

The Origins of the Celebration
of the Christian Feast of

EPIPHANY



An Ideological, Cultural
and Historical Study

Merja Merras

University of Joensuu - Publications in the Humanities No 16

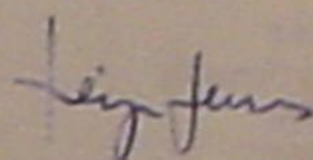


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Merja Merras



**THE ORIGINS OF THE CELEBRATION OF
THE CHRISTIAN FEAST OF
EPIPHANY**

AN IDEOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL STUDY

UNIVERSITY OF JOENSUU

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To

Fr. Olavi

Teo and Krista

Laura and Risto

Varvara

Merja Merras

The Origins of the Celebration of the Christian Feast of Epiphany.
An Ideological, Cultural and Historical Study.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to seek an answer to the question whence the feast of Epiphany, which became common in the Church in the last half of the 4th century, and is celebrated on the sixth of January, has as its themes both the birth and baptism of Christ, and whence the theme of baptism in particular originated. Due to lack of sources we are unable to say anything certain on this subject, but we can always rearrange the pieces of the puzzle in order to find a possible solution. I have not dealt with the question of the date of Epiphany, except insofar as it was necessary to take into consideration in dealing with my theme.

In Judaism there were three main feasts which involved the obligation of pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple. Two of them, Passover and Pentecost, have continued in the Christian Church, though their themes have gained new aspects. The Feast of Tabernacles, which was said to be the greatest of all celebrations, seems not to have any continuation in Christianity. In the early Christian Church there were also three main feasts. According to the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, they were Passover, Pentecost and Epiphany; Ephraem the Syrian (306-373) considers Epiphany the greatest of all feasts. This leads one to wonder whether Epiphany has something to do with the Feast of Tabernacles. It is plausible that all the three ancient Jewish pilgrimage festivals gained a new Christian approach as the fulfilment of the eschatological time.

The Gospel of John connects *the Feast of Tabernacles* with Jesus' existence as the light of the world and the fountain of living water. It might reflect the way the early Jewish Christian Church celebrated *the Feast of Tabernacles*, which was now seen as the festival of the true descent of Yahweh's *doxa*, the appearance of the true light and the fountain of living waters. The celebration of Christ's Incarnation, if there was such in the time of the martyrs, must have been a celebration of a religious idea of Redemption, not a celebration of an event in history - the birth of the Messiah.

The consequences of the separation from the Synagogue were that the Christians were no longer dependent on the rabbinical authorities for determining the dates and themes of their feasts. I reject the theory of the History of Religions school, which has maintained that the Christian Epiphany has its origins in a Gnostic feast. It is impossible to imagine that the Catholic *ecclesiae* would have taken over a Gnostic Feast to illustrate its central doctrines of Incarnation, Redemption and Baptism, because both groups had different conceptions of these things, and simultaneous celebration would have caused fatal confusion.

The early feast of Epiphany had overall the same themes: the appearance of the Saviour and the baptism which Christians undergo in order to receive the benefits of the divine Incarnation. Only local circumstances led to the emphasis laid on certain points in the celebrations. These special emphases arise from the persecutions, which necessitated standing fast in one's baptism by recalling it on certain occasions in order to prepare oneself for blood baptism. The most solemn day for recalling one's baptism is the feast of the Incarnation and baptism. Epiphany was probably the first commemoration day of baptism, having its roots in the renewal of the covenant of the Old Testament.

The earliest Christian iconography presents the idea of Redemption as a group of pictures derived from Biblical stories. The baptism of Christ there occupies a central position, as do the themes of the Fall and of the Good Shepherd pointing to the Redemption which the Good Shepherd brings to fallen mankind. The picture presenting the Adoration of the Magi points to the Incarnation.

The miracle at the wedding at Cana (water changing into wine) became connected with the themes of the Redemption because it testifies to the appearance of God's *doxa* in Christ. By performing a miracle before the eyes of his mother and the disciples Jesus gave them a sign of his Divine power: God's *doxa* or *shekhinah* had truly descended upon the earth. This was a sign for the Jews, who were accustomed to see the descent of God's glory commemorated at the Feast of Tabernacles in the Jerusalem Temple.

The early Church embedded its doctrine in its liturgical practice. If the Incarnation, reconciliation, baptism and abiding in the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God were of central importance for a believer, they needed to be expressed liturgically, they needed a *Sitz im Leben*. Such we can find in Syria in the second half of the fourth century where the Epiphany hymns of St. Ephraem and the earliest Syriac lectionary clearly point to this kind of celebration.

The obvious reason why in the fourth century the ecclesiastical authorities pushed for universal celebration in the Church of the Feast of Epiphany is the case of Arius. Arius challenged the idea of the Divine Incarnation, but the victory of Catholicism was confirmed by the celebration of God's descent to earth and man's redemption accomplished through it - by the Feast of Epiphany.

* * *

KEY WORDS

Epiphany, Epiphany baptism, Paschal baptism, feasts, lectionaries, early Egyptian Church, early Syrian Church, mass baptism,

Preface

The origins of this study lie long ago in my youth when I became interested in the procedure by which produced Scripture. I took a degree in Biblical Studies and Christian Oriental culture at Helsinki University, but I was constantly seeking for a view of the Bible which could provide the answer to the procedure with which the early Church adopted its ideas.

Besides the Bible my interest has concentrated on the hymnography and liturgy of the Orthodox Church. Soon I noticed that we can trace the beginnings of all the other feasts of the Church except Epiphany. The question of its origins has been my permanent companion for years.

25 years passed before I could say I had found a solution to both these questions. For "illumination" in biblical studies I owe thanks solely to Professor *Paul Nadim Tarazi*, whose acquaintance I made at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, New York, while a visiting fellow at that seminary in the fall semester of 1990. His view of the totality of the Bible based on the latest scholarly studies is the best fruit of Neopatristics that I have come across. It encouraged me to sit down and sift through the evidence I had gathered concerning the early Feast of Epiphany.

With my ecumenical contacts I have been convinced that there needs to be not only one teacher to consult, but several who complement each other and provide a wider scope. I wish to express my special thanks to His Eminence *Johannes*, Theol. D., Archbishop of Karelia and all Finland for guiding me in the way of thinking of the early Fathers. *The Finnish Bible Translation Committee*, a member of which I was from 1985 to 1991, taught me to understand current western trends in biblical scholarship and encouraged me in the scholarly field. Of its members my special thanks go to my friend *Tapani Harviainen*, Professor of Semitic languages, who has given of his valuable time for discussion and raised questions relating to my study which have helped me to analyze the complex world of thought. I also thank him for transliterating the Arabic passages.

My stay at St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary proved to be very fruitful for understanding the totality of living the Christian life and gaining a knowledge of the thought of the Early Church. All its professors gave me food for thought, but especially I have to mention - besides *Fr. Paul Nadim Tarazi* - Professor of Patristics, *Fr. John Meyendorff* (d. 1992), his son *Paul Meyendorff*, Professor of Liturgical Theology, and the Visiting Professor of Iconography, *Fr. Nicholas Ozolin*.

My thanks are due to *Marjatta Hietala*, Professor of History, and the Faculty of Arts at Joensuu University for their unprejudiced opinion with regard to my study plan and for accepting it in the Publications in the Humanities. My friend *Leena Mari Peltomaa*, lic. Phil., whose Akathistos research, which open new paths, has encouraged me greatly, has kindly discussed the linguistic problems of the Greek passages.

I have received financial support from the Faculty of Arts of Joensuu University, the foundation of Leo and Regina Wainstein, and my parents, to whom I express my warmest thanks. Mr. *Michael Cox*, lic. Theol., revised my English carefully and raised the level of it in a way that deserves especial gratitude.

My son *Teo Merras*, who studies political science, deserves honorary mention for being my book courier from Helsinki University Library, and producing by computer the figure on page 11. My daughters, *Laura Merras-Salmio*, Med. Cand. and *Varvara Merras* have encouraged me in my carrel with their lively comments. Varvara in addition, after realising the demands of the situation, quietly consented to do her own cooking.

Finally my thanks go to my husband, *Fr. Olavi Merras*, M.Th. for teaching me the basics of liturgical theology, for helping in computer difficulties and the Russian language, for discussing difficult passages and for enduring two years' disorder in our life and home. I dedicate this book to my whole expanded family thanking them for their support and interest in liturgics.

Lahti, May 1995.

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* * *

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Problem

The hymns *de Nativitate* and *de Epiphania* by Ephraem the Syrian (306-373) are the earliest writings we have concerning the feast of Epiphany celebrated on the sixth of January in the Christian apostolic catholic Church.¹ The next reliable and comprehensive information concerning the celebration of this festival is to be found in John Chrysostom's sermon preached at the feast of Epiphany in the year 387.² Slightly earlier, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa preached sermons on 25th December and 6th January, and these sermons have been preserved, but the significance and designations they give to these festivals vary or are difficult to interpret.³ From the period earlier than this we have only a number of references, as well as information which can be interpreted in different ways, and the origin of the feast disappears somewhere among the world of a variety of competing Christian movements in the period of the martyrs.

The origin of the feast, however, deserves clarification, for it considerably increases our knowledge of the process involved in the encounter between different cultures, as well as of the formation of Christian teaching in the midst of a great variety of influences. We need to know on what basis the movement which later became the foundation of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, selected its constitutive elements, and what kind of ideological development reveals the liturgical practices relating to the feast.

The purpose of this study is to seek an answer to the question why the feast of Epiphany, which became common in the Church in the last half of the 4th century, and is celebrated on the sixth of January, has as its themes both the birth and baptism of Christ, and whence the theme of baptism in particular originated. Due to lack of sources we are unable to say anything certain about this question, but

¹ *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*. CSCO 186-187. *Scriptores Syri* 82-83. Louvain 1959.

² *Homilia de baptismo Christi et de Epiphania*. PG 49, cols 351-372.

³ Basil: *In Sanctam Christi generationem*. PG 31, cols 1457-1476. Gregory of Nazianzus: *Orationes* 38, 39. PG 36, cols 311-360. Gregory of Nyssa: *In diem natalem*. PG 46, cols 1128-1149. *In diem luminum*. PG 46, cols 577-600.

we can always rearrange the pieces of the puzzle in order to find a possible solution.

1.2. The State of Research

In 1982 *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* summed up the state of research by stating that it is not possible to determine the origins of the feast of Epiphany because of the lack of reliable sources. Scholars have taken great pains to show that the feast of Epiphany celebrated by the Church developed from the Gnostic feast on January 6th. In the period of the martyrs there is no trace of it.⁴ In Rome the celebration of Epiphany on January 6th is attested for the first time with certainty in the fifth century. The feast of December 25th as the commemoration of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is recorded in Rome in 354.⁵ Thus we have to turn to the East for the origins of the Christian feast of Epiphany.

The principal specialists in this field are H. Usener⁶, L. Duchesne⁷, K. Holl⁸, B. Botte, O. Cullmann, A. McArthur and T. Talley. G. Winkler classifies the proposed theories as follows: "history of religions" theses, the apologetic thesis of Harnack⁹, and the chronological theory of Duchesne. B. Botte, O. Cullmann, A. McArthur and T. Talley are the latest scholars who have summarized the previous

⁴ "Den Ursprung dieses Festes im Osten zeitlich festzusetzen und geographisch exakt einzugrenzen, Anlass und Motiv für seine Entstehung sicher zu bestimmen, ist aufgrund des Fehlens zuverlässiger Quellen unmöglich — Mit viel Mühe hat die Forschung zu beweisen versucht, dass sich aus diesem gnostischen Fest des 6. Januar das Epiphaniafest der Kirche entwickelt hat." F. Mann. *TRE*, Bd 9. 762-765.

⁵ The *Chronograph of Furius Dionysius Philocalus* is an almanac presenting (inter alia) lists of Roman holidays, consuls, city prefects, and two lists of burial dates, one of Roman bishops and another of martyrs. The latter two are in calendrical order, not in historical order, and the first date given in the *Depositio Martyrum* is December 25, "VIII kal. Ian. natus Christus in Betleem Iudae." The calendar of the bishops ran, as did the *Depositio Martyrum*, from December 25 to December 25 without any mention of the Feast of Epiphany. The first burial noted in the calendar (Bishop Marcus) was in 336 and the second (Bishop Julius) in 352. We may say that at Rome in these years the Nativity of Christ on December 25 marked the beginning of the liturgical year. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 85.

⁶ *Das Weihnachtsfest* (1911).

⁷ *Les origines du culte chrétien*. 5. ed. (1920).

⁸ 'Ursprung des Epiphanienfestes' (1927). 123ff.

⁹ "Wie Doketismus, so war auch der Ebionitismus abzurweisen; denn Christus ist der im Fleische erschienene wahrhaftige Gott. Daher nannte die alte Kirche die Geburt Christi seine Epiphanie, um damit zugleich sein göttliches Wesen zu bezeichnen." Th. Harnack, *Einleitung und Grundlegung der Praktischen Theologie* (1877), 376.

studies concerning the origins of Epiphany and drawn their own conclusions in this regard. They need to be repeated here.

Bernard Botte thinks that the history of the one festival (birth) cannot be separated from that of the other (baptism), so closely are they intertwined. The separation took place, as far as we know, at Antioch in 386-387¹⁰, but Botte thinks that originally baptism had no place in the Syrian (i.e. Antiochian) Epiphany. The Western Epiphany was simply a commemoration of the Incarnation and the association of baptism with the festival in the West was caused by a second surge of Eastern influence. Botte's final point is that the evolution of the festival took place in the midst of the great christological controversies of the 4th and 5th centuries, in the environment which produced the decrees of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon.¹¹

Oscar Cullman has closely studied the problem of the date of Epiphany and has provided most arguments upon which later scholarship has constructed the theories of the origins of its date and themes. He supports the view of Gnostic origins of the feast; and explains the presence of both Christ's birth and baptism in the early Christian Epiphany by saying that the festival of the followers of Basilides¹² was adopted by the orthodox eastern Church and thus it came under the same heading as Christ's manifestation, or Epiphany, which was the dominant idea of the feast. He emphasizes that the factor which motivated the institution of both festivals of the Incarnation (Dec. 25 and Jan. 6) was derived from reflective faith, not any concern for historical accuracy.¹³

Allan McArthur concludes against Botte that Epiphany was partly, at least in the West, originally an unitive festival, commemorating both the Incarnation and baptism of Jesus. He believes that the roots of Epiphany lie in the Gospels as follows: John 1:1-2:11 was written against the liturgical background of the Feast of Epiphany. In Ephesus, in the city of St. John, the beginning of the Gospel of John was read at Epiphany, and it coloured the feast: the Incarnation of the Word,

¹⁰ The writings of the Great Cappadocians. See closer ch. 6.7.

¹¹ *Les origines de la Noël et de l'Épiphanie* (1932), 86. B. Botte - E. Melia, 'Noël, Epiphanie, retour du Christ' (1967), 5-69.

¹² See closer ch. 4.3.

¹³ 'The Origin of Christmas' (1956), 21-36. *Der Ursprung des Weihnachtfestes* (1960).

the testimony of the Baptist and the first sign, the Cana wedding miracle. This theory, however, takes no note of the symbolism, which was very important for Jews, and thus also for the Jewish Christians, but it explains why besides the central elements, the Incarnation and baptism, the Cana story plays such an important part in the feast.¹⁴

Thomas Talley is the latest scholar who has made a detailed study of all sources and research relating to the origins of Epiphany.¹⁵ He is mainly concerned with the date of Epiphany, but he also ponders the development of its themes. He thinks that in the Church the Advent/Epiphany complex is a time of beginning that carries with it a strong note of eschatological expectation. Yet he admits that the expectation of the parousia was often wedded to the Christian Passover, as it had been to the Jewish Pesach.¹⁶ Prior to the adoption of the festival of Dec. 25 it seems clear that from Constantinople, through Cappadocia, to Syria, Epiphany celebrated both the nativity and the baptism of Jesus. The reason for the celebration of his baptism on Jan. 6 is for him an open question. Talley concludes briefly that with the original unitive character of the Epiphany there is a lingering witness to the primitive understanding of the baptism of Jesus as in some way a dimension of the mystery of the Incarnation.¹⁷ The drawing of water from the Nile on Jan. 6th, which Epiphanius mentions¹⁸, does not seem to represent the continuation of a discernible pre-Christian Nile festival on the 11th of Tybi. It has, however, several analogies in the pagan world. The origin of its observance in the Christian Church is grounded in Christ's sanctification of the waters at his baptism.¹⁹

Talley presents a theory of the origins of the Christian Epiphany feast which is derived from the system of Bible-reading, and which would explain the different themes of the feast in different areas: January was the beginning of the lectio

¹⁴ *The Evolution of the Christian Year* (1953), 69.

¹⁵ *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1986). Slightly emended edition 1991.

¹⁶ *Idem*, 79-80.

¹⁷ *Idem*, 121-129.

¹⁸ *Panarion* 5i.30.1-3.

¹⁹ Talley, *idem*, 114-117.

continua of the Gospels. Beginning with each church's local Gospel coloured the content of the first festival. The Ephesian use of the Gospel of John would perhaps identify the nativity and the baptism on the same day, leading quickly to the miracle at Cana. In Jerusalem the preference for Matthew would closely identify the beginning of the Gospel as the nativity in Bethlehem. The Alexandrian devotion to Mark would focus the beginning of the Gospel on the baptism. The common theme that united all these was the Manifestation of God in Man - τὰ ἐπιφάνια.²⁰

Christina Mohrman has also pointed to the many motifs that this feast has included since its inception. In her view the primary themes were the birth and baptism of Christ, but in a broader sense also the manifestation of the Divinity of Jesus in his physical birth and in his baptism, as well as in the adoration of the Magi and in the changing of the water into wine.²¹

Jean Daniélou has put forward a theory as to why the celebration of Christ's baptism is at the beginning of January:

"The Feast of Tabernacles was certainly kept in the month of September by Jewish Christians as by the Jews. This may have left a trace in the Gospel of Mark, if it is accepted that this book constitutes a series of lessons for a liturgical year, beginning in September and ending with the Palm Sunday lesson, the Passion lesson being separate. This would synchronise the Feast of Tabernacles with the lection relating the baptism of Christ; and it should be noted incidentally that in the Fourth Gospel the feast is expressly linked with baptism (John 7:37-39). Possibly, being the feast of the beginning of the year, and the annual commemoration of Christ's own baptism, it included the celebration of Christian baptisms."²²

Gabriele Winkler has recently called attention to the manifestation of light at Jesus' baptism and its possible connection with the Feast of Epiphany. She finds that the origin of the feast of Epiphany seems to be in close connection with the history of development of the Gospels. Tatian's Diatessaron informs us of a "great" or "mighty" light appearing at the baptism of Jesus in Jordan, and this

²⁰ *Idem*, 129-134, 233.

²¹ C. Mohrman, 'Epiphania' (1953), 644-670.

²² Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (1964), 345.

knowledge is widespread. The great light and the voice from heaven proclaim the divine origin of Jesus. According to Winkler, in the oldest stratum of the evidence Jesus *became* the Son of God in the Jordan. Later he *is manifested* in the Jordan as the Son of God. In the fourth century it is obvious that the light *stems* from Jesus. The voice from heaven and the light *demonstrate* that Jesus is the Son of God. The testimony of the sonship occurs with the appearance of the light. Here lies probably also the root of the name of the feast: the rising (of the light), in Syriac *denḥa*.²³

The question of the early Christian calendar has been the subject of constant study, but there is no consensus as to its origin and development. The theses mentioned above show this clearly. Yet there seems to be in our days a tendency to place special weight on the Jewish inheritance of the Christian Church.²⁴

1.3. Historical Context and Sources

It is inconceivable to study the diffusion of innovations without some knowledge of the social structures and contemporary historical situation in which potential modifying factors are located.²⁵ Thus it might be profitable to take a glance at the political and cultural history of the Roman empire during the first centuries of the Christian era.

The Roman empire was usually tolerant in its attitude towards different cultures and religions, but it was especially on its guard with regard to the Jews, who were constantly driven to revolt by their religious and political aspirations. The state showed limited tolerance towards the growing Christian population, too, because at first Christianity was perceived as a sect within Judaism. The emperors considered *inter alia* that Christianity posed a threat to the unity of the state, and they persecuted Christians periodically until the Constantinian peace was imposed.

²³ 'Die Licht-Erscheinung bei der Taufe Jesu und der Ursprung des Epiphaniiefestes.' (1994), 177-223. See in more detail chapter 6.4.

²⁴ E.g. B. Bagatti, *The Church from Circumcision* (1984). Fisher, ed. *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy* (1990). E. Testa, *The Faith of the Mother Church* (1992).

²⁵ Rogers, E. *Diffusion of Innovations* (1962), 16.

The Church still had to be constantly on the alert, which had a great effect on its life and thinking, and introduced new liturgical practices. During some of the persecutions church property was confiscated and church buildings destroyed, but the most severe persecutions were those where all Christians were forced to sacrifice to the gods, first of all to the emperor, under threat of the death penalty. The political uniformity of the Roman empire made it possible for ideas and influences to flow freely inside the state. Only the language barrier caused obstacles, but the most highly valued literature was soon translated into other languages. The evidence of Jerome proves that the writings of St. Ephraem the Syrian were already translated into Greek during his lifetime. Yet we can distinguish several areas in the Roman empire which seemed to have ways of thinking and expression of their own. We can differentiate the Latin-speaking western areas, Egypt, Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria. Jewish influence was prominent in the eastern parts of the empire. Both catholic and heretical writings were circulating in the Empire at the same time, and people could not always know with certainty what was the teaching of the Church and what was not.

The main mission of the early Church was to preach to the Jews the Gospel that the Messiah has now come, and to the Gentiles the Gospel that the Son of God has come down from heaven to save people from the demonic powers. Those who accepted this message maintained liturgical practices which expressed their faith, and adopted the Christian life-style. Though baptized in the one church the Christians carry with them their national and educational inheritance. Jews were especially bound by their religion. All males learned to read the Holy Scriptures and were obliged to observe religious customs, which became, as it were, "a second skin". This was the way they lived and thought and it is impossible to imagine that this did not leave any traces in the lives of the Jews who accepted Jesus as Messiah. Jewish thinking was heavily bound up with the Jerusalem temple cult, but after its destruction synagogue worship had to maintain every aspect of Jewish religious life. The situation among Diaspora Jews, including Jewish Christians, was a little different from Jerusalem practice, and some evidence of their festal system is to be found, too. Soon Christianity was more widespread among the Gentiles than among the Jews; among the Gentiles there arose significant teachers who put the Jewish inheritance into a Greek mould that

was more familiar to them. From their writings we can conclude how the cult needed to react to the new circumstances brought about by the new spiritual context and also to the historical situation in which the Christians lived.

Under the Constantinian peace the Church began to organize and standardize its cult, but even now the sponsors were Greek, and the Jewish inheritance which was adopted was not specified as being Jewish. Jewish customs and thinking preserved by Christianity remained only in border areas where the Jewish contribution was traditionally significant and the Greek contribution slight. We have important evidence from Syria which reveals earlier practices observed by this Church as well as the unifying process in Syria in the fourth century. I refer to the writings of Ephraem and the early Syriac lectionary *Br. M. Add. 14528*, which I shall deal with in the chapters 6.3. - 6.6.

Christian rites mainly followed Jewish customs, upon which they were based. Baptism and the thanksgiving offer gained - in spite of their Jewish roots - new substance in accordance with the teaching of Jesus. In the liturgy the Church lived the life of the saved. Opponents who criticized the customs and teaching of the Church made it necessary for the early fathers to write apologies for Christianity. The preaching of the early Church is to be found in the New Testament. The preaching of rival sects is fragmentarily preserved in the writings of the Church Fathers and recently-discovered Gnostic documents.

The main sources used here are the familiar writings of Judaism and early Christianity: the Old Testament, the pseudepigrapha and the Talmud; the New Testament, apocryphal writings and the church fathers, church orders and lectionaries of the fourth and fifth centuries. The approach adopted in previous studies of these sources has not always been sufficiently cautious, as Paul Bradshaw has recently shown.²⁶ His ten principles for interpreting early liturgical evidence are important and worthwhile following, especially the ninth these: "Only particularly significant, novel or controverted practices will tend to be mentioned, and others will probably be passed over in silence; but the first time something is mentioned

²⁶ *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (1992).

is not necessarily the first time it was practised."²⁷ The new approach to the Talmud is necessary, too. Rabbi J. Neusner, who has recently produced a fresh translation of the Talmud of the Land of Israel, finds that confusion results when one attempts to use these specialized writings to reconstruct the past. The finished text tells the reader more about the last editor of the material than about the original writers quoted in the document.²⁸

The writings the great Church Fathers at the end of the fourth century show how the unifying process in the early festal calendar was brought to a conclusion. Already at this time the Jews as a whole had taken sides in the battle over Christianity, and therefore they were regarded by these Gentile fathers as a threat to Orthodoxy. Their practices could not be presented as the basis of Christianity, just as little as could be the doctrinal systems of other groups considered heretical²⁹.

In their writings the great teachers of the fourth century Church transmitted the way of thinking of previous generations, but they also developed it further in order to be able to make the teaching of the Catholic Church more precise for its confrontation with the many competing "Christian" groups of their time. Thus the old material is made to serve the contemporary situation and, for example, the teaching which was earlier formulated for people rooted in Jewish customs is now set forth for all Christians irrespective of their origin. Talley has presented evidence from Roman culture to show the connection of Christianity with the universal culture. I do not deny this influence on the final stage of Epiphany, but my intention here is to show the Jewish and Oriental roots of the feast.

Besides the well-known patristic sources which have been available since the last century I have made use of the new editions of the writings of the famous Syriac author Ephraem published between 1955 and 1976 with valuable assessments by their editor Dom E. Beck. The hymns *de Nativitate*, which are of central impor-

²⁷ *Idem*, 76.

²⁸ R. MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts on Jews and Judaism* (1990), 13.

²⁹ By heresy/heretical I mean the different explanatory systems given to Christianity in the course of time during the first three centuries which were later rejected by ecclesiastical synods. I use the word as a technical term, known from later classifications, not as an evaluation of these systems.

tance for my theme, have recently been carefully translated into English by Kathleen McVey. The Epiphany hymns of Ephraem also deserve a new translation. The earlier one in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* is not accurate enough. The latest edition of the *Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum*, produced by A. Vööbus in 1979, has elucidated the many stages in the redaction of this early document. These and many other studies have helped us to see "the thread" in Jewish thinking.

Thus I shall make principal use of sources that have been known for a long time. However, the questions I intend to bring to the sources and my focus on Syriac evidence are different from those of the previous researchers. I have gained additional new support from the old Syriac lectionary *Br.M. Add. 14528*, published in translation in 1923, and the Armenian Lectionaries *Ms. Arm 44* and *Cod. Arm. Jer. 121*, published in 1905 and in 1970.³⁰ I have found it possible, with the use of the new studies available, to date the Syriac lectionary to an earlier time than did its original editor, F.C. Burkitt. The lack of any mention of Paschal baptism in it is the main reason for believing it to be of great antiquity. Thus I have made greater use of it than have previous scholars, who treated it as if it dated from the fifth century.

My main sources and the ways of influence are presented in the enclosed figure.

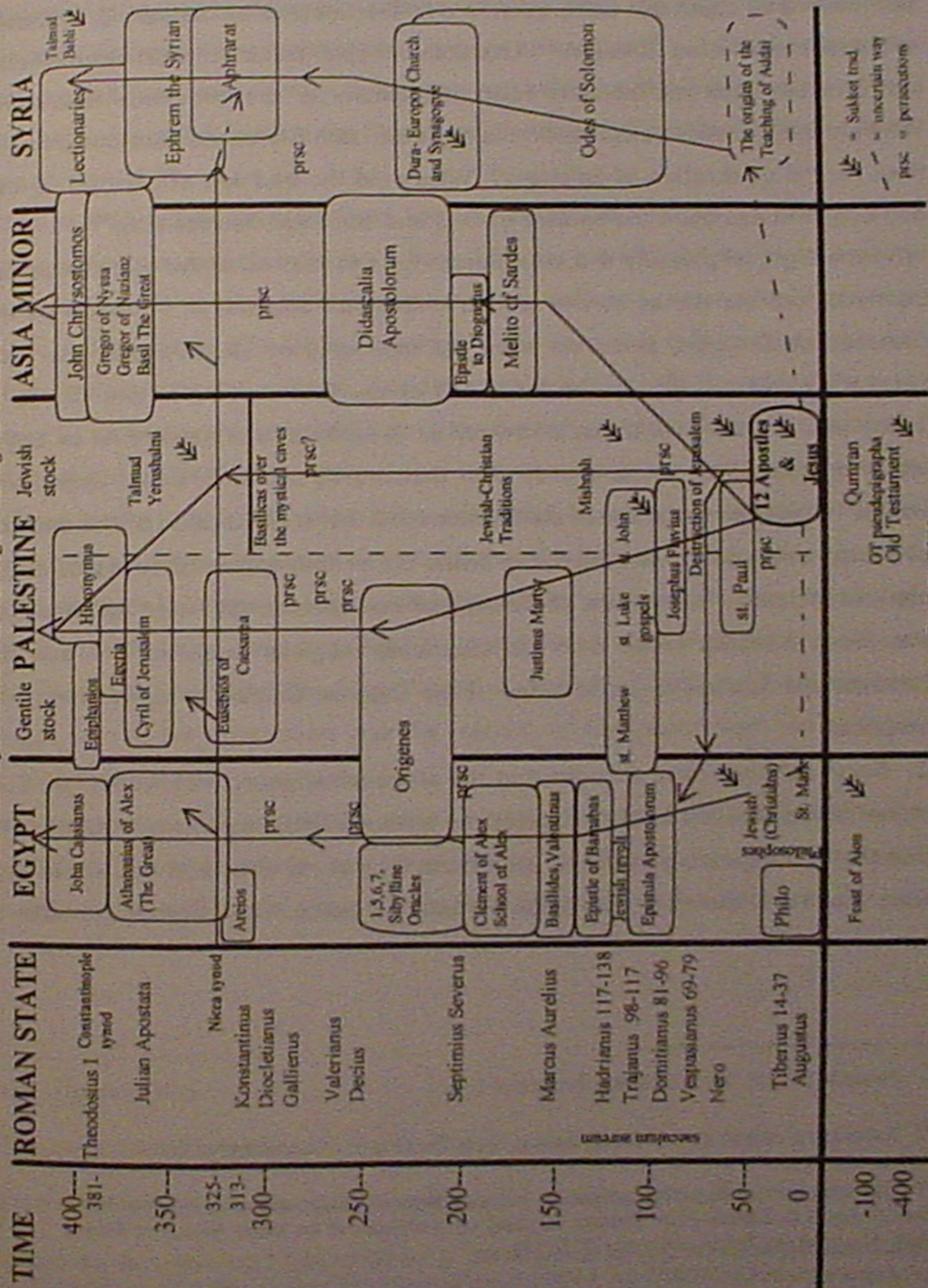
The study is ideological in its attempt to trace the principal ideas of the new stage of an old religion. It is cultural in that the basic ideas live within different cultural milieus which give the colouring and direction to the idea. Finally, it is historical too, as we now look at this process from afar understanding the historical events and trends which influence this process of ideas and cultures.

1.4. Theories of the Date of Epiphany

The reason for the date of Epiphany, the sixth of January, has been satisfactorily explained by T. Talley, and I do not intend to deal with this question here, except insofar as I have to take it into consideration in dealing with my theme. However, it is useful to set out these theories with a few comments.

³⁰ The first edition of the later one was published in Armenian in 1948, but it was reachable only for a few because of the language. *Grand Catalogue of the Armenian convent of St. James in Jerusalem*, I. Ms. Arm. 44 = F.C. Conybeare, *Patrologia Armenorum*, Oxford 1905, 507-527. Cod. Jer. 121 = *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 35, fasc. 3. Ed. by A. Renaux.

The Catholic Christian ways of influence in four regions during four centuries



Top Draw 5/8/88

1. Our earliest Christian source, Clement of Alexandria (d. before 215), tells how the followers of Basilides celebrate Jesus's baptism on January 6 or 10. Epiphanius informs us about this celebration held by the Gnostics on January 5/6, known as the festival of Aion, *Coreum*.³¹ Like Clement Epiphanius does not say explicitly that Gnostics observed the same Feast of Epiphany as "we Christians" also have. Why did the Gnostics celebrate on the same day that Christians later observed as their central celebration of Epiphany? Where did the tradition of celebrating this day begin? It has been the subject of long and troublesome research.³²

Why the night of January 5-6 was chosen for this festival of Aion is uncertain, but what we can be certain of is that it was not adopted in imitation of the Christian observance, since we have the testimony of Messala that the Aion festival was in its place in the latter half of the first century before Christ.³³ Talley also doubts that Christ's Nativity at Bethlehem was celebrated in Egypt either on the 25 of December or 6 of January at the time when Epiphanius wrote.³⁴ Basilides transformed the *Coreum* feast into a celebration of the baptism of Christ, because in his system the divine Christ first appeared on earth at the baptism of Jesus. This festival of the baptism was accordingly called Epiphany, as the Greek tradition called their corresponding religious festivals.³⁵ Thus the Gnostics did not adopt the feastday of the Catholic Church to serve their own purposes.

2. Some scholars have thought that the process happened vice versa. O. Cullmann claims that the Church adopted the festival of the Basilidians and, insisting that the real appearing of Christ upon earth was at his birth and not at his baptism, made the theme of this feast the birth of Jesus. Thus before the birth of

³¹ *Panarion* 51.22.8. See in more detail chapter 4.2.

³² Talley has presented them all in his thorough study *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*.

³³ The sixth-century Byzantine antiquarian, Joannes Laurentius Lydus, quotes in his *Peri Menon* 4.1. the first-century B.C. Roman writer Messala, as noting the observance of the heorte Aionos on January 5. Karl Hoff, 'Ursprung des Epiphaniestages' (1927), 150.

³⁴ *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 112, 117-120.

³⁵ Cullman, 'The Origin of Christmas' (1956), 24-25. Talley, *idem*, 115-117.

Christ came to be celebrated on December 25, this joyful event was commemorated on the night of January 5-6.³⁶

3. Epiphanius sets out different systems of calculating the birth, baptism and death of Christ, and attempts to relate them one to another.³⁷ Talley has investigated the systems and gives two dates according to the Roman reckoning, which were regarded in the early Church as the day of Christ's Passion: **April 6 and March 25.**³⁸

a) The first Christians, like the Jews, kept the Pascha on the 14th of Nisan. The inadequacy of the Jewish calendar, whose 12 lunar months did not equal a solar year, presented difficulties for the maintenance of uniform practice. An increasing number of Gentiles had become Christians. They lived in a culture that followed the solar Julian calendar, and they had done so since 9 B.C. By the end of the first century Christians were separated from synagogues and were thereafter independent of the rabbinical authorities. Asian Christians gave up the lunar calendar regulated by the Babylonian rabbinical academies in favour of the local form of the Julian solar calendar. Sozomen notes that the Montanists of Asia Minor set the Pascha on April 6 following a solar rather than lunar calendar.³⁹ Thus the day of Christ's Passion also becomes April 6, and derived from it according to the rabbinical reckoning⁴⁰ the day of his "birth" is April 6 as well. But if we suggest that the date of his conception was the real day of his Incarnation, his birthday falls nine months later - on January 6.

Talley presents evidence that the early Christian Pascha also included Christ's Incarnation. The incarnational content of Pascha was increasingly identified with the conception of Christ. In areas where, as in Asia, the Paschal date was April 6,

³⁶ Cullmann, *idem*. 24-25.

³⁷ *Panarion* 51.24:1,4; 26. See ch. 4.2.

³⁸ *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 2-27, 87-128

³⁹ *Idem*, 8. Sozomena, *Hist. eccl.* VII.18. NPNF, vol. 2, 389. A. Strobel seeks to rationalize the April 6 date as the fourteenth day from the vernal equinox. *Ursprung und Geschichte des frühchristlichen Osterkalenders* (1977), 373.

⁴⁰ See ch. 2.1.

the Nativity could be set nine months later, on January 6. Clement also seems to know January 6 as Christ's date of birth.⁴¹

b) By the third century, however, we encounter computations that aim at determining the Julian dates on which the fourteenth day of the moon occurred in the various years, with the result that the Julian date of Christ's Passion was set on March 25. The first evidence of this are the writings of the statute of Hippolytus, which assign Christ's Passion to the eighth of the kalends of April, March 25. The same identification of March 25 with Nisan 14 in the year of our Lord's Passion is found in a work usually attributed to Tertullian - *Adversus Iudaeos*: "The Passion of Christ was perfected---in the month of March at the time of Passover, on the eighth of the Kalends of April---."⁴² These western writers believed that in the year of our Lord's Passion the preparation of Passover, 14 Nisan, fell on the Julian March 25. This Julian date happened to coincide with the date assigned to the spring equinox in the Julian calendar. In the third century there seems to have been no concern to shift the paschal date to the equinox itself, since the Hippolytan tables establish the Julian equivalents for 14 Nisan in every year. *De Pascha Computus* from the year 243 presents the same system, pointing out that 25th of March was also the first day of creation. The sun was created on the fourth day of creation and Christ was identified with the sun:

"O how admirable and divine is the providence of the Lord, that on that day on which the sun was made on the same day was Christ born, the fifth of the kalends of April⁴³, the fourth day of the week, and so rightly did the prophet Malachi say to the people: 'The sun of righteousness shall rise upon you, with healing in his wings.'"⁴⁴

Belief in the conjunction of the 14th day of Nisan with March 25 in the year of Christ's Passion was not limited to Rome. Such a paschal date has been noted in Egypt by A. Jacoby⁴⁵ and it constitutes the basis for an important Latin work *De*

⁴¹ *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 119-120, 232-4. For Clement see my ch. 4.2.

⁴² *Adv. Iud.* VIII.18. The date is March, 25. Talley, *Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 10.

⁴³ Meaning March, 28.

⁴⁴ "O quam praecleara et divina Domini providentia, ut in illo die quo factus est sol in ipso die nasceretur Christus V id. Apr. feriz IIII. et ideo de ipso merito ad plebem dicebat Malachias propheta: orietur vobis sol iustitiae et curatio est in pennis eius." *De pascha computus* 19. CSEL 3.3, 226. Talley, *idem*, 90-91.

