of the dogmas, tenets, and cosmology of the Hellenized and Latinized versions of the teachings of Jesus.

7. The spread of Christianity—the ethical element in Christianity—how it sobered Europe. (Browne 293)

Much of the old love for Isis, and especially for Cybele, the **great Mother** of the Gods, was taken over into the church and translated into the worship of Mary, the Mother of Christ. . . (B 294).

V: THE ROMANS (Browne 100)

4. The desire for a future life—and how the mysteries satisfied it. (Browne 109)

The root of the mystery was an ancient Persian legend which told of a divine hero named Mithras whose **miraculous birth** had been **witnessed only by a few shepherds** come from afar with **gifts** to adore the wonder-child (B 110).

IX: GREECE AND ROME (**Wright** 108)

IX—*Mystery Religions in the Roman Empire* (Wright 123)

[contd from 98:6.4] Instead of a mythical hero, Christianity had the advantage of an **historic** man, who had led a blameless life in recent times, as its Founder (Wr 126).

98:7.7 4. The mystery cults, especially Mithraism

but also the worship of the **Great Mother** in the Phrygian cult.

Even the legends of the birth of Jesus on **Urantia** became tainted with the Roman version of the **miraculous birth** of the Iranian savior-hero, Mithras,

whose advent on earth was supposed to have been **witnessed by only a handful of gift-bearing shepherds**

who had been informed of this impending event by angels.

98:7.8 5. The **historic** fact of the human life of Joshua ben Joseph, the reality of Jesus of Nazareth as the glorified Christ, the Son of God.

## II: CHRIST (Browne 276)

## 2. The story of Saul of Tarsus. (Browne 279)

Most important of all, [Paul] must very early have learnt from slaves in the household, or from Gentile playmates, of the mystery cults which were prevalent in his native city, and of the savior-gods in whom the masses put their impassioned trust. . . (B 279-80).

## 1. The mysteries in the Roman Empire—the philosophies. (Browne 276)

And side by side with these religious cults flourishing among the lower elements in the population of the Empire, different schools of philosophic thought flourished among the more learned folk. One of these was the philosophy developed in the city of Alexandria by an Egyptian Jew named Philo (Wr 278).

[Compare Glover passage in 195:0.7.]

98:7.9 6. The personal viewpoint of Paul of Tarsus.

And it should be recorded that

Mithraism was the dominant religion of Tarsus during his adolescence.

Paul little dreamed that his well-intentioned letters to his converts would someday be regarded by still later Christians as the “word of God.” Such well-meaning teachers must not be held accountable for the use made of their writings by later-day successors.

98:8.10 7. The philosophic thought of the Hellenistic peoples, from Alexandria and Antioch through Greece to Syracuse and Rome.

The philosophy of the Greeks was more in harmony with Paul’s version of Christianity than with any other current religious system and became an important factor in the success of Christianity in the Occident.

## IX: GREECE AND ROMAN (Wright 108)

V—*Attempted Reforms by Poets and Philosophers*  
(Wright 114)

[contd from 98:2.6] Man's virtues as an individual and as a citizen, Aristotle set forth in detail so effectively that his work may be said to form the basis of systematic ethics for subsequent European thought down to the present time (Wr 116).

Greek philosophy, coupled with Paul's theology, still forms the basis of European ethics.

98:7.11 As the original teachings of Jesus penetrated the Occident, they became Occidentalized, and as they became Occidentalized, they began to lose their potentially universal appeal to all races and kinds of men. Christianity, today, has become a religion well adapted to the social, economic, and political mores of the white races.

## II: CHRIST (Browne 276)

8. The development of the Church—Protestantism—why Christianity has succeeded.  
(Browne 298)

Once Paul came on the scene, the light of the religion of Jesus began to fade,

and the glare of the religion about Christ blazed over all (B 298-99).

It has long since ceased to be the religion of Jesus,

although it still valiantly portrays a beautiful religion about Jesus to such individuals as sincerely seek to follow in the way of its teaching. It has glorified Jesus as the Christ, the Messianic anointed one from God, but has largely forgotten the Master's personal gospel: the Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of all men.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

[And with that word we must leave the tale of what happened in Europe. The story of Christianity is long and bewildering,

for it stretches through twenty centuries and is written in a hundred tongues (B 300-01).

It has taken rich and poor, learned and ignorant, white, red, yellow, and black—it has taken them all and tried to show them a way of salvation (B 301).

In a word, it has worked—in a measure. . . (B 301).]

URANTIA PAPER 98

98:7.12 And this is the long story of the teachings of Machiventa Melchizedek on Urantia.

It is nearly four thousand years since this emergency Son of Nebadon bestowed himself on Urantia,

and in that time the teachings of the “priest of El Elyon, the Most High God,” have penetrated to all races and peoples.

And Machiventa was successful in achieving the purpose of his unusual bestowal;

when Michael made ready to appear on Urantia, the God concept was existent in the hearts of men and women, the same God concept that still flames anew in the living spiritual experience of the manifold children of the Universal Father as they live their intriguing temporal lives on the whirling planets of space.

98:7.13 [Presented by a Melchizedek of Nebadon.]