⁴⁵ Ein bisher unbeachteter apokrypher Bericht über die Taufe Christi' (1902), 15. Vincenzo Loi, Il 25 Marzo

*solstitia et aequinoctia conceptionis et nativitatis domini nostri Iesu Christi et Ioannis Baptistae.*⁴⁶ No clear date has been established for this work, although it seems unlikely that it could have originated before the fourth century. As its title suggests, it makes the equinox itself the occasion of the Passion, and tells that the conception of Jesus took place six months later than John the Baptist's conception (Luke 1:36), that is, at the spring equinox. The birth of Jesus, therefore, took place nine months later, at the winter solstice.

"Our Lord was conceived on the eight of the kalends of April in the month of March, which is the day of the Passion of the Lord and of his conception. For on the day that he was conceived on the same he suffered."⁴⁷

The last sentence refers to the Mishnah, as we shall see later.⁴⁸ This is one evidence of the definition of Christ's birthday in the flesh on December 25. Talley assumes that the commemoration of Christ's birth on December 25 was established in the North African and Roman churches before Epiphany, January 6, and antedates the Donatist schism, which took place in the year 311. The date December 25 was derived from a tradition which puts the day of Christ's Passion on March 25.⁴⁹

4. Since the beginning of this century it has been common to account for the Christian adaptation of the Roman winter solstice festival, *dies natalis solis invicti*, on December 25.⁵⁰ There is, however, as we have seen, one slender tradition of Christ's birthday on the same day, December 25, and it was already in existence before Emperor Aurelian, who was thought to have brought the festival of *natalis solis invicti* to Rome in 274 C.E. Actually the sun-feast has longer roots reaching beyond Aurelian. The coincidence takes place in Western Christendom, but in the East the tradition of January 6 is better known. This evidence makes it possible to

data pasquale ed la cronologia Giovannea della passione in età patristica' (1971), 51f.

⁴⁶ The work is published as an appendix in B. Botte's *Les origines de la Noël et de l'Épiphanie* (1932), 88-105. Talley, *idem*, 11, 94.

⁴⁷ Talley's translation from the appendix of Botte's *Les origines de la Noël et de l'Épiphanie* (1932). Lines 230-233. Talley, *idem*, 94.

⁴⁸ See p. 20

⁴⁹ *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 85-99.

⁵⁰ H. Usener, *Das Weihnachtsfest* (1911), 348, 365-378. G. Kunze, 'Die gottesdienstliche Zeit' (1954), 464f.

see even Christmas justified on the basis of having Jewish roots, not only as the adaptation of a Roman festival, which has been the usually accepted theory. This also has influence to bear on the theory of the origins of Epiphany.

5. There remains yet one theory left which explains the date of January 6 as Christ's birthday. According to Jewish tradition, the world was created at the beginning of Nisan, in its first six days and thus the creation of Adam took place on the sixth of Nisan. Analogically, Christ, the New Adam, had his origins on the sixth of Nisan, and he was born in the flesh on the sixth of the Syriac month Kanun, which corresponds to the Roman January. Ephraem seems to know this tradition.⁵¹ But he transposes the date of conception to the tenth of Nisan because of the allegory he finds in Exodus:

"Moses shut in the lamb in Nisan on the tenth day⁵² - a symbol of the Son who came into the womb and closed Himself up on the tenth day. He came out from the womb in this month when the light conquers."⁵³

"The Lord of the months chose two months for his actions: His conception took place in Nisan and His birth in Kanun. In Nisan he sanctified those conceived, and those born He freed in Kanun. Blessed is He who gladdens with His months!"⁵⁴

"In Kanun when seed hides in the earth, the Staff of life sprang up from the womb.

In Nisan when the seed springs up into the air, the Sheaf propagated itself in the earth.

In Sheol Death mowed it down and consumed it, but the Medicine of Life hidden in it burst through.

For in Nisan when lambs bleat in the field, into the womb He, the Passover Lamb, entered."⁵⁵

"The number ten is complete; on the tenth of Nisan You entered the womb. The number six is also perfect; on the sixth of Kanun Your birth gave joy to the six directions... On the tenth (was) His conception, on the sixth His birth."⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Sancti Ephraem Syri In Genesim et In Exodum Commentarii* 1:8. *Hymnen de Resurrectione* 4:13.

⁵² Cf. Ex. 12:3,6

⁵³ HNat. 5:14. Transl. Kathleen McVey

⁵⁴ NHat. 22:6. Transl. Kathleen McVey

⁵⁵ HNat. 4:31-34. Transl. Kathleen McVey

⁵⁶ NHat. 27:3-4. Transl. Kathleen McVey

"In the same Nisan our Lord descended from heaven and Mary received him..."⁵⁷

Ephraem the Syrian is certain of January 6 as the true date of the Christian feast of Epiphany. He did not invent it himself, but clearly he inherited it from the Jewish tradition, with which the Syrian church had strong bonds.⁵⁸ Ephraem explains the date of the feast:

"The sun conquered and engraved a symbol on the degrees that it ascended. Since it ascended it is twelve days, and today this is the thirteenth: a perfect symbol of the birth of the Son and of His Twelve."⁵⁹

He also finds an allegorical interpretation of his theme: the twelve disciples and Jesus as the thirteenth person. This explanation might have served as a simple everyman's way to calculate the exact time of a great feast. Epiphanius gives the same explanation, quoting Ephraem. The date of Christ's birth was of no great significance at any time or in any culture, but the date of Christ's suffering at the Jewish Passover was a much more secure date for initiating the tradition of his divine Incarnation.

In western parts of the empire *dies natalis solis invicti* had been identified with Christ the Sun of Righteousness by the Emperor Constantine. Support for the date of the "new" feast was gained in the Church as a result of the coincidence in the calendars mentioned above. From Rome Christmas slowly gained a foothold. In Rome in 354 the theme of this new imperial feast was the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. There is a likelihood that the dates of the both Natalia festivals arose from Jewish calculations, as we have seen. Epiphany was initially in a stronger position, partly because its celebration was well-established in the eastern provinces, whither Christians traditionally turned in search of practices to portray their faith.

1.5. The Hypotheses

In Judaism there were three main feasts with the obligation of pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple. Two of them, Passover and Pentecost, have continued in the Christian Church, though their themes have gained new aspects. The Feast of

⁵⁷ HRes. 4:13. My translation.

⁵⁸ See chapter 3.4.

⁵⁹ HNat. 5:13. Transl. Kathleen McVey.

Tabernacles, which was said to be the greatest of all celebrations, seems not to have any continuation in Christianity. In the early Christian Church there were also three main feasts. According to the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, they were Passover, Pentecost and Epiphany; Ephraem the Syrian (306-373) considers Epiphany the greatest of all feasts.⁶⁰ This leads one to wonder whether the Feast of Tabernacles did not leave any traces on the early Christian Church. My first hypothesis is that the Tabernacles traditions form the foundation on which the Christian Epiphany gradually arose.

I shall also put forward for consideration the proposition that the process which brought forth the Christian Epiphany feast was influenced by the need to express in a liturgical manner the crucial belief in God's descent in flesh upon the earth to rescue people from the demonic powers. The teachings of the Apostle Paul seem to be important in this process.

The Jewish influence diminished after the fall of Jerusalem and after Gentile Christians assumed leadership in the Church. Their main concerns were heretics - the traditional Jews and the Gnostics - whose teaching differed from St. Paul's. I presume that it was the struggle against Gnosticism that introduced the emphasis on the centrality of baptism in redemption and on the benefits it bestowed on the Christian, even though it might cost him his life in times of persecution.

At the beginning of the fourth century the Catholic Church faced another danger in Arianism, which challenged the Divine Incarnation. I presume that the Church found it necessary to strengthen the celebration of the Incarnation and the baptism of believers, which is rooted in the baptism of Christ, in order to defend its existing faith. This might have been the final stage in the development of the universal Christian Epiphany feast.

When the Constantinian era brought the festival of the unconquered sun into relation with Christ's birth in Bethlehem, giving it a central place in the festal calendar, the Feast of Epiphany preserved the theme of baptism. A focus on its historicity might have turned this feast into the celebration of Christ's baptism in the Jordan.

⁶⁰ See the quotation on page 166.

2. PALESTINIAN TRADITIONS ON THE JEWISH PILGRIMAGE FEASTS

2.1. The Jewish Calendar and Eschatological Time

Before the Exile the Jews used a solar calendar, which began in Spring and comprised 364 days. The day began at dawn. During their stay in Babylon the Jews became acquainted with another calendar system, namely the Chaldean, which was a lunar-solar system, meaning that the months were reckoned according to the moon while the years were reckoned according to the sun. All months were called in post-exilic literature by names, not merely by numbers. In order to adjust the lunar months to the solar year, they from time to time intercalated a special month of 30 days. This kept the festivals in the proper season of the year - Passover after the vernal equinox and Tabernacles after the autumn equinox. The festivals now had fixed dates according to the moon. The Passover rite takes place at full moon, just as does the feast of ingathering (Tabernacles). In the new calendar the day was reckoned from sunset to sunset, the day following the night. Later they adopted some Greek systems, such as changing the New Year from the spring to the autumn, because most nations at that time counted their years from the autumn.

This was the Jewish calendar in its main outlines during the time of Jesus and the first two centuries C.E., and it was followed by all Judaeans, because there was one temple and one religious court which dominated religious life.¹ After the fall of Jerusalem the rabbis attempted to maintain their authority in this matter.

In Jewish tradition annual birthdays served no purpose,² but the year of birth was often calculated according to the dates of the rulers. The birthday and hour of birth were not important for the Jews, although some of them had learnt from the Babylonian astrologers something of the connection between the signs of the days of the week and the characters of those born on those days.³ But the rabbis were

¹ Zeitlin, 'The Judaeon Calendar during the Second Commonwealth and the Scrolls' (1966), 197-198. van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (1961), 6. There were other Jewish calendars, for instance that of Qumran, but they only applied to a specific group.

² Zeitlin, 'The Dates of the Birth and the Crucifixion of Jesus' (1964), 406.

³ A. Alunann, 'Astrology' (1972), 789. *The Treatise of Shem*, a Jewish astrological pseudepigraphon, dated by J.H. Charlesworth to the first century B.C., describes the characteristics of the year according to the house

interested in certain dates that would conclude the *eschaton*. In the Gemara of the Mishnah we read:

"It has been taught: R. Eliezer says: In Tishri the world was created; in Tishri the Patriarchs were born; in Tishri the Patriarchs died; on Passover Isaac was born; on New Year Sarah, Rachel and Hannah were visited (or: remembered on high); on New Year Joseph went forth from prison; on New Year the bondage of our ancestors in Egypt ceased; in Nisan they were redeemed and in Tishri⁴ they will be redeemed in the time to come.

R. Joshua says: In Nisan the world was created; in Nisan the Patriarchs were born; in Nisan the Patriarchs died; on Passover Isaac was born; on New Year Sarah, Rachel and Hannah were visited; on New Year Joseph went forth from prison; on New Year the bondage of our ancestors ceased in Egypt; and in Nisan they will be redeemed in time to come."⁵

The text continues by explaining whence the rabbis draw their theses. Both use different passages of Scripture to support their own arguments. Then it continues:

"He who holds that they (the patriarchs) were born in Nisan holds that they died in Nisan, and he who holds that they were born in Tishri holds that they died in Tishri. - - - What then is the point of it? This day my days and years have reached full measure, which teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and completes the years of the righteous from day to day and from month to month, as it says, 'The number of thy days I will fulfil.' (Ex. 23:26)

---Our Rabbis taught: 'The wise men of Israel follow R. Eliezer in dating the Flood⁶ and R. Joshua in dating the annual cycles⁷, while the scholars of other peoples follow R. Joshua in dating the Flood also.'⁸

This passage gives the reason for placing the birth on the same date as the death: the number of days will be fulfilled. The same expression is also found in the second Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch, which is from the late first century C.E.

of the zodiac in which it begins. It testifies to Jewish interest in astrology and the zodiac at the beginning of our era. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1. 473-486.

⁴ The English translation by Maurice Simon here puts 'Nisan', but in the original text and in Goldsmith's German translation there stands the word 'Tishri'. Talley also pays attention to this fact. *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 155, note 4.

⁵ *Talm. Bab.* vol. 23. Rosh Hashanah 10b-11a. Transl. Maurice Simon.

⁶ The translation has a note here: "I.e. the years of Noah and the calendar from Tishri; Tishri being the New Year for years."

⁷ The translation has a note here: "They hold that the world was created in Nisan."

⁸ *Talm. Bab.* vol. 23. Rosh Hashanah 11a, 12a. Transl. Maurice Simon.

"And he (Enoch) remained on the earth for 30 days, talking with them. And then he was taken up to heaven again in the month of Tsivan (on the 6th day), on the very same 6th day on which he was even born, and at the very same hour. And just as every person has his nature the darkness of this present life, so also he has his conception and birth and departure from this life. In (the hour in) which he was conceived, in that hour also he is born, (and) in that also he departs."⁹

The early Christian usage of commemorating the martyrs on the anniversaries of their death, referring to it as their birthday, might also reflect this ancient Jewish belief, though the concept of *dies natalis* derived from the imperial usage, which was more familiar to the Gentiles, is obviously stronger. This tradition seems to have survived until it is recorded by St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who, when declaring the mystery of the baptism, writes in his mystagogical lecture:

"In the same moment you were dying and being born, and that saving water was at once your grave and your mother.—One time brought both, and your death coincided with your birth."¹⁰

The competition between Tishri and Nisan is a result of the change of calendar. In Jewish tradition there are two traditions of the beginning of the year: according to the older tradition, the year begins in the spring, in the month of Nisan. According to the other tradition, it begins in the autumn, in the month which was called by the older Canaanite name Abib and later known by the name Tishri. The calendar which begins in Nisan is of Babylonian origin. It was adopted in Israel, evidently in the seventh century, but after the reign of Josiah.¹¹ In the Hellenistic world the year normally began in the autumn, which had the effect that the Jews too began to commence their year in the month of Tishri. Both calculations are seen still quite late in the Talmudic tradition. Therefore there is disagreement over the month which marks the turn of the year and therefore also over the month in which creation occurred. Both passages show that the day of creation and the day of final redemption were considered to be the same, and on the same basis the births and deaths of the patriarchs are placed on the same day. This shows that the rabbis' final concern was eschatology. The association of the coming of the Messiah with Passover, on the other hand, and with the festivals of Tishri (*Rosh*

⁹ 2 Enoch 68a:2-4. Translated and dated by F.I. Andersen. In: *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.1.

¹⁰ *Mystag.* 2:4. Transl. Anthony A. Stephenson. *FC*, vol. 64.

¹¹ de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (1961). 185.

Hashanah and *Sukkoth*), on the other, speak of the inherently eschatological character of these festivals than to eschatology itself, thinks Talley.¹²

Eschatology was seen among the Jews as the fulfilment and the end of history. The *Eschaton* is not simply an ending, but the fulfilment of what has developed in time, that to which time has been inwardly subordinated as the means is to the end, that which fills it with meaning. The Sabbath and feast-days have an 'eschatological' significance, as reminders of the ultimate and great 'Day of the Lord' which is coming in time. Such a time is eschatologically transparent, time within and over which the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is constantly acting, and which discovers its real meaning in the Kingdom of Yahweh, 'the Kingdom of all ages'.¹³

This same understanding of time also lies at the heart of the Christian New Testament concept, as Cullman has demonstrated. The norm is not something which is still coming in the future, but the One who has already come.¹⁴ The difference between Christianity and Judaism is not in their understanding of time, but in their conception of the events by which this time is spiritually measured.¹⁵ Without it it is impossible to understand either early Christian eschatology or what we call the eschatology of the early Christian cult. This leads to the conclusion that Christ's second coming is secondary, but the fact that he has come is primary, and needs to be repeated and celebrated.

The inadequacy of the Jewish calendar, whose 12 lunar months did not equal a solar year, presented difficulties for the maintenance of uniform practice. This was a problem even for Jews in the Diaspora, and a letter was sent out from the sages of Palestine to Jews in the Diaspora commanding the adoption of an additional month whenever necessary. The fixing of the calendar was the prerogative of the

¹² Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 50.

¹³ A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to the Liturgical Theology* (1966), 55-57.

¹⁴ Cullman, *Christ and Time*, 3. ed. (1962), 108.

¹⁵ A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (1966), 55-57. 'The eschaton is not so much a new age as a new existence - The main point of Christian eschatology is that the end-time is not in the future but now.' R. Taft, 'The Liturgical Year: Studies, Prospects, Reflections' (1981), 13, 19.

priesthood. It was their duty to regulate the calendar in such a way that the feast would be celebrated in the right season. Differences among the Israelites regarding the calendar and the time set for keeping the feasts were potentially and actually disastrous for both religious and for social and economic life. Such a difference was in itself sufficient reason to form a sect.¹⁶

2.2. Jewish Feasts and their Eschatological Character

The Jewish feasts were connected with the nation's dedication to Yahweh. When the ancient tribes gathered to celebrate the harvest they at the same time acknowledged the One who was the giver of the harvest. When they gathered to celebrate the memory of the Exodus from Egypt they at the same time renewed their faith and dedication to the God Yahweh, who brought them out from bondage in Egypt. The celebrations included cultic rites which expressed thanksgiving and dedication to Yahweh, but there were also worldly pleasures such as eating and drinking. The Old Testament commands the Israelites to attend three pilgrimage festivals - *Sukkoth*, *Shabuoth* and *Pesach* - celebrated in the temple in Jerusalem.¹⁷ Over a period of time the Jewish feasts gained new connotations linked with the expectations the Israelites had for the future, the first of them obviously the coming of the Messiah. In time all the major Jewish feasts were coloured by Messianic expectation. From reading-lists from ancient times we can draw some conclusions concerning the themes of the feasts. Reading practices seem to be still indistinct and lacking in uniformity at an early date.¹⁸ The Mishnah mentions only a few readings at festivals and they are no more than an initial effort. The festal readings follow the Babylonian tradition and they are quite well known in the Babylonian Talmud.¹⁹ The Palestinian readings are less common.

¹⁶ van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (1961), 5-6.

¹⁷ Ex. 23:17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16. Sanders (1992) believes that Palestinian Jews attended on average one of the three festivals each year. *Judaism. Practice and Belief*, 130. *Talm. Bab.* Rosh Hashanah 5a: "on the feast of Passover (the celebrant is) required to stay overnight (in Jerusalem), so on the feast of Tabernacles he is required to stay overnight." There is no mention of staying overnight on the feast of Weeks.

¹⁸ C. Perrot, 'The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue' (1988), 137-138.

¹⁹ *Talm. Bab.* vol. 24. Megillah 31a/b, 4:5.

The following pages present the Jewish feasts such as they were at the beginning of the Christian era, and with special reference to how they exhibit eschatological expectations. This is essential to understand the religious mind of a Jew, who was taught to read the Scriptures with their prophecies and who attended the major feasts. When the message of Jesus as the awaited Messiah reached him and he decided to believe, he understood redemption from these premisses and expressed it in the way he was accustomed to do, that is, liturgically.

The Feast of Passover, *Pesach*, was the central feast in Israel, because it commemorates the basic act of God's intervention in the destiny of the nomadic people. Israel's Yahweh was above all the God of the Exodus. This was a central theme constantly referred to in the Holy Scriptures, as it is in the Psalms that were recited in the cult of the Jerusalem temple.²⁰ At *Pesach* there were originally two different festivals, the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover conceals old nomadic customs by slaughtering a lamb, and Unleavened Bread hints at the primitive agricultural feast of the new harvest. Before our era the two festivals had been merged and become a single pilgrimage festival lasting eight days. *Pesach* was celebrated on the 14th of the 7th month²¹, and on the 15th came Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days. The theme commemorated at *Pesach* was the Exodus, the main event of Israelite history, which frequently occurs in the Scriptures, stressing the power of the God of the Exodus. The readings at *Pesach* in Palestinian tradition are, according to the Mishnah, Lev. 22:26-23:9 (sacrificial offerings, appointed feasts), and in addition, according to later traditions, Ex. 12:43f., 14:30f., 22:24f. (the ordinance of Passover, crossing the sea), Num.9:1f. (*Pesach* in the wilderness, the cloud above the Tabernacle), Deut. 16:1f. (appointed feasts), Josh. 5:2-12 (circumcision at Gibeath-haaraloth, the Passover at Gilgal), Judg. 5:1-20 (the song of Deborah) or Isa. 10:32f. or Isa 19:1-25. For the Sabbath of the feast the readings are Deut. 14:22f. (tithes), Mal. 3:10-24 ("the sun of righteousness shall rise") or Exod. 13:17f. (crossing the sea)

²⁰ P. Tazari, *The Old Testament: an Introduction. I: Historical Traditions* (1991), 33-48.

²¹ Ex. 12:2 states the first month. By the first century, however, the common reckoning was that the Jewish year began in the autumn and that Passover fell in the seventh month. Sanders, *Judaism* (1992), note 34, page 510.

and Ezek. 37:1f. (the dry bones). The last two are doubtful.²² Eschatological expectation appears to some extent seen in these readings.

Strobel has shown the eschatological character of the Jewish Pascha.²³ Talley refers to a passage of Targum Yerushalmi, where it is said about *Pesach*:

"Four nights are written in the book of Memorial.---

The fourth night: when the end of the age will be accomplished, that it might be dissolved, the bands of wickedness destroyed and the iron yoke broken. Moses came forth from the midst of the desert, but the king Meshiha (Messiah) (comes) from the midst of Rome.---

This is the night of Pesah before the Lord, to be observed and celebrated by the sons of Israel in all their generations."²⁴

Here is a clear expression of the coming of the Messiah in connection with the *Pesach* celebrations. That the coming of the Messiah would occur at the end of time, on the Day of the Lord, is a common view in late Judaism. The coming of Messiah in connection with *Pesach* shows the eschatological significance of that feast.

The Feast of Pentecost has its roots in the celebration of the harvest of corn. *Chag Shabuoth*, (the feast of weeks) was held in the spring, originally without any fixed date. Later it was fixed at 50 days or seven weeks after Passover, to which its Greek name *Pentekoste* refers. Its second theme is the renewal of the covenant, which is evident in the Book of Jubilees (ca.140-100 B.C.) where the commemorations are associated with the Sinaitic, Noachic and Abrahamic covenants, and the feast is treated as a divinely instituted festival for the renewal of the covenant. Such was the feast observed on the 50th day of the third month at Qumran.²⁵ The commemoration of the giving of the law comes also from pre-Christian times. However, the central point was not the law but the

²² C. Perrot, 'The Reading of the Bible in Ancient Synagogue' (1988), 146-150.

²³ A. Strobel, *Ursprung und Geschichte des frühchristlichen Osterkalenders* (1977), 29-35.

²⁴ J.W. Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch* (1862), 480-481. T. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 49. The Targum might be from the Christian era, which weakens its value as pre-Christian evidence of Judaism. G. Stemberger, *Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur* (1977), 80-83.

²⁵ Jubilees VI:17-18. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1; M. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (1987), 88-90.

covenant.²⁶ Yet some scholars hold that the change was due to the influence of the Church. As evidence they point to the choice of prophetic readings which stress the theophanic aspect of the feast, e.g. Jeremiah chapter 31 where "the days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant."²⁷ But it is obvious that *Shabuoth* has older traditions behind it. The reading which Megillah gives for *Shabuoth* is Deut. 16:9f. (appointment of the feast). Later readings are also Exod. 19:1f. (God's descent at Sinai and Moses' going up before him), Hab. 3:3-11 (God's glory at Teman) and Zeph. 3:20 ("I will restore your fortunes").²⁸ Old Testament scholarship has come to terms with the idea that there was a covenant renewal feast in ancient Israel, but mostly it has been connected with the Feast of Tabernacles.²⁹ It is still possible to connect the covenant and the oath with *Shabuoth*.³⁰ Thus the feast of the renewal of the covenant is also referred in people's minds to the perfect covenant in the *eschaton*. It also gives *Shabuoth* an eschatological and Messianic stamp. I doubt that this was first noticed after the challenge posed by the Christians.

The earliest stage of the Feast of Tabernacles, *Chag Sukkoth*, is to be found in Judg. 9:27 and here it is an agricultural festival, more particularly a thanksgiving for the fruit harvest. Later it was also a general thanksgiving for the bounty of nature in the past year. Num. 29:1-12 contains a divine command to celebrate feasts. "On the first day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation...It is a day for you to blow the trumpets." This is *Rosh Hashanah*, New Year's day. Ten days afterwards comes the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, when

²⁶ Kretschmar, 'Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten' (1954), 229.

²⁷ E. Werner (1959) *The Sacred Bridge*, 10. S. Cavaletti (1990) 'The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy', 36. On Jewish pericopes see Kretschmar (1954) 'Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten', 230-231, and C. Perrot (1988) 'The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue', 143-150.

²⁸ Perrot, *idem*, 146-147.

²⁹ Deut. 31:9-13. Krübb, *The Qumran Community* (1987), 88-90. See closer next ch.

³⁰ "Im Jubiläenbuch wird das Wochenfest als Gedenktag des Bundes gefeiert, den Gott mit Israel geschlossen hat (6:17-21). Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass das Jubiläenbuch mit dieser Deutung des Wochenfestes schon an ältere Traditionen anknüpft. —Neh. 10:30 stehen Bund und Eid in enger Verbindung miteinander, ebenso wie Job. 5:11. Hier liegt wahrscheinlich der Hauptgrund für die Verschiebung des Bundeserneuerungstages auf das Wochenfest." Kretschmar, 'Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten' (1954), 226-227.

"you shall afflict yourselves", and five days after it the Feast of Booths, of which only the following words are said: "You shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work and you shall keep a feast to the Lord seven days." In the next passage Lev. 23:39-43 there appears for the first time the basis for the redemptive character of *Sukkoth*: "You shall dwell in booths for seven days; all that are native in Israel shall dwell in booths that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

It is more credible that in spite of the mention of booths tents first occur in the history of the twelve tribes, because tents are peculiar to nomads in the desert. Booths refer to the wine harvest, when the people live in booths while working in the vineyard. It seems that the feast of tents was the principal convocation of the Exodus tribe of Ephraim³¹ reminding them of the crucial point of their faith - meeting Yahweh of the Exodus in the desert. In Hosea 12:9 we have evidence of it: "I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast."

In the desert traditions we read that God spoke to Moses in the tent of meeting and told the people to "encamp each by his own standard, with the ensigns of their fathers' houses; they shall encamp facing the tent of meeting on every side."³² The tent of meeting is thus a meeting-place between Yahweh's *kabod* (glory) and the gathered people, and the central point of the whole gathered camp. There also arises the question whether the camp order in totality refers to a tent feast of the tribes.³³ The Day of Atonement is connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, not merely because it is celebrated five days before *Sukkoth*, but also because the atonement sacrifice was most probably a part of the ancient tent feast. This leads one to suggest that the Day of Atonement is as old as the tent feast, and not something invented later. Its second stage is presented in Lev. 16 where it speaks not only of the sacrifice, but also of the ark, the altar, its veil and

³¹ On the central meaning of the tribe of Ephraim, see Tarazi, *The Old Testament: An Introduction. I: Historical Traditions* (1991), 33-48.

³² Num. 1:1; 2:2; 3:38

³³ Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel* (1954), 17-36.

the mercy-seat.³⁴ The Deuteronomistic historian, who reviewed the Davidic-Solomonic era in the light of the book of law, i.e. Deuteronomy, has summed up the theme of the cult observed in the Jerusalem temple during the autumn feast³⁵ in a single sentence in 1 Kgs. 8:16: Yahweh has elected Jerusalem, so that His name will dwell there, and He has elected David to rule over his people Israel. This double theme is the essential content of the feast of *Sukkoth* in Jerusalem. In the ancient world the ruling authorities sought new power from the origins of the people and the capacity to maintain themselves in power.³⁶ Therefore the cult became quite tangible by making the facts concerning their origins known among the people. A. Weiser has maintained that there was a cultic theophany of Yahweh as the highlight of the feast.³⁷

This was the state of affairs in Davidic Jerusalem too. The covenant at Sinai was brought to Jerusalem in the form of the ark and it was linked to the person of David. The Sinaitic covenant was transferred to the Davidic covenant and the priestly house of Eli was replaced by the Zadokites. Only the ruler who accepted the covenant with Yahweh would thereafter stand in the covenant of David.³⁸ It is possible to see the same development in the process where a Jewish feast turns into a Christian feast: The covenant of the Messiah was brought to the Gentiles in the form of the Gospel, which was bound to the person of Jesus. The old covenant was transferred to the new one and the Jewish priests and temple cult was replaced by Christian bishops and the celebration of the Eucharist. When the first temple in Jerusalem was completed in the middle of the 10th century B.C. it was linked to the *Sukkoth* tradition, perhaps because its dedication

³⁴ *Idem* 30-32, 95-96.

³⁵ 1 Kgs. 8:2.

³⁶ Kraus, *idem*, 122-128. Tarazi, *The Old Testament: An Introduction: Historical Traditions* (1991), 89f.

³⁷ "Die Theophanie gehört zugleich der Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart.—Die Theophanie und Lade gehören zusammen und die Theophanietradition hatte ihren Sitz im Festkult.—Die Frage wie sich Theophanie im Kulturspiel abspielt habe, ist im einzelnen nicht mit Sicherheit zu beantworten.—In der Kultfeier finden wir selbstprädikation Jahwes, Darstellung der Rauchwolke, Poszumenschall und Festjubiläum."

Zur Frage nach den Beziehungen der Psalmen zum Kult. Die Darstellung der Theophanie in den Psalmen und im Festkult (1950). 513-531. Cf. also *Das Alte Testament Deutsch: Die Psalmen* (1966). 42, 59, 65, 448, 462.

³⁸ 1 Kgs. 2:26-27, 35; 2 Kgs. 23:3; Ps. 132:11-14. Kraus, *idem*. 73-75, 85.

took place during *Sukkoth*.³⁹ This gave reason to declare the pilgrimage to Jerusalem at *Sukkoth* obligatory for all men in Israel.⁴⁰

After many rulers had failed, Josiah initiated a restoration of the Sinaitic covenant in connection with the traditional Davidic State cult and restored the feast of Passover. After the return from the captivity there occurs the first mention of a celebration of the Feast of Booths in strict conformity with the Law. According to Nehemiah, the Law was read every day of the feast.⁴¹ Deuteronomy (31:10-11) requires that the law be read every seventh year at this feast, and it is probable that the study of Scripture remained an important part of the festival. In the cult of Ezra's time excited eschatological expectation was of great significance. Trito-Isaiah speaks more of the coming redemption than of the past one. The lessons the Jews used to read at Tabernacles were the commands for *Sukkoth* from Leviticus and Numbers.⁴² 1 Kgs. 8:54-66 was also read, recounting the dedication of the first temple. Ezek. 38:18-39:26 and Zech. 14:1-21 would be read, because there is written about the great day of the Lord. In Ezekiel there is a prophecy of the great battle between Gog and Magog, and in Zechariah it is written of the time when Jerusalem will be cleansed and sanctified.⁴³ In the centre there is the awareness of the immediate arrival of God's kingdom, which will take place in the re-chosen city of Jerusalem. In Zech. 14:16 the pilgrimage of the Gentiles to Jerusalem is specifically linked with *Sukkoth*. The idea of living waters flowing out from Jerusalem to the east and west is found both in Ezek. 47 and in Zech. 14:8. It originates in Semitic mythology concerning the creation of the world, beginning from the Altar at the centre or navel of the world, which is also the key-stone blocking off the primeval flood. The altar, the holy rock, is called *shethiyyah*, which can be translated 'the Rock of Drinking'.⁴⁴ The stream

³⁹ 1 Kgs. 6:38, 8:2,65

⁴⁰ Ex.23:14-17; 34:22-23. Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (1961), 31-35.

⁴¹ Neh. 8:1-3, 13-18

⁴² Lev. 22:26f. and 23:40f., Num. 29:2f., Deut. 14:22f.

⁴³ Perrot, 'The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue' (1988), 146-167. For further information on the rabbinical conception of these passages, see *Talmud Babli*, Meg. 31a.

⁴⁴ *Talm. Bab.* vol. 21. Yoma 5:3. Draper, J.A. (1983) 'The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7.1-17.' 140.

flowing from the temple in the last days occupies the rabbis a great deal, so it is no wonder that it also occurs in the New Testament. The lessons read at the Feast of Tabernacles reflect clearly the eschatological hope.

2.3. The Special Rites of the Feast of Tabernacles

In the Old Testament there is mention of how fire descended from heaven upon the altar, or how Yahweh's *kabod* filled the temple, pointing to the fact that God was present in this place.⁴⁵ When the temple was consecrated under Nehemiah, Ezra 3 and 6 contains no mention of God's glory descending in such a way. But in the second book of Maccabees there is preserved a tradition of the sacred fire which was hidden when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, but which was found once again at the time of the dedication of the second temple under Nehemiah. This rediscovered fire consumed the offerings upon the altar, as it also did under Moses and Solomon when Yahweh's *kabod* appeared to all the people.⁴⁶ When the Maccabeans desired to purify the temple, they made the altar and "striking fire out of flints they offered a sacrifice after an interval of three years."⁴⁷ Whether or not fire came from heaven to consume their sacrifices is obscure in the books of Maccabees. Yet they celebrated this day as the Day of Tabernacles, calling it both Dedication (ἐγκαινισμός, *Hanukkah*) and Purification (καθαρισμός).⁴⁸ Josephus, however, knew these Days of Dedication as τὰ φῶτα, 'lights', and in Egypt the sacred fire must have been associated with the festival.⁴⁹ In 123 B.C. the Jews of Jerusalem wrote to the Egyptian Jews explaining how they were rededicating the temple after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes and, for

⁴⁵ Ex. 40:34-38; Lev. 9:23-24; 1 Kgs. 8:10-11; 2 Chr. 5:13-14; 2 Chr. 7:1-3. Cf. also Judg. 6:21-22. The origin of the sacred fire may be the Zoroastrian temple cult of fire. Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees* (1983), *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 41a, 172.

⁴⁶ 2 Macc. 1:19-34

⁴⁷ 2 Macc. 10:3. Transl. Sidney Tedeschi.

⁴⁸ 2 Macc. 2:16, 10:6-7

⁴⁹ Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees* (1988), 172-173. Solomon Zeitlin, 'Introduction' (1954) in: *The Second Book of Maccabees*, 46.

instance, lighting the lights of the *menorah*. They urged the Egyptian Jews to celebrate this event like *Sukkoth*, as the *Sukkoth* of Kislev. This is the beginning of the feast of *Hanukkah* on the 25th of Kislev.⁵⁰ Hints of a connection between *Hanukkah* and *Sukkoth* are also preserved in rabbinic literature.⁵¹

Yahweh's *kabod* signifies his visible presence among his people. It is a holy term connected with the appearance of light.⁵² In later Jewish writings, the Targumim, the Books of Maccabees and the Mishnah, Yahweh's *kabod* is expressed by the term *shekhinah*, which means the dwelling of Yahweh, first in the temple (2 Macc. 14:35), but later it signifies all modes of God's presence in the past, present and eschatological future.⁵³ In the Midrash the promise of God is that "in the coming aeon, when I have led my *shekinah* to Sion, I will disclose myself in my *kabod* to all Israel, and they shall see and live for ever."⁵⁴

The eighth day of Tabernacles, *Shemini Azeret*⁵⁵ which has long traditions behind⁵⁶, was early on an independent festival. Like the first day, it was a holy convocation, standing in the Mishnaic era in the same relation to Tabernacles as Pentecost to Passover.⁵⁷ According to a Jewish tradition which is followed by modern scholars, this feast had a special rite called *Beth ha-Sho'ebah* or *Beth ha-Shubah*, and it is connected with the libation of water and thus to be read *ha-sho'ebah*, 'drawing'.

A Jewish scholar, Solomon Zeitlin, finds, however, that this rite is really connected with fire and not in any way with the libation of water, and has to be read

⁵⁰ 2 Macc. 1-2; 10:1-8.

⁵¹ Moshe David Herr, 'Hanukkah' (1972), 1284.

⁵² 2 Chr. 5:13-14; 7:1-2.

⁵³ J. Sievers, "Where Two or Three...": The Rabbinic Concept of Shekhinah and Matthew 18:20" (1990), 47-52.

⁵⁴ Kittel, 'Doxa', 249. (Tanch. Buber 'bmdbr' 20, p. 18.)

⁵⁵ or *Simchat Torah* in post-Talmudic era.

⁵⁶ Lev. 23:33,43; Neh. 8:16-18. Num. 29:12,35.

⁵⁷ *Talm. Bab.*, vol. 23. Rosh Hashanah 4b.

beth chashubah, 'important precept',⁵⁸ referring to the descent of the holy fire. In the Gemara of *Sukkah* the Babylonian Talmud has preserved the following explanation:

"It was stated: Rab Judah and R. Ina differ; one of them taught *sho'ebah* (footnote: water-drawing) and the other taught *chashubah*. (Footnote: Important. The phrase would thus mean 'the important rejoicing of the Temple.) Mar Zutra observed, He who teaches *sho'ebah* is not in error, and he who teaches *chashubah* is not in error, since it is written, 'And ye shall draw water in joy' (footnote: Isa. 12:3); and he who teaches *chashubah* is not in error, since R. Nahman stated, it is an important precept, dating from the very creation."⁵⁹

Zeitlin argues that the Amoraim no longer knew the historical reasons for the celebration of fire or its connection with the Feast of Tabernacles.⁶⁰ They even differed about the name of this celebration. The Mishnah speaks separately of the libation of water, *sukh/nesekh hammayim*, and the *beth ha-sho'ebah*, drawing, which makes it evident they were not identical.⁶¹ The celebration of fire takes place on the first day of the festival, not on the last one as in the case of the libation of water.

During the festival there was a ceremony of libation every day and especially on the last great day. This event is connected with the belief mentioned above that the altar stands over the key-stone blocking off the primeval flood. The libation was done to obtain the favour of God so that He would send rain the following year. In the Talmud God is made to say: "Pour out water before me on the festival in order that your rains for the year may be blessed."⁶² The custom may perhaps be traced to the very ancient practice of drawing and pouring out water at religious services, as reported in 1 Sam. 7:6. This is regarded as symbolic of rain. A

⁵⁸ *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, compiled by Marcus Jastrow (1903), gives the following explanation of this term: *chashab* 1) to think, intend, plan; 2) to consider, regard, to count; 3) to design, trace; part. pass. *chashub, chashuba*, a) counted, regarded; b) valuable, important, respectable, of high standard.

⁵⁹ Transl. by Israel W. Slotki. *Talm. Bab.* vol. 22. *Sukkah* 5,1. P. 236.

⁶⁰ S. Zeitlin, 'The Beth Ha-Shoebah and the Sacred Fire' (1953), 176-182.

⁶¹ *Idem*, 177.

⁶² *Talm. Bab.* vol. 23. *Rosh Hashanah* 16a.

prayer for rain was recited on the eighth day.⁶³ A priest filled a golden pitcher holding three logs with water from the Siloah, and brought it through the water-gate, while the crowd recited Isa.12:3. Amid trumpet-blasts the water was poured simultaneously with a libation of wine into a tube in the altar, through which it flowed, mingling with the libation of wine, by an underground passage to the Kidron.⁶⁴ The Palestinian Talmud explains that the term *beth ha-sho'ebah* was employed because the Holy Spirit, not the water, was drawn from the place of *Beth ha-Sho'ebah*.

Said R. Joshua b. Levi: "Why is it called bet hashshoebah (place of drawing)?" "For from there they draw the Holy Spirit, in line with the following verse of Scripture: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' (Isa.12:3)."⁶⁵

Thus this took place on the last great day of the feast, *Simchat Torah*, but the other *beth ha-shubah* was celebrated on the first day, as is recorded in Mishnah:

"At the end of the first festival day of the Festival (the priests and Levites) went down to the women's courtyard.

And they made a major enactment (by putting men below and women above).

And there were golden candleholders there, with four gold bowls on their tops, and four ladders for each candlestick.

And four young priests with jars of oil containing a hundred and twenty logs (would climb up the ladders and) pour (the oil) into each bowl.

Out of the worn-out undergarments and girdles of the priests they made wicks,

and with them they lit the candlesticks.

And there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem which was not lit up from the light of bet hashshoebah.

The pious men and wonderworkers would dance before them with flaming torches in their hand,

and they would sing before them songs and praises."⁶⁶

⁶³ *Mishna*, Taanit 1,1-2, shows that there are different traditions of this prayer. "When do they include the mention of the powers of rain (in the prayer)? R. Eliezer says: "On the first day of the Festival (of Tabernacles)." R. Joshua says: "On the last day of the festival." Transl. by J. Neusner (1988), p. 307. See also *Berakhot* 5,2. P. 8.

⁶⁴ H.G. Friedmann, 'Feast of Tabernacles' (1905). 657. Suk. 4:9-10; Tosef. Suk. 4.

⁶⁵ Suk. 5. III AB. *The Talmud of the Land of Israel*, vol. 17, p. 116. Transl. by J. Neusner (1988). Zeitlin, 'Beth ha-Shoebah and the Sacred Fire' (1953). 178.

⁶⁶ Suk. 5:2-4. Transl. J. Neusner (1988).

It is very probable that the idioms were confused in the minds of the Talmudists. Zeitlin offers an interesting solution to this confusion, one which provides evidence for our theme, too. He finds that *beth chashubah*, "important precept", means the descending of fire upon God's altar, consuming the sacrifices, as it was under Moses, Solomon, Ezra and the Maccabees. In support of this he adduces the same passage mentioned above: the letter of Jerusalem Jews to their Egyptian brethren in 2 Macc. The Mishnah says of this celebration that whoever has not witnessed it has never seen a real festivity.⁶⁷ In the brilliantly illuminated court of the women, before the assembled multitude occupying the double gallery erected by the priests and Levites, the most prominent Israelites took part in a torch-dance, at the same time reciting hymns, songs of praise and psalms with shouts of Hallelujah. The celebration continued till cockcrow. The illumination, torches and torch-dance show that there was an element of fire present on the first day and during the whole festal week. The people waved the palm-branches with cries of Hoshanna. "Every day they walk around the altar one time and say, 'Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord! We beseech thee, O Lord, send now prosperity.'"⁶⁸ The Hallelujah-psalms 113-118 have as their main themes praise and thanksgiving for deliverance, both national and personal.⁶⁹

Among the Maccabees the eight-day rededication ceremony was performed on an analogy with Solomon's consecration of the temple and it was celebrated with gladness and torches in the same way as the Feast of Tabernacles.⁷⁰ *Hanukkah* is therefore called Tabernacles or Tabernacles and Fire.⁷¹ As has been mentioned above, Josephus tells that the Jews call this new festival τὰ φῶτα, 'lights', but he no longer knew why this name was given to the festival.⁷² With the destruc-

⁶⁷ Suk. 5:1

⁶⁸ Mishnah, Suk. 4:5D. Transl. J. Neusner. Ps. 118:25.

⁶⁹ Suk. 3:9-11; 4:1-8. E.P. Sanders, *Judaism* (1992), 135. The name for the seventh and last day of Sukkoth was also Hoshanna Rabbah because of the numerous Hosannas which are recited.

⁷⁰ 2 Macc. 2:12; 10:5-8

⁷¹ "ὡς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἄγητε ἀκηνόρηγας καὶ τοῦ πυρός..." 2 Macc. 1:18.

⁷² Antiq. 32:325.

tion of the Temple such practices as were bound up with the feast disappeared or were modified to fit altered conditions. The *sukkah* (a booth) was later made symbolic of the "clouds of glory" with which God shielded Israel from harm in the wilderness, and the *lulab* (a branch) which was understood to represent God's glory⁷³ was likewise given symbolic significance, and thus the aforementioned ceremonies were spiritualized, too. In the midrashic tradition Jews sing praises to God because He has made atonement for them on the Day of Atonement. On the first day of the Feast God says: "Let bygones be bygones". From this moment on commences a new reckoning. Today, the first day of *Sukkoth* is to be the first day in the new reckoning of iniquities.⁷⁴

In the wall-paintings of the Dura-Europos synagogue the Feast of Tabernacles occupies quite an important position, which scholars think indicates overemphasized eschatological tension. We shall return to these pictures in chapter 3.1.

What was the rabbinic understanding of the principal features of *Sukkoth* - the water libation and the additional eighth day of the feast? In his study Bruce H. Grigsby draws attention to the passage in *Pesiqta Rabbati* where the significance of the eighth day is seen first as a day of great rejoicing in the light of God's gracious bestowal of the season's first rains, and secondly as a day of great anticipation in the light of God's promises to pour out the spiritual "rains" of the Messianic age.⁷⁵ In the Gospel of John we read how Jesus went into the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles "in the middle of the feast" and on "the last day of the feast, the great day".⁷⁶ We shall return to this subject in chapter 2.5.

⁷³ *Pisqa* 27, 9: "R. Aqiba said: The word *hadar* is a symbol of the Majestic One, of whom it is said: 'Thou art clothed with glory and majesty (= *hadar*).' (Ps. 104:1) A branch of palm trees (Lev. 23:40) likewise is a symbol of the Holy One, of whom it is written: 'The Righteous One shall flourish like the Palm Tree'. (Ps. 92:13) And a tree whose boughs are leafy is likewise a symbol of the Holy One who is present among the righteous, as it is said: 'And he stood among the myrtle trees that were in bottom' (Zech. 1:8)." Braude, ed. *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, 421.

⁷⁴ *Idem*, 409.

⁷⁵ "If Any Man Thirsts...": The Rabbinic Background of John 7:37-39" (1986), 101-108. The 52nd *pisqa* (section) of a homiletic *midrash* *Pesikta Rabbati*, 52:4-5. W.G. Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati*, 2 vols. (1968).

⁷⁶ John 7:1-14,37.

We now see that the Feast of Tabernacles seems to have some themes in common with the Christian Epiphany. The possibility of seeing the central rite of *Sukkoth* - *beth chashubah* - to remind one of God's *kabod* descending from heaven, leads us to consider whether the first Christians also now saw the great feast as a reminder of God's Son coming down to earth in the flesh. The drawing of water, the lights - torches - and the hallelujah-psalms were also easily seen as links between the *Sukkoth* of the Old and New Covenants. The Gospel of John, which speaks of the living water given by Christ, might represent this conception.

We have some slight evidence, though it is quite late, connecting the wax-tapers with the Feast of Epiphany. It is a fragmentary Arabic manuscript from Sinai, at the earliest from the ninth century, published by Mrs. M.D. Gibson in 1894, and containing some of the Pauline letters.⁷⁷ F.C. Burkitt drew attention to it in his article in the *Journal of Theological Studies* in 1905.⁷⁸ A. Baumstark also discussed it in 1921 in his study of Syriac lectionaries and concluded like Burkitt that it originated from a Melkite Egyptian parish which used Palestinian Syriac as the liturgical language.⁷⁹ Burkitt describes it as follows:

"As is often the case with manuscripts of the New Testament, some lectionary rubrics are inserted in the text. The reading system is neither the present Byzantine lectionary, nor that of Nestorian, Jacobite or Maronite, but it is closely akin to what we find in the Palestinian lectionary. This manuscript has the insert 'Gal. 3:24 - Read the day of the Nativity and the day of the wax-tapers, τὰ φῶτα.'⁸⁰

The edition of M.D. Gibson really does have an insert, written in red, after verse 3:23: "*taqra' yawm 'al-milād wa-yawm 'al-qir*",⁸¹ meaning exactly what Burkitt claimed, yet without the word τὰ φῶτα, which is Burkitt's own clarification. The

⁷⁷ 'An Arabic Version of the Epistles of St. Paul to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians with part of the Epistle to the Ephesians' (1894). *Studia Sinaitica II*.

⁷⁸ Burkitt, 'The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary' (1905). 91-98.

⁷⁹ Baumstark, 'Nichtevangelische Perikopenordnung' (1921). 135-6.

⁸⁰ Burkitt, *idem*, 96.

⁸¹ *Studia Sinaitica II*. Edition p. 14. *qir* is a loan word from Greek: κηρός, wax.

name *Day of the Wax-Tapers*, used in Egypt, is hardly a coincidence, but rather a reminiscence of the earlier feast embedded in the Christian Feast of Epiphany.

It would be surprising if a feast which played such a major role in the lives of the Jewish people had left no trace in the writings of the early Church.⁸² Few scholars have pointed to this similarity, although there is no serious proven theory.⁸³ Selwyn deserves attention because his observations regarding the connection between the Russian Feast of Epiphany and the Jewish Sukkoth are the first to have been put forward- as far as I know - and they are quite unique.

Selwyn draws attention to the blessing of water performed in St. Petersburg at Epiphany, which is known by the name 'the Lights'. "This name is now generally supposed to be due to the array of torches and tapers accompanying the service, symbolizing as they do 'the spiritual illumination to which our Lord by His baptism in Jordan consecrated water'.⁸⁴ The torches illustrate the meaning of the name of 'the Lights', but do not explain its origin."

He also finds other similarities: lessons from the Old Testament including Isa. 12:3 ("With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation"); the sanctifying *epiphaneia* of the Holy Spirit upon the waters; the drawing of the saving waters from the River Neva for the Jordan reproduces the drawing of the water as from the saving fount of Siloam which was made to flow to Jordan; the use of fir-boughs and a wooden booth reproducing the boughs of thick trees 'cedar, plane and cypress', at Jerusalem; the fence of fir-boughs guarding the wooden platform covered with red cloth reproducing the wooden pulpit erected in the court of the women; the singing of hymns with hallelujah; the blare of trumpets by the army; the presence of "kings" (Isa. 60:3); and this all takes place on January 6. He asks: "Could one, after eighteen centuries, expect a closer resemblance?"⁸⁵ The identity

⁸² J.A. Draper, 'The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7.1-17' (1983), 133.

⁸³ E.C. Selwyn, 'The Feast of Tabernacles, Epiphany, and Baptism' (1912), 225-249. Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (1959), 9-12, 89. Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (1964), 343-346. A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (1966), 53.

⁸⁴ Cf. ch. 6.7.1.

⁸⁵ Selwyn, *idem*, 233-235.

of this ceremony with that of the Feast of Tabernacles is beyond dispute, concludes Selwyn. Furthermore, he is convinced that Basilides, who celebrated the feast of Jesus' baptism on the 6th of January, was a Jew. "He joined those who knew and had attended the Tabernacles at Jerusalem before A.D. 68. He might indeed have witnessed it himself. His life fills the time when the Feast of Tabernacles ceased to be what it was and the Feast of Lights began as such."⁸⁶ Selwyn also pays attention to the Odes of Solomon: "Of the numerous correspondences noticed by Dr Bernard between the Odes of Solomon and known baptismal forms of expression, nearly all have now been shewn to correspond with the ideas underlying or closely related to Is. LX-LXII as interpreting the *Skenopegia* (*Suk-koth*)."⁸⁷

It is yet obvious that Selwyn was too eager and quick to see a simple correspondence with the facts mentioned above. Russian liturgical practice is a derivation of the Byzantine one, and the roots of this practice can be found already in the fourth-fifth century Byzantine Empire. His merit lies, however, in observing this interesting question. As mentioned above, some of the similarities seem really to have their origins in the Jewish feast of *Sukkoth*. But why do we not have any other distinctive features of *Sukkoth* - the date, the booths etc. - included in the Christian Feast of Epiphany? The explanation might be found in the development of the Christian Church in the first centuries.

2.4. Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians

Palestinian Christianity of the earliest days, due to the ethnical and cultural diversity of the inhabitants, was divided into two distinct branches. One was the group of Judaeo-Christians who retained obligatory religious duties and lived together with other Jews who had not accepted Christ, but in isolation from Gentile Christians. This lasted until the final break with the Synagogue, at the latest about 90 C.E. Other Palestinian Christians of pagan stock were in contact with the Christians of Asia, Rome and Egypt.⁸⁸ This distinction influenced the

⁸⁶ *Idem*, 238.

⁸⁷ *Idem*, 246f. See also ch. 5.2.

⁸⁸ B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine* (1971), 5.

formation of liturgical practice in the early Church. The Church began, or continued, its liturgical practice on the Jewish foundation, under the leadership of St. James the Righteous, the brother of the Lord. He was martyred in 62, according to Eusebius.⁸⁹

Before the time of Constantine the centre of the primitive Church in Jerusalem was Mount Zion and the coenaculum where Jesus ate the Last Supper with the disciples.⁹⁰

The pilgrim of Bordeaux who visited Jerusalem in 333 calls it a synagogue because it was officiated by Judaeo-Christians. Other Judaeo-Christian meeting-places, using the customary name of synagogue, were to be found in Nazareth and in Capernaum.⁹¹ Gentile Christians called their meeting-places *domus ecclesiae* or simply *ecclesiae*.

As a consequence of the war of 135 the Jews took refuge especially in the mountains of Galilee, while the Gentiles occupied the coastal towns, with Caesarea as the capital. Aelia Capitolina, the former Jerusalem, was also under their control and the Jews were expelled from the city. The Gentile bishops took the leadership in the former Jewish Church. This situation remained stationary up to the time of Constantine, when conditions in Palestine altered perceptibly.⁹² Thus Greek influence began to spread slowly into the early Church, including its liturgical practice.

Was there any difference between these two ethnic groups in their understanding of faith in the Messiah? We may seek the answer in the earliest Christian writings: in the letters of St. Paul and the Gospels.

From the letters of St. Paul it appears that he had opponents who preached a different kind of gospel from the one St. Paul preached to the churches he had

⁸⁹ *Hist. eccl.* II. 23. The sentence: "Feustus had died and they did not have any ruler", (II.23.2) refers to about that year. Cf. also Josephus, *Antiq.* 20:197-203.

⁹⁰ Acts 2:29; Origen, *Com. Matth.* PG 13, cols 1736-7; Epiphanius, *De mensuris*, PG 43, cols 260-261.

⁹¹ B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision* (1984), 116-132.

⁹² Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* IV:5-6, V:12.

himself established.⁹³ These adversaries desired all those who accepted Jesus as Messiah first to become members of the Jewish people through circumcision and observance of Jewish customs (Gal. 1,2). Paul, however, had undergone a life-changing experience of what it means to believe in Jesus. This experience was so powerful that it forced him to look beyond all the former ordinances with a broader perspective.

"If Jesus was indeed alive again in a supernatural sense, then clearly his death must be understood in the light of that tremendous fact. The traditional interpretation of the Jewish Christians that the death of Jesus was an accident, which had strangely fulfilled Isaiah's curious prophecy, Paul had not accepted before his conversion and after that event he still found it inadequate. --- (for him) the Death and Resurrection of Jesus (is) a divine Mystery of cosmic significance.--- The Death, moreover, had for mankind a supreme soteriological value, and, as such, it was to be exalted and placed in the forefront of the gospel. Hence was derived Paul's emphasis upon the Cross of Christ, and hence also his fierce denunciation of his Judaizing opponents as enemies of the Cross of Christ."⁹⁴

At first Paul's views did not enjoy general support. The leadership of the primitive Church was in the hands of the Jerusalem Jewish Christians, and this primitive Church's view of Jesus was that he was the Messiah, the Lord over death, who indeed died in shame, but who remained undefeated by the Romans. Following his Resurrection he is alive and rules as king over his invisible kingdom - of the true Israel, and receives into his kingdom all Jews and proselytes who believe in him. As a result of his vision Paul had become convinced that not only was Jesus alive, but also that Jesus shameful death was a necessary atoning sacrifice of cosmic dimensions. In the development of its thought Judaism had already perceived that Yahweh was a God who ruled all nations, not just the Jews. However, this was something that the nations had so far failed to realize. It was expected that everyone would submit to the rule of the Jewish Messiah when he came, and, of course, it presupposed that one should first become a Jew.

⁹³ "If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed." Gal. 1:9

⁹⁴ Brandon, S.G.E. *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1957), 71.

Paul's idea that all nations belong to God as they are, was a new thing in Judaism. The apostolic conference of Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-9, Acts 15) did not eliminate the problem from the Church, although it evidently helped to clarify some of the ambiguities regarding the teaching and division of labour between Paul and the other apostles. In Jerusalem and elsewhere, however, there remained adherents of the old practices who did not cease their opposition to Paul (Acts 21:17-30). They were convinced that Paul was a noxious being, since before his conversion he had attempted to destroy the Church by persecuting it. Now after his conversion he had wreaked havoc upon it by introducing apostasy. These opinions continued as long as there continued to be Judaeo-Christians. But St. Paul taught that the reality of death ("I have been crucified with Christ"⁹⁵) eliminates the binding power of the Law. The new life, which the Law cannot confer, has its source in Christ himself. Jesus sonship in relation to God is linked to our sonship in relation to God, and Gal. 4:4 expresses the prerequisite for that link: his becoming a human being just as we are human beings.⁹⁶

Luke, who is regarded as the author of Acts, does not seem to have been acquainted with Paul's teaching in detail, but he knows about the most important controversy - should circumcision be required of Gentiles when they accept the Gospel?⁹⁷

The Jewish Christian church of Jerusalem was honoured as the primary authority of the Christians. St. Paul too had accepted it, though he reminds his readers that even he is an apostle of equal standing with the Twelve, who received his discipleship from Jesus himself.⁹⁸ St. Paul emerges as the victor after the destruction of Jerusalem and the disappearance of the mother church of the Circumcision as an authority. Yet this controversy is reflected in the kerygma of early Christianity, revealing the different approaches there were to the redemption Jesus brings to mankind. This kerygma consists of the proclamation of the focal points of

⁹⁵ Gal. 2:19

⁹⁶ P. Tarazi, *Galatians* (1994), 19-21, 38-47, 88-89, 203. B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision* (1984), 70.

⁹⁷ Acts 15

⁹⁸ Acts 9:19,26-30; 13:2-3; 15:1-6.

historical redemption, wrought by God through Christ, mediated through the Spirit and actualized within the Fellowship, and it constituted the main part of *lex orandi*.

2.5. The Feast of Tabernacles in the Gospels and in the Book of Revelation

What do the Gospels reveal with respect to the Jewish tradition of God's *doxa* descending upon the earth and of other ideas relating to *Sukkoth*? They were written only after the destruction of Jerusalem, though their sources are older. Matthew's Gospel was clearly written for Jewish Christian circles, because it presupposes a knowledge of Jewish customs. Whether it was written in Aramaic in Palestine or in Greek in Egypt, is still unclear. Its purpose was to provide a clear picture of the kind of Judaism that formed the background to Jesus' life and ministry amidst the confusion of different religions, and to show how Jesus related to Judaism. Matthew attempted to show the Jews that the Scriptures are fulfilled in Jesus, who is the Messiah of Israel, and who interprets the Torah with complete authority. As Messiah he is also the Suffering Servant of the Lord described by Isaiah. Jesus was sent to his own people, but after his Resurrection he sends his disciples to win all nations to his allegiance. The concept of redemption, according to Matthew, is faith in the Messiah Jesus, who is sent by God, is the Son of God, and will redeem those who believe in him. The concept of God's son becoming man is not easily comprehensible to the traditional Jews, and it occurs here only secondarily.⁹⁹ But in the Old Testament the Son of *man* who manifested God's *doxa*¹⁰⁰, refers to Jewish thought, familiar from the scene of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke are written from the Gentile Christian viewpoint. They stress the Divinity of Jesus; he is Messiah, but also the Son of God, which means that he has the same power as God, and thus has authority over the demonic powers. These Gospels do not mention the Feast of Tabernacles, but the descent of God's *doxa* is referred to. St. Luke uses the testimony of

⁹⁹ Matt. 3:17; 10:32-33; 11:27; 17:5.

¹⁰⁰ Mark. 16:27 ("The Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father", ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ), 19:28, 24:30 and 25:31 (The Son of man coming in his glory, sits on his glorious throne, ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αἰῶνός); Kissel, *Doxa*, 232-255.

the shepherds who were eye-witnesses of the announcement of Messiah's birth. He writes: "δόξα κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς, the glory of the Lord shone round about them." This is a reference to the experience of God's *doxa* on earth in the birth of the Messiah.¹⁰¹ St. Mark uses the word *doxa* only three times, and only when speaking of God and the Son of man in heavenly glory.¹⁰²

The Gospel of St. John is quite different. It is obviously written by a Jew using Jewish ways of thinking and Semitic-coloured Greek. It was written between 85-110, and was already used in Egypt at the beginning of the second century.¹⁰³ It is a totality, written in a chiasmic pattern, the purpose of which, in the view of its author, is to be organized testimony to redemption.¹⁰⁴ However, the identity of the author is not entirely certain. It is a polemical writing directed against certain groups, especially Jews, though it enjoyed favour in Jewish-Christian circles. It was directed against the world - those who prefer darkness to light, against the synagogue leaders, against the adherents of John the Baptist, against crypto-Christians, against the Jewish Christians who had left the synagogue but whose faith in Jesus was inadequate for one reason or another, against the followers of Peter and the other apostles who did not fully understand Jesus or the teaching function of the Paraclete - with whom the Johannine Christians prayed for unity.¹⁰⁵

The Jewish feasts occupy an important position in St. John's Gospel. *Sukkoth* and *Pesach* are mentioned several times. "After this there was a feast of the Jews,

¹⁰¹ Lk. 2:9. "Doxa- heavenly brightness, rightly regarded as the manifestation of God's presence and power." W. Hendriksen, *NT Comm. of Luke* (1978), 151.

Luke's Gospel contains only a few passages where *doxa* is mentioned. Besides the aforementioned they are 2:32 (Simeon's eulogy: "the light to lighten the Gentiles and the *doxa* of thy people Israel"); 9:31-32 (Moses and Elijah appeared in *doxa*, and the disciples saw the *doxa* of these two Old Testament figures and of Jesus); 24:26 ("Ought not Christ to have suffered and to enter into his *doxa*?") All these passages reflect Jewish sources.

¹⁰² 8:38: "When he (the Son of man) comes in the *doxa* of his Father with the holy angels." 10:37 "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on your right hand, and the other on your left hand, in your *doxa*." 13:26: "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and *doxa*."

¹⁰³ E. Lohse, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments* (1972), 114-115.

¹⁰⁴ "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." Jn 20:31. Ellis, P. *The Genius of John* (1984), passim, esp. 1-18.

¹⁰⁵ Ellis, *idem*, S. Brown, R. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (1979), 59-91, 165-169.

and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." The story continues by telling how Jesus heals a man, who had been sick for thirty-eight years, at the pool of Bethesda.¹⁰⁶ This feast is not more closely identified, but some scholars have come to the conclusion that the feast was Tabernacles, and the healing of the sick man at Bethesda was connected with it.¹⁰⁷ *Skenopegia* occurs openly at the beginning of chapter 7: "Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was at hand." Jesus was asked to go to the feast, but he refused. Afterwards he went up to Jerusalem again. "In the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught." Once again his teaching was a source of controversy.

"On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed: 'If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'. Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."¹⁰⁸

Jesus associates the pouring of water on the last day of the feast in connection with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (7:2,37). Jews were awaiting the joyous advent of the first rains of the season, which would end their meteorological drought as well as their spiritual drought. They longed for the time when eschatological waters envisioned by Ezechiel and Zechariah would gush out of the rock underneath the new temple, herald the age of Messianic prosperity and symbolically fill the wells of salvation. Jesus cries that he himself will graciously provide "rain" which will bring life in the Spirit to all who drink of it, resembling the alternative rabbinical interpretation - 'to draw the Spirit'. He proclaims that these eschatological torrents of living water will flow from him, the new temple, the key-stone, the pierced rock. He is the Lamb who will shepherd them¹⁰⁹ and lead them to the water. "I am the light of the world", he declares also, referring to the

¹⁰⁶ Johs 5:1-9.

¹⁰⁷ "F.M. Braun untersucht den Einfluss der verschiedenen Festtraditionen im Johannesevangelium und vermutet dabei, dass das Fest der Juden' in 5:1 das Wochenfest sei. (Rev. Thom 52/1952. 259f.)" Kretschmar, *Himmelstein und Pfingsten* (1954), 248, Note 177.

¹⁰⁸ Johs 7:37-39.

¹⁰⁹ Johs 10:11.

rite of illuminating the court of the women during the feast. These three images dominate the teaching of Jesus on the Feast of Tabernacles, as is described in chapters 7 to 10.¹¹⁰ A strikingly similar combination of these three themes can be seen in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch).¹¹¹ All these passages stress Jesus' position as the centre and fulfilment of what the feast symbolizes.

The seventh chapter of the Revelation provides imagery much like that of the Feast of Tabernacles¹¹², which has made scholars seek a similarity between the Great Festival and the early Jewish-Christian usage. Draper summarizes research on this subject, and by giving more evidence he comes to the conclusion that *Sukkoth* continued to be observed by some groups of Christians, and they gave it the same kind of eschatological significance as found in Rev. 7.¹¹³ The Revelation uses other Jewish idioms, too, in explaining past and future events, and it confirms that they were familiar to most of the listeners.¹¹⁴ This book was still highly disputed, and though Athanasius enumerates it among the canonical writings in 376 its acceptance was not even then everywhere unequivocal. Much apocryphal and pseudepigraphic material was excluded from the canon, although they later circulated in the early Church on an equal footing with recognized canonical writings. It was difficult to ascertain what was the non-negotiable truth

¹¹⁰ B. Grigsby, "If Any Man Thirsts...: Observation on the Rabbinic Background of John 7:37-39" (1986). 101. Draper, 'The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles' (1983). 133-136. See also C.W.F. Smith, 'Tabernacles in the fourth Gospel and Mark' (1963). 130-148.

¹¹¹ "Write also to our brothers in Babylon a letter of doctrine and a roll of hope so that you might strengthen them also before you go away from us. For the shepherds of Israel have perished, and the lamps which gave light are extinguished, and the fountains from which we used to drink have withheld their streams."—And I answered: "Shepherds and lamps and fountains come from the Law and when we go away, the Law will abide. If you, therefore, look upon the Law and are intent upon wisdom, then the lamp will not be wanting and the shepherd will not give way and the fountain will not dry up." 77:12-13

¹¹² "Multitude from every nation...standing before the throne, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God... (ἡ σωτηρία τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, cf. Hebrew Hoshanna). —And he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence (καὶ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου σκηνώσει ἐπ' αὐτούς.) — For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd (ὅτι τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ ἀνά μέσον τοῦ θρόνου ποιμαίνει αὐτούς), and he will guide them to springs of living water (καὶ ὁδηγήσει αὐτούς ἐπὶ ζῶης πηγᾶς ὕδατων.)..." Rev. 7:10, 15, 17.

¹¹³ J.A. Draper, 'The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles' (1983). 133-141.

¹¹⁴ For instance: The heavenly temple in ch. 4, where "seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne (of God)", 4:5, and the new Jerusalem reflecting the earthly Jerusalem in ch. 21:9-27.

of Christianity before the Muratorian canon of c. 180 became the yardstick of the formation of the canon, and the basis for later developments.

2.6. The Tradition of the Holy Places at Bethlehem and at the River Jordan

Would it be possible that the celebration of Christ's birth and baptism had begun at these places? The birthplaces of the Jewish national leaders, prophets and great rabbis were important, as were the places of their tombs.¹¹⁵ One's birthplace tied a person to one's ancestors, because the tribes and families of Israel possessed certain areas.¹¹⁶ Bethlehem, the place of Christ's birth according to Luke 2:4 and Matt. 2:1, was the area of the tribe of David. The eye-witnesses who transmitted the tradition of the birthplace to the followers of Jesus, were Mary, the mother of Jesus and several shepherds, to whom the angels, according to Luke 2, announced the birth of the Messiah, and who testified in Bethlehem to the truth of the message.

The Mishnah contains the following passage:

"One who sees a place, in which miracles were performed for Israel, says: Blessed is he, who performed miracles for our fathers in this place."¹¹⁷

The events of Luke 2 were surely the highlight of the shepherds' lives and they surely did not keep it from their families and friends. Finally their experience found a place in St. Luke's Gospel. Many were those who visited the cave of the Nativity as well as the sites of Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre, saying the blessing at the holy place and passing this custom to the next generations.¹¹⁸

This custom of saying a blessing at a holy place can be seen in the story of the pilgrim Egeria, from the 380s. For her it is a rule that the visitor and his or her host

¹¹⁵ Matt. 23:29, Luke 11:47. Joachim Jeremias, *Heiligengräber in Jesu Umwelt* (1958). Goldberg, 'Die Heiligkeit des Ortes in der frühen rabbinischen Theologie'. *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge*, Heft 4/1976.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Josh. 13:6-19:51. "The proof of legitimate ancestry had become the very foundation of the community of the people returned from exile. Gens Davidica remained the foremost lay family in post-exilic Judaism and the messianic hope rested in this royal family." Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus* (1969). 275-6.

¹¹⁷ *Mishnah* (1988). Berakhot 9:1. Transl. Tzvee Zahavy and Alan J. Avery-Peck.

¹¹⁸ Kretschmar, *Festkalender und Memorialstätten* (1987), 71-73. R. M. Payne, *Christian Worship in Jerusalem in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries* (1981), 34-36. St. Justin the Martyr was shown the cave c. 130-150. *Dial.* 70, 78. FC, vol. 6. T.B. Falls: 'Introduction' (1948): 139, Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (1971). 10, note 3.

say a prayer at the holy place before engaging in any other activities.¹¹⁹ This custom surely illustrates the way in which Jewish Christians related to the holy places connected with the life of Jesus.¹²⁰

The first authorized leader of the Christian community in Jerusalem, James, the brother or cousin of Jesus, was of Davidic stock and enjoyed good relations with the Pharisaic party, which was divided over the matter of Jesus. James was martyred just before the disaster that befell Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Eusebius writes that the Emperor Vespasian, who destroyed Jerusalem, ordered all the descendants of David to be sought out so that no one of royal descent would remain alive. After him his son Domitian (81-96) felt some suspicion towards Christians, and the descendants of David in particular were an eye-sore to him. The Christians were required to remain an insignificant group in the empire.¹²¹ Thus it was impossible in Davidic Bethlehem to initiate any tradition commemorating Jesus' birth.

After suppressing the Bar Kokhba revolt in 132 the Emperor Hadrian build a new Roman city named Aelia Capitolina upon the ruins of Jerusalem. It was forbidden for Jews and Jewish Christians too to enter Jerusalem and its vicinity. Yet we can find hints that this prohibition was not an absolute one.¹²² Gentile bishops assumed leadership in the Jerusalem Church from around 135 C.E. In Bethlehem a grove consecrated to Adonis (Tammuz) grew above the traditional grotto of the Nativity.¹²³ This special pagan place helped the Christians to remember the correct location of the sacred cave. The Jews were not accustomed to building

¹¹⁹ E.g. *Itin. Eger.* 1:2, 4:8, 10:7, 14:1, 19:16.

¹²⁰ It has been preserved until our day by Russian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Mihailovskij, *Sputnik* (1886), 238ff. S. Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem* (1914), e.g. 208ff. A booklet published in 1994 by the Russian Orthodox Church gives the troparia and other prayers which are to be said by the pilgrims at the different holy places in the Holy Land.

¹²¹ *Hist. eccl.* II: 23: 3-19; III: 11, 12, 17, 19. So also Dio Cassius, Hegesippus, Brettius. See *New Eusebius*, p. 8-10.

¹²² Origen, *In librum Jesu Nave* XVII.1; Jerome, *Com. in Soph.* 1.15ff. ; *Inn. Burdig.* 22. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (1969), 285.

¹²³ Jerome, *Epist.* 58,3; Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 31,3.

anything on the holy places, although they had many an opportunity to do so.¹²⁴

A baptismal place at one side, if that, is all that has been found from before the time of Constantine. This is the case at Nazareth, at Jacob's well in Samaria and possibly at Bethlehem.¹²⁵ The building programme was the concern of the rulers, and it was the Emperor Constantine the Great who gave permission for the building of the Church of the Nativity, and it too had a basin for baptisms.¹²⁶ Its site was one of the oldest and most documented holy places of Christianity, as is also the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark we read that John the Baptist preached in the wilderness of Judea and baptized in the River Jordan.¹²⁷ St. Luke mentions him going into all the region about the Jordan preaching a baptism of repentance.¹²⁸ Only the evangelist John places his baptizing activities in two certain geographical locations: at Aenon near Salim¹²⁹ and Bethany¹³⁰. Aenon is located in the northern part of the Jordan valley, near the town of Scythopolis or Beth-Shean. It does not lie on the bank of the Jordan, but is a place of several springs in the Jordan valley. Egeria also visited Aenon and wrote:

"He led us along a well-kept valley to a very neat apple-orchard, and there in the middle of it he showed us a good clean spring of water

¹²⁴ This is proven by Bagatti's investigations at Nazareth. B. Bagatti, *Gli scavi di Nazaret* (1967), vol. I: *Dalle origini al secolo XII*. English translation: Eugene Hoade, *Excavations in Nazareth* (1969). Ignazio Mancini, *Archaeological Discoveries* (1970), 155.

¹²⁵ In 333 the pilgrim from Bordeaux found only "a bath", without the church, at Jacob's well in Samaria. "Ubi sunt arbores platani, quas plantavit Iacob, et balneus, qui de eo puteo lauatur." Itin. Burdig. 588. Was there a baptismal place at Bethlehem before Constantine, is obscure. The pilgrim from Bordeaux introduces even here only "a bath" (...unde aqua leuatur, et balneum a tergo, ubi infantes lauantur). Itin. Burdig. 594. Vincent & Abel, *Bethlehem. Le Sanctuaire de la Nativité* (1914), 92-94. B. Bagatti (1984): "A basin within a small grotto which was in Constantinian period outside the actual edifice, was known as the bath of Jesus." *The Church from the Circumcision*, 245.

¹²⁶ Justin the Martyr, *Dial.* 78; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1,51; Jerome, *Ep.* 46,11; 58,3; W. Foerster, 'Bemerkungen und Fragen zur Stätte der Geburt Jesu' (1934), 1-7. J. Michl, 'Die Geburtsgrötte zu Bethlehem' (1956), 115-119; S. Mittmann, 'Bethlehem' (1980) in *TRE* Bd. 5, 760.

¹²⁷ *Mat.* 3:1,6; *Mark* 1:4,5.

¹²⁸ *Lk.* 3:3.

¹²⁹ *Jn.* 3:23.

¹³⁰ *Jn.* 1:28.

which flowed in a single stream. There was a kind of pool in front of the spring at which it appears holy John the Baptist administered baptism. 'This garden,' said the holy presbyter, 'is still known in Greek as *cepos tu agiu lohanni*, or in your language, Latin, St. John's garden.' A great many brothers, holy monks from different parts travel here to wash at this place. So once more we had a prayer and a reading at this spring as we did in the other places. We said a suitable psalm, and did everything which was usual when arriving at a holy place. The holy presbyter also told us that nowadays at Easter the candidates who are to be baptized in the village, in the church called Opu Melchisedech, receive their actual baptism in the spring itself. Then, directly afterwards, they go off by torchlight singing psalms and antiphons, and accompanied by the clergy and monks. In this way they are taken after their baptism from the spring to the church of Melchizedek.¹³¹

According to tradition, Melchizedek offered Abraham bread and wine at Salem. From Egeria's writings we can conclude that this was the main thing commemorated in this area and Aenon as the place of baptism seemed to have less significance. Egeria does not mention, either here or anywhere else, anything of the memorial church of Christ's baptism, nor does Eusebius, who writes that the Emperor Constantine built many churches in the Holy Land. Yet Egeria mentions that there were also pilgrims to this place and they immersed themselves in the holy spring. In the mind of the people it had become clear that the water of this place was holy because of the baptism of Jesus and it also brought blessing to those who were immersed in it as Jesus was.

The other place of baptism given by St. John - Bethany - is according to Origen, who had personal knowledge of Palestine, to be read Bethabara. He states that Bethabara lies on the slopes of the Jordan.¹³² The pilgrim from Bordeaux gives the following information concerning the place of baptism:

"Five miles from there (= the Dead Sea) in the Jordan is the place where the Lord was baptized by John, and above the far bank at the

¹³¹ Itin. Egeriae 15:2-5. Transl. by J. Wilkinson. *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 111.

¹³² "Ἐπίσθημεν δὲ μὴ δεῖν Βηθανία ἀναγνώσκειν, ἀλλὰ Βηθαβάρᾳ, ... Δείκνυσθαι δὲ λέγουσι παρὰ τῆ ὄχθη τοῦ Ἰορδάνου τὰ Βηθαβάρᾳ, ἐνθαῖστροῦσι τὸν Ἰωάννην βεβαπτικέναι." *Com. in Evang. Joan VI.24*. PG 14, col. 269. *Paulys Realencyclopädie*, vol. 5, informs us of Bethabara that tradition has tried to find it near Jericho, but without any certain result. (Benzinger, 'Bethany', 361-362)

same place is the hillock from which Elijah was taken up to heaven.¹³³

Wilkinson makes a comment that the pilgrim most probably approached from the west bank. But the hillock of Elijah's ascension must be on the other side. The site is probably Jebel Mar Elyas, beside Wadi el Kharrar, a mile and half to the east of the place of baptism. This might be the same place as Origen is referring to. We have no knowledge of any church or memorial at this place of baptism.

Before the time of Constantine the Great we do not know of any memorials, feasts or processions linked to any dates at Bethlehem nor at Aenon. Thus we cannot find the historical origins of the feast of Epiphany directly in these places, but the seeds from which it once sprouted are to be found in the message of the Gospels and more specifically in the way the Jewish Christians interpreted the Gospel passages in the light of the Old Testament and their midrashic tradition. It seems that the places are not directly connected with the feast of Epiphany, but something of the content of the early Epiphany can be traced there.

2.7. The Feasts of the First Jewish Christians

In theory the first Christians had a choice between three different options with regard to the Jewish feasts. They could decide first that these feasts were no longer relevant in the Messianic era,¹³⁴ secondly, that they may be celebrated but they have to express the Christian view that the eschatological era is already here, and thirdly, that it is possible for the old Jewish festal tradition to be totally renewed.

Yet it seems that the very first Christians celebrated all the feasts according to the Jewish tradition.¹³⁵ The activities of St. Paul show that he did not cut his ties to

¹³³ Itin. Burdig. 598. Transl. by J. Wilkinson. *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 161.

¹³⁴ Cf. Col. 2:16: "Therefore let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath."

¹³⁵ "The early Christians were in a tradition of a very elaborate and complicated liturgical calendar. Of all parts of the liturgy the feasts are perhaps the most enduring; it is practically impossible to change the date and form of old festivals, the creation of a new religious festival is almost unthinkable." Goudeover, *Biblical Calendars*, 151.

"The early Christians in the first three centuries of the present era, kept the festivals according to the same (=Jewish) calendar." S. Zeitlin, 'Some Stages of the Jewish Calendar' (1938), 191.

the Jewish feasts¹³⁶, but brought a new Christian approach to them. Thus the second category is most probable, at least with reference to the great pilgrimage feasts. Christians did not change the festivals, but they continued their themes into new perspectives. Clear testimony to the Christian observance of a Jewish feast appears only in the second century, and it was a gradual modification of the Jewish Passover.¹³⁷

How can we characterize a Jewish-based, but Christianized feast? A. Schmemmann stated that participation in the old cult when the new one was already present formed the liturgical dualism of the first Christians. The novelty of the new cult - baptism, eucharist - did not come from non-Hebrew sources. It is Hebrew both in form and spirit. At the centre stands faith in the long-awaited and now realized coming of the Messiah. The feasts were not special historical commemorations nor were they the casting of the dogmatic significance of these events into special liturgical forms. The Church preserved the feasts of the old Israel because she preserved the theology of time of which they were the expression. The Jewish feasts were developed over a period of time to catch new dimensions of the faith, and Christians continued the same developments in the light of the Messiah who has come.¹³⁸ The content of Paschal and Pentecostal celebrations was immediately developed to express the faith that the Messiah has already come, but the dates of the feasts were not moved. The rites and the liturgy of the feasts did not change, except for the slaughtering of the Paschal lamb, which was not performed. There was no reason to change the Feast of Tabernacles, so we may suppose that in its externals it continued as it was.

¹³⁶ Acts 20:16; 1 Cor.5:7-8

¹³⁷ A. Strobel, *Ursprung und Geschichte* (1977), 37-46.

¹³⁸ A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (1966), 47, 68. G. Kretschmar, 'Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden' (1990), 39. Cf. also T. Talley, 'Historische Elemente zur Formulierung einer christlichen 'Festkunde'' (1981), 110-121.

The Quartodeciman Pascha¹³⁹ is at present commonly accepted to be older than the Sunday Pascha.¹⁴⁰ It is directly derived from Jewish Paschal practices. Jesus is designated the Lamb of God and, according to the Gospel of St. John, he dies at the same moment as the Paschal lambs were slaughtered.¹⁴¹ The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem took no part in the slaughtering, but fasted¹⁴² until midnight and kept vigil past the midnight hour, which terminated the Jewish Passover, until cockcrow and then it was concluded with "my agape and my remembrance", to use the expression found in the *Epistula Apostolorum*.¹⁴³ The Sunday Pascha is also a reduction from the Jewish one, and the same readings from the Old Testament were continued there, too,¹⁴⁴ thus indicating that the rival dates for the early Christian Pascha did not bear witness to any difference in content.

Talley thinks that in the *Epistula Apostolorum* some remnants can be found which might refer to the rejection of the old festivals. Christ teaches the apostles:

15. (Ethiopian) "And you therefore celebrate the remembrance of my death, i.e. the passover; then will one of you who stands beside me be thrown into prison for my name's sake, and he will be very grieved and sorrowful, for while you celebrate the passover he who is in custody did not celebrate it with you. And I will send my power in the form of my angel, and the door of the prison will open, and he will come out and come to you to watch with you and to rest. And when you complete my Agape and my remembrance at the crowing of the cock, he will again be taken and thrown in prison for a testimony, until he comes out to preach, as I have commanded you."

And we said to him, "O Lord, have you then not completed the drinking of the passover? Must we, then, do it again?" And he said to us, "Yes, until I come from the Father with my wounds."

(Coptic) "And you remember my death. If now the passover takes place, then will one of you be thrown into prison for my name's

¹³⁹ i. e. Fourteenth of Nisan according to the Jewish calendar.

¹⁴⁰ P. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins* (1992), 195-6.

¹⁴¹ John 19:13-31. T. M. Finn, 'Pasch. Paschal controversy' (1990), 695-6.

¹⁴² Like the Jews, too, because the *Mishnah* required a fast from all food from the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that preceded the sacrifice of lambs for Passover. *Talm. Bab. Pesah* 99b.

¹⁴³ See closer p. 67L.

¹⁴⁴ A. Rablitz, *Die alttestamentlichen Lektionen der griechischen Kirche* (1916), 71-74.

sake,—¹⁴⁵ And we said to him, "O Lord, is it perhaps necessary again that we take the cup and drink?" He said to us, "Yes, it is necessary until the day when I come with those who were killed for my sake."¹⁴⁶

Talley sees here a reflection of the author's awareness of a dispute over the necessity for the Christian celebration of the Jewish Passover.¹⁴⁷ The passage tells moreover that the Apostles are grieved when they are not able to celebrate the Passover together.¹⁴⁸ They strive to do so, which indicates that the author of the *Epistula Apostolorum* accepted it as a meaningful celebration. The matter is not disputed there. At cockcrow they celebrate the Eucharist with the cup for the remembrance of Christ's death, as is related in the Gospel of Matthew 26:26-29, and the Agape. The question the Apostles put concerns the validity of this custom. I would consider this passage as strengthening the celebration of the eucharist, proclaiming in this way the Lord's death. Thus I do not see any evidence for Talley's thesis and thus for the whole possibility of rejecting the Jewish feasts.

The first stage of the Christian Pascha was not celebrated in line with the ideas of St. Paul, who was a controversial person among the Jewish-Christians, especially in Jerusalem, but in line with the teaching of the other Apostles, who were the authorities of the Jerusalem *ecclesia*. Their view of Jesus' death was not so triumphal as was St. Paul's. The Lord's Day, Sunday, was the commemoration of Christ's Resurrection, and it was celebrated every week. Pascha was seen at first as a commemoration of Christ's passion. This is also seen in the Paschal sermon of Melito of Sardis. The main subject he repeatedly explains is the slaughtering of the Paschal lamb in Egypt, which brought life to the chosen people, and the death of Christ, which brought life to the *ecclesia*. The Resurrection is naturally mentioned, and the sermon ends with praise in order to show the meaning of all this

¹⁴⁵ The continuation is about the same as above.

¹⁴⁶ *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. one, 188-227.

¹⁴⁷ Talley, *Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 5-7.

¹⁴⁸ It is certain that this is the Quartodeciman Pascha, states B. Lolise (1953) in 'Das Passafeier der Quartodezimaner', P. 32. Anm. 3. Hornshuch agrees (1965): *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum*, 101.

suffering, but it does not occupy a central place in the sermon. The main theme here is the saving sufferings of Christ.¹⁴⁹ Only when the Quartodeciman Pascha changed to Sunday Pascha there was an opportunity for universal acceptance of St. Paul's view of the totality of Christ's suffering and Resurrection.

After the Bar Kokhba rebellion it was forbidden for Jews to enter Jerusalem, now Aelia Capitolina, and Gentile bishops continued to lead the Christian *ecclesia* there. The controversies over the date of Pascha began only after bishops in Jerusalem were no longer "of the circumcision". Whether or not the establishment of the Sunday Pascha was the work of these Greek bishops, we do not exactly know, but it seems clear that such a Pascha was established in Palestine and in Alexandria well before the Paschal controversy of 190 C.E.¹⁵⁰

The Jewish Christians celebrated Pentekoste as a direct continuation of its old themes: the giving of the law and the renewal of the covenant. They kept the old memory of the feast as a type of the new redemption, the Ascension of Christ and the establishment of the Church. This is seen in the old pericope-lists, where Ex. 19, Jer. 31, Isa. 48 and perhaps also Ezek. 1 come from the old Jewish tradition.¹⁵¹ The psalm of Habakkuk is one of the Jewish *Shabuoth* pericopes. It is an early Israelite poem about the theophany of Yahweh, and its occurrence in connection with *Shabuoth* is understandable because it describes God descending from a mountain:

"God came (LXX: shall come) from Teman and the Holy One from (LXX adds: the dark shady) Mount Paran. His excellence covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. His brightness was (LXX: shall be) like the light, rays flashed from his hand (LXX: there were horns in his hands)."¹⁵²

The psalm had eschatological significance both in late Judaism and in early Christianity. Pentecost was a mystery feast which had hardly any connection

¹⁴⁹ By pointing to Romans 6 Talley suggests that the quartodeciman Pascha celebrated the entire work of redemption: the Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection and glorification, all focused upon the Cross as the locus of Christ's triumph. *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 6. I think this is overstated for the earliest years.

¹⁵⁰ A. Szeibel, *Ursprung und Geschichte des frühchristlichen Osterkalenders* (1977), 377.

¹⁵¹ Kerschmar, 'Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten' (1955), 229-231.

¹⁵² Hab. 3:3-4.

with historical events. The tongues and pouring out of the Holy Spirit also have their roots in the Sinai tradition. The connection between the celebration of Pentecost in the Christian *ecclesiae* - as they were from the second century onwards - and the Jewish *Shabuoth*, was probably the Pentecost of the early Palestinian Church.¹⁵³ The name Pentecost did not refer only to the feast on the 50th day, but also to the whole period of 50 days, which very early on became the joyous time of "Great Sunday" to the Christian Church.

After the fall of Jerusalem there were only a few synagogue rites left from the sacrificial offerings of the temple, but the themes of dedication and thanksgiving to God were the same at the great feasts.¹⁵⁴

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, and *Rosh Hashanah*, the New Year feast, are the festivals, in addition to *Sukkoth*, of which we should like to find documentary evidence of its continuity or discontinuity under new conditions. *Yom Kippur* has obviously ceased because Jesus was the unique sacrifice and after his death there is no need for any further sacrifices. The theme of Atonement at *Yom Kippur* is still preserved in Pascha. The special theme of *Rosh Hashanah* was the Creation, and it could have continued in areas where the Jewish calendar was in use.

But what evidence do we have to prove the continuation of the Feast of Tabernacles among the first Christians? As we have seen, the Gospel of John and the Revelation mention *Sukkoth* in a way that also alludes to its significance in the primitive Jewish Christian Church. Verses 19-29 of Psalm 118 have a prominent place in the Jewish feast of *Sukkoth*, as we have seen. For a Christian the same verses speak of the festival joy which the Messiah has brought with his *epiphaneia*.¹⁵⁵ Yet the hallelujah psalms sung at *Sukkoth* do not occur at Epiphany in the

¹⁵³ Kretschmar, *idem*, 235-240.

¹⁵⁴ So also *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah* 9: "Rabbis Pinechas, Levi and Jonathan quoted Rabbi Menachem of Galia: 'In the time to come (the Messianic age) all sacrificial offerings will be discontinued, except for the thanksgiving offering (todah). All prayers will be discontinued, except for the prayers of thanksgiving.'" M. Margulies, *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah* (1953-1960).

¹⁵⁵ Ps. 118:27 in the LXX: θεός Κύριος, καὶ ἐπέφανεν ἡμῖν· αὐστήσαθε ἑορτὴν ἐν τοῖς πυκάζουσι.
"God is the Lord and he has shone upon us; celebrate the feast with thick branches."

earliest Christian lectionaries. This might have reference to the break with the Synagogue: it was not wise to celebrate in the same way as the "faithless" do. Daniélou thinks that the date 5-6 January for the feast of Epiphany has perhaps come about by transferring the Jewish *Sukkoth* from the beginning of the Jewish year in September to the beginning of the Roman year in January.¹⁵⁶ If we consider that the date of the early Feast of Epiphany has arisen from the sources mentioned in chapter 1.4., this kind of transfer would very well have confirmed the new date. Some evidence we might find in St. Athanasios' canons, handled in ch. 4.6.

Since among the Jews *Sukkoth* was strongly eschatological and connected with the coming of the Messiah, its themes continued in Christian circles as a fulfilment of that expectation. The same themes - the descent of God's *doxa* and the living water which brings salvation - remained, as did some liturgical practices, such as the torches (τὰ φῶτα), some water-rites and the reading, for instance, of Isa.12. The date of this festival was also free to change, like Pascha and Pentecost. It seems that from these elements and the new date arise the third great feast of Christianity - the Epiphany.

The booths were abandoned to the Jewish celebrations, though they remained in allegorical form in Christianity, too. St. Paul uses the picture of booths speaking of mortal human bodies in 2 Cor.5:1-5. This is a common idiom in Hellenistic literature, too¹⁵⁷, and we cannot draw any further conclusions regarding the relation between the New Testament σκηνή and *Sukkoth*.

Thus all the Jewish feasts had passed through some degree of change over a period of time in Christian use. When we come to the fourth century the three main feasts have survived in reduced forms. A. Baumstark has characterized the feasts by saying that the feasts of primitive Christianity were instituted to give expression to great religious ideas rather than being historical commemorations of episodes in sacred history.¹⁵⁸ This is obvious during the martyr time. The triumph of Constantine meant the arrival of the Kingdom of God on earth, and with this

¹⁵⁶ *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (1964). 345.

¹⁵⁷ See closer p. 184f.

¹⁵⁸ A. Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy* (1958). 157.

idea came first an emphasis on the tangible, on historical events connected with redemption.¹⁵⁹ This development found continuation in the era of the ecumenical synods, which stressed the historicity of Jesus.

2.8. The Fall of Jerusalem and its Consequences

The Jerusalem temple with its traditions and rites was to its Christian inhabitants the central place of faith, until the disaster of the year 70 destroyed it suddenly and finally. The Jewish war, which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem, posed a similar total dilemma to the Judean Jewish Christian Church as it did to traditional Judaism.

Eusebius mentions Jewish Christians having fled to Pella in north-east Transjordan, having been warned beforehand of the coming destruction, and so does Epiphanius, who was dependent upon him.¹⁶⁰ It seems, however, rather improbable that they would all have left in good time and left their place of residence years before the destruction of Jerusalem. After the war began there was a new situation, for the Roman army had advanced from the north towards the south at the same time occupying the land, and there was nothing to be gained by entering enemy-occupied territory. East of the Jordan Roman troops were similarly spread out. The only possible direction of escape for multitudes fleeing from Jerusalem just before its conquest was to the south, the Negeb desert and Egypt beyond. Throughout their history the Jews had fled there from armies.¹⁶¹ Joachim Jeremias presents evidence from the Talmud of commercial relations between Egypt and Jerusalem.¹⁶² People from Jerusalem may have come to Pella, as to several other

¹⁵⁹ R. M. Payne, *Christian Worship in Jerusalem* (1981), 45-46.

¹⁶⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* IV:6:5. Epiphanius, *De mensuris et ponderibus* 15. Josephus also writes about such a flight. *Antiq.* 20:11,1. *Jew. War* 4:6,3; 7,3.

¹⁶¹ "It is reasonable to suppose that to the ancient land of Nile, whither the patriarchs had gone in times of want, to which Israel had turned for succour from Assyrian terror, where the broken remnants of Judah, dragging with them the protesting Jeremiah, had found shelter from Babylonian vengeance, where multitudes of Jews under the patronage of the Ptolemies had settled and prospered and whither after the destruction of Jerusalem, as Josephus tells us (*Wars* VII.10.1), even many of the fierce Sicarii fled for refuge." Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1957), 178. J. Gunther (1973) finds it probable that the Jerusalem refugees stayed first in the Judean wilderness, but later Pella was the gathering place of the 'disciples' and leaders from the area over which James had effectively exercised authority. *The Fate of the Jerusalem Church*, 81-94.

¹⁶² *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (1969), 70.

Diaspora towns, both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem, when war was replaced by peace and travelling was again safe, or after the revolt of 132, when the Jews were expelled from Jerusalem.

When the influential mother-church of Jerusalem was dispersed, the leadership of the Christian world shifted to the Hellenized cities - Antioch in Syria and Alexandria in Egypt. After the year 70 new people arrived in Alexandria, Jerusalem Jews accustomed to holding fast to their traditions, both those of the old faith and adherents of Christianity.

"The overthrow of their nation and the destruction of their sacred city with its Temple, must have been a most grievous blow to their national faith and pride. ---If they remain convinced of the essentiality of Judaism and continued to regard Jesus primarily as the Messiah, the inescapable logic of fact demanded that they should find some explanation for the overthrow of their nation by the heathen which would square with their faith. Then in turn the failure of their own people to accept the person and mission of Jesus raised more acutely than ever the question of the admittance into the Church of those Gentiles who were willing to accept Jesus as their Lord. ---The rehabilitation of Paul in the Gentile churches and the challenge which that fact implied to the essentially nationalistic factor in Jewish Christianity had in time also to be faced."¹⁶³

Pauline thought had gained the upper hand in the churches of Asia founded by St. Paul. Luke had written his Gospel and Acts from the perspective of Antioch¹⁶⁴, where Paul's teaching had received a generally favourable response. Scholars hold that the viewpoint of Jewish Christians is preserved in Matthew's Gospel. It too is generally thought to have originated in Antioch. It is not, however, likely that Luke's writings and Matthew's Gospel originated in the same circles of early Christian tradition, because there are differences in important passages. For example, the fate of Judas Iscariot: In Matt. he hanged himself, while in Acts he fell over and his belly split open. Alexandria, the city with the second largest

¹⁶³ Braden, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1957), 226.

¹⁶⁴ Acts 11:19,22,25-27, 14:21, 15:22,30,35, 18:22

Jewish population in the ancient world provides a natural background to the origin of Matthew's Gospel.¹⁶⁵ Using this Gospel, again in Alexandria, attempts were made to produce Christian teaching uniform with the rest of the Christian world. An important part of this teaching was the full right of non-Jews to inherit without being circumcised the salvation brought by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. It is in this mental atmosphere and in response to such needs that Brandon believes that the Gospel of Matthew was produced.¹⁶⁶ Thus the apostolic Church standardized the teaching of salvation both in Antioch and in Alexandria.

Egyptian, and especially Alexandrian, Jewry formed an influential group in all Egyptian affairs. The traditional Jewish Christians from Jerusalem were authorities in their new homeland, and the memories of the golden old days surely made the people follow them in their religious life. The feasts were celebrated with their former splendour. The Christian *Sukkoth* traditions with the descent of God's *doxa* in the Messiah Jesus and the living water which brings salvation were now strengthened in Egypt, too. Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians harmonized their views in the matter of redemption. Yet it was not possible for traditional Jews, even if converted to Christianity, to accept forms of worship from the Hellenistic cultural inheritance in order to express their faith. What was presented in Christian liturgical life had to be based on Jewish tradition, the same tradition in which Jesus lived.

The Alexandrian Jewish Christian church did not have a strong leader who would make his mark in history. The *Epistula Apostolorum* still speaks for the endeavours of this Church. I shall return to the Egyptian question in chapter 3.3.

¹⁶⁵ Carsten Peter Thiede has recently (1995) proposed the hypothesis that the papyrus Magdalen Greek 17, found in Egypt, is the oldest extant papyrus of the Gospel of Matthew, and can be dated to the late first century, some time after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. If it were possible to prove this, it would support my impression of the course of events. 'Papyrus Magdalen Greek 17 (Gregory-Aland P64). A Reappraisal'. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*. Band 105. 13-20.

¹⁶⁶ Brandon, *idem*. 226. R.E. Witt agrees: 'The Flight to Egypt' (1972). 92-93.

2.9. Conclusions

Jewish feasts had undergone changes in their nature over the centuries. The three main Jewish feasts became in the long run celebrations of a more and more eschatological nature, focusing on present, imminent redemption, not on past history. The themes of the Jewish *Sukkoth* were at the latest stage celebrations of God's glory descending upon the earth, the torches and palm branches symbolizing it, and the living water flowing from the centre of the earth.

The three ancient Jewish pilgrimage festivals gained a new Christian approach as the fulfilment of the eschatological time. The Quartodeciman *Pascha* was the commemoration of Christ's saving sufferings, the new *Pentecost* was the celebration of the giving of the new law, which is now written in the hearts of believers by the outpouring of the Spirit.

The Gospel of John connects *the Feast of Tabernacles* with Jesus' existence as the light of the world and the fountain of living water. It might reflect the way the early Jewish Christian Church celebrated *Sukkoth*, which was now seen as the festival of the true descent of Yahweh's *kabod*, the appearance of the true light and the fountain of living waters.

The tradition of saying a prayer at the holy place is a Jewish custom, and it was observed by pilgrims. Any other celebrations on the sites of Christ's birth (Bethlehem) and baptism (the River Jordan) are not traced before the time of Constantine. This shows that the celebration of Christ's historical birth or baptism did not receive the initial impulse at those places, but they became attached to them when the feasts were developed into historical commemorations. The first celebration of the Incarnation sprang from a totally different viewpoint, great religious ideas, not historicity.

The concept of redemption was slightly different in Jerusalem from in the Pauline congregations. The burning question was whether the Gentiles needed first to become Jews in order to gain salvation. St. Paul taught that God's Son descended to earth and gave *all* people the opportunity of redemption without submitting

themselves to the law. This created a need to celebrate the redemptive Incarnation.

Thus the celebration of Christ's Incarnation, if there was such in the time of the martyrs, must have been a celebration of a religious idea, not a celebration of an event in history - the birth of the Messiah.

The fall of Jerusalem brought to an end the celebrations in the Jerusalem Temple, and liturgical life had to be maintained in synagogues or *domus ecclesiae*. The Jerusalem inheritance was perhaps transferred to Pella, but inevitably to Egypt too, where it influenced and strengthened the movement which later on developed into Catholicism, before the time of the great Hellenistic teachers.

3. THE CONCEPT OF FEASTS IN DIASPORA JUDAISM AND JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

3.1. Feasts of the Diaspora Jews

The Jewish cult was concentrated in Jerusalem, where the hereditary priesthood performed the regulated sacrifices, both communal and individual, based on the Old Testament legislation. Other religious duties, such as pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the great festivals, and tithes, were also bound to the Jerusalem temple. In the 5th century B.C. there was a Jewish temple on the island of Elephantine in Upper Egypt, where Jewish soldiers performed their religious duties, even sacrifices, but there is no evidence of the existence of this temple at the beginning of our era, nor of any other Jewish temples anywhere but in Jerusalem.

The meeting-place for Diaspora Jews was the synagogue, and its purpose was to provide a place for them to gather together to pray to Yahweh and to maintain Jewish traditions and teachings. The celebration of the festivals was important. Absence from Jerusalem was no excuse for neglecting them. Though we have no precise evidence of liturgical life in the Diaspora in the beginning of our era, it seems that the synagogues served as a replacement for the lost temple and acquired some of its functions.¹ The wall-paintings at the Dura Europos synagogue dating from before 256 C.E. demonstrate how important a place the feasts had in the pictorial scheme of the synagogue. It does not seem pure accident, writes C. Hopkins, the discover of Dura Synagogue, that the great celebrations of the Jews should find a place in the synagogue, although it is perhaps accidental that the panels recording them were preserved: the Exodus from Egypt recalling the Passover; the scene of Esther, the days of *Purim*; the tents of the desert, the Feast of Tabernacles; and the return to Jerusalem with the cleansing of the Temple, the *Hanukkah*. *Yom Kippur* is perhaps less clear, as well as the end and the beginning of the year, but surely the purification and sacrifice at the beginning of each month bring it to mind. The top and bottom painted panels are linked by the history and visions described in the Jewish laws. The middle panel with Torah, Tabernacle, Ark and Temple refers, according to J. Gutmann, to certain rites and

¹ A.T. Kraebel, 'The Diaspora Synagogue: Archeological and Epigraphic Evidence since Sukenik' (1995), 120-121.

observances that were part of synagogue life.² An interesting scene is that of Moses holding his staff in the pool formed by the water gushing from the rock. Twelve streams of water issue from the spring and they wind their way into twelve tents. Behind the pool is the Tabernacle with a graceful *Menorah* in front of it. This scene reveals all the elements already found in the earlier scriptural description of the Feast of Tabernacles, telling of the Jews' burning hope for the future.³

At the Synagogue celebrations of the Feast of Tabernacles the *sukkah* and the *lulab* remained, and the season was distinguished by the liturgy. The entire "hallel" (Ps. 113-118) was recited, not only on the first and last days of the feast, but also on the intervening days. Hymns containing allusions to the festival were introduced into both the morning and evening prayers. After the destruction of the Temple, Johanan ben Zakkai ordained that wherever Jews celebrate *Sukkoth*, the *arba'ah minim*⁴ should be taken in the hand for seven days in commemoration of the Temple. They were to be held in the hand while "hallel" is chanted.⁵ Every day selections from the Torah were read: Lev. 22:26-23:44 (Biblical law for *Sukkoth* and Num. 29:12-34 (the sacrificial prescription). From *Haftarah*⁶ is read Zech. 14:1-21 (eschatological *Sukkoth*); 1.Kgs 8:2-21 (the dedication of Solomon's temple) and Ezek. 38:18-39:16 (to refer to the time prophesied by Zech. 14). On the first seven days, except on the Sabbath, there was a procession, the worshippers, *lulab* in hand, marching around the reading-desk and reciting hymns with the refrain "Hoshanna" as a reminder of the processions around the altar in Temple times.⁷

Thus Diaspora Jews could experience in its main outlines the same festal celebra-

² Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos* (1979), 175-6. Gutmann, ed. (1973) *Dura-Europos Synagogue*, 149.

³ Hopkins, *idem*. 158, 161.

⁴ four species of plant

⁵ Suk. 46a

⁶ Lessons from Prophets and other writings outside the Torah.

⁷ Friedmann, 'Tabernacles, Feast of' (1905). Jacobs, 'Sukkot' (1972), 499-501.

tion as could the people of Jerusalem. The content of the feast was present in the Scripture readings, and only some rites that had grown up around them were lacking. But these things do not influence the understanding of the message of the festival.

3.2. The Consequences of the Break with the Synagogue

It seems that those Jews and proselytes who accepted Jesus as Messiah in the first decades continued to belong to their synagogues, trying to convince the others too of the fulfilment of the Messianic age. The separation from the synagogue (*habdalah*) took place gradually, culminating in c. 90 C.E. in the addition of the curse on *Nosrim* (Nazarenes) and *minim* (heretics) to the 12th prayer of the *Shmoneh 'esreh*, the Eighteen Benedictions recited in the synagogues.⁸ This development is to be seen in the Gospel of John, 9:22, 34; 12:42; 16:2. The division was not a consequence of a particular edict, but the result of a long process, depending on the local situation and on the political power of the Christians, too. In the border areas where Jewish influence was traditionally prominent, e.g. in Syria, the final division took place slowly.⁹ The Didache confirms the separation from the Christian side by commanding that the faithful must not fast at the same times as the "hypocrites", on Mondays and Thursdays, but on Wednesdays and Fridays.¹⁰ The final split between Church and Synagogue in Alexandria was probably not complete until the time of the Jewish revolt 115-117 C.E. in the reign of Trajan. The result of this revolt was that the Jewish community, probably even including some Christians, was virtually annihilated.¹¹

The consequence of the *habdalah* was that Jewish Christians were no longer dependent on the rabbinical authorities and could choose the festival days and develop the themes of their feasts for themselves. They lived in a culture that

⁸ *Talm. Bab. Berakhot* 29a. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.9.2. Justin, *Dial.* 16.4, 47.4 and 117. Kretschmar, 'Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden' (1990), 13-16.

⁹ W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (1984), 126; G. Kretschmar, 'Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden' (1990), 14, 20, 26, 39.

¹⁰ Didache 8.1.

¹¹ Pearson, 'Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations' (1986), 150.

followed the solar Julian calendar and had done so in Asia Minor and in Egypt since the beginning of the Christian era. The date of Passover, the 14th of Nisan, was quite easy to follow, as was that of Pentecost. Men could also change these dates to the Julian reckoning, as we have seen in ch.1.4. But the division also caused a split in the national group and forced the Christians to turn increasingly to the Gentiles to allow the Church grow. Soon there were more Gentiles in the Church than Jews, and Gentiles felt free to hate the "faithless" Jews. They did not feel the national solidarity of the Jews, nor were they acquainted with their common heritage, which also influenced their Church. The seeds of antisemitism were sown in the Church.

3.3. Egyptian Christianity

The obscurity that veils the early history of the Church in Egypt and that does not lift until the beginning of the third century constitutes a conspicuous challenge to the historian of primitive Christianity. One may agree with the foregoing statement made by Colin H. Roberts.¹² The Apostle Mark is said to have been the founder of Egyptian Christianity, according to Eusebius and ancient Egyptian apocryphal traditions,¹³ but we possess no other documentation of it. However, most scholars nowadays agree that Christianity came to Egypt very early on and there exists a consensus with regard, at least, to a considerable influence having been exerted by Jewish Christianity. Klijn states more precisely that at the beginning it was closely related to an underlying Judaism in language, ideas and theology.¹⁴ St. Paul mentions Apollos from Alexandria, whose teaching caused disagreements in the Corinthian Church (1 Cor.1:12,3:4,21-22,4:6). Taking these arguments as a basis I shall attempt to give a rough outline to the development behind the veil of obscurity.

Christianity first became attached to Jewish circles, causing the same juxtapositions as everywhere else. The earliest Christians in Alexandria doubtless lived in

¹² *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (1979). 1.

¹³ Eusebius, *EccLHist.* II.16. *Martyrion of St. Mark*. PG 115, cols 164-169. Pearson, 'Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations' (1986), 137-145.

¹⁴ E.g. Daniélou, Hornschuh, Roberts, Koester. A.F.J. Klijn, 'Jewish Christianity in Egypt' (1986). 161-165.

the same areas of the city as the other Jews, and can be presumed to have participated in the life of the synagogues. They would also have worshipped in house churches. Alexandrian Judaism was especially coloured by Greek philosophy and by Philo, the renowned Jewish Gnostic philosopher. Our knowledge of Gnosticism in Egypt before Hadrian (when Basilides and Valentinus flourished) is even more obscure than for non-Gnostic Christianity.¹⁵ The Jewish population of Egypt has been estimated at 10-15% of the population, and in Alexandria it was numbered in the hundreds of thousands.¹⁶ This has to be taken into account when thinking of the strength of Jewish festal traditions. Yet it is obvious that this Jewry was not homogeneous and uniform.¹⁷ The first two centuries of the Christian era were full of different solutions to the great questions of the time. Everybody was occupied with religious matters.¹⁸

In Egypt there arose a great number of writings intended to explain the significance of the life and teachings of Jesus. The "canonical" Gospels and the letters of St. Paul were only some of the writings circulating among the people. Of the preserved "apocrypha" the most useful for our theme are the Gospel of the Hebrews, the *Epistula Apostolorum* and the Sibylline Oracles.

The Gospel of the Hebrews, which is preserved in fragmentary form in the writings of the early fathers, deals with the Incarnation of Christ in a way that points to an attempt to explain Jesus' physical birth in Jewish terms using, for example, Ps. 2:7 and Ps. 89:28-30. Christ was in Mary's womb for seven months, says one fragment, and another states that the Holy Spirit was the mother of the Saviour. With reference to Jesus' baptism it is written:

"The whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended upon him and rested on him and said to him: 'My Son, in all the prophets I was waiting for you

¹⁵ Roberts, *Manuscripts, Society and Belief* (1979), 52.

¹⁶ H. A. Green, 'The Socio-Economic Background of Christianity in Egypt' (1986), 110. Philo claims (*Flacc.* 43) that in his time there were at least one million Jews in Egypt. Josephus reports that 50 000 Jews were killed during the massacre of 66 A. D. (*Jew. War.* 2.497). Pearson, 'Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations' (1986), 145.

¹⁷ M. Pucci Ben Zeev, 'New Perspectives on the Jewish-Greek Hostilities in Alexandria during the Reign of Emperor Caligula' (1990), 227-235.

¹⁸ H. I. Bell, *Cities and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (1957), 55-77.

that you should come and I might rest in you."¹⁹

It is obvious that the notion of Jesus' Incarnation was not yet precise and clear to the writer of these passages. Jesus came down from heaven, and he was the Son of God, but how the Incarnation happened was obscure. Jesus' baptism is presented as inspiration and adoption. The Holy Spirit waits for the coming of his Son from his pre-existent state.

The *Epistula Apostolorum* is an important document in its attempt to give a clear picture of Egyptian Christianity in the first century. We have two versions of it, in Coptic and Ethiopic, and some fragments in Latin. It probably comes from the end of the first or the beginning of the second century, as does the Gospel of the Hebrews.²⁰ Hornschuh has made a thorough study of the subject and demonstrated that it originated in Egyptian Jewish Christian circles, and this has been accepted by many other scholars.²¹ The objective of these Jewish circles was to oppose Gnosticism and to defend both Christianity based on Judaism and the contribution of the Apostle Paul in uniting Gentiles and Jews. The writer is, in Hornschuh's opinion, "ein in essenischer Tradition erzogener, zum Christentum konvertierter Jude",²² who expected the new eschatological era to begin from the direction of Syria, as the Essene/Qumran Damascus Document clearly indicates. Paul was converted to Christianity on the road to Damascus, which links him, in the opinion of the author of *Epistula Apostolorum* to the new eschatological phase.²³ By defending Paul the author of *Epistula Apostolorum* wishes to make a connection between the *oikumene* and Pauline Christians and to make a clear break with the Gnostics. He concludes that there is no other legitimate access to

¹⁹ *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1. Transl. by P. Vielhauer. 161-165.

²⁰ M. Hornschuh, *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum* (1965), 119. P. Vielhauer, 'Jewish Christian Gospels' (1963), 163.

²¹ Daniélou, Hornschuh, Roberts, Koester. Klijn refers to them in his article 'Jewish Christianity in Egypt' (1986), 162.

²² Hornschuh, *idem*, 73.

²³ *Epist. Apost.* 31-33. Hornschuh, *idem*, 74-77.

Christ and to his appearing than through the eleven apostles.²⁴ The *Epistula* is a very early document, for one cannot conceive that the Essene tradition survived very long after the second decade of the second century.²⁵

Incarnation is a central notion in the *Epistola Apostolorum*. In chapter 18 of the Coptic version there is an explanation of the origin of the pre-incarnate Logos: "I have come into being on the eighth day, which is the day of the Lord." Jesus coming is said to have come to earth when he took the form of the angel Gabriel, appeared to Mary and spoke with her. "Her heart received me and she believed; I formed myself and entered into her womb; I became flesh" (Ch. 14). The reality of Christ's body is strongly maintained.

The *Epistula Apostolorum* does not place emphasis on baptism. Jesus' baptism is not mentioned at all, though it is obvious that the writer knows the canonical Gospels. By not doing so he might consciously pass over the Gnostic traditions, where Jesus' baptism is central. Yet baptism occurs there as "the baptism of life", and it is linked with forgiveness of sins.²⁶ "The baptism of life" is a frequent expression, and it obviously comprises a holistic conception of redemption. Jesus is said to have descended and spoken with departed forefathers

"that they may come forth from the rest...and I have given them the right hand of the baptism of life and forgiveness..., as I have done to you and to those who believe in me" (27). "Truly I say to you, all who have listened to you and have believed in me will receive the light of the seal that is in my hand" (41). "For by my hand they will receive the baptism of life and forgiveness of sin" (42).

The festal tradition is also observed in the *Epistula Apostolorum*. The disciples celebrate the Passover. The Ethiopic version contains an addition: "You therefore celebrate the remembrance of my death, i.e. the Passover" (15). Talley is certain that this notion is a sign of a Quartodeciman Pascha.²⁷ Pentecost was also observed: "...between Pentecost and Passover the coming of my Father will take place" (16). Other feasts or liturgical traditions are not mentioned.

Jewish Christians continued to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles as an eschatolo-

²⁴ *Epist. Apost.* 41, 50.

²⁵ Horowitz, *idem*, 73-80, 83.

²⁶ Horowitz, *idem*, 42, 64.

²⁷ Talley *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 6.

gical fulfilment because they had no reason to discontinue it.²⁸ At least we have no firm evidence of its cessation. In the reign of Trajan in 115-117 C.E. there took place a Jewish revolt in Alexandria, which was suppressed with a heavy hand. Thereafter Jewish influence had to be limited, and this applied to Jewish celebrations also. Now the Christian Church comes out from beneath the shadow of Judaism. Egyptian Christianity turned even further to the Gentiles in order to survive.²⁹ The *Epistula Apostolorum* shows such a prominent influence of Jewish concepts that one is tempted to place its origin before this turning-point in the life of Egyptian Jewry.

The Sibylline Oracles are a composite writing, supposedly given by the Sybilline prophetess. A Jewish version of it was reworked by a Christian editor. The earliest possible date for this Christian redaction is the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The latest date differs for the individual books, the latest being the eighth century. Approximately half of the collection can be ascribed to Egypt, others with varying degrees of probability to Syria and Asia Minor. The document agrees with the *Epistula Apostolorum*: Jesus was clothed in the flesh taken from the Virgin Mary, but he remained the same Logos as he was before his Incarnation. He was able to act as God even in the flesh. The healings and other miracles performed by Jesus on earth are referred to here, as in our other documents, as a manifestation of his divine power. No real doctrine of Jesus' baptism is to be found here either. But the writers constantly repeat the importance of being baptized.³⁰

There are at least three passages which connect the Incarnation with the baptism of men as follows:

In the first book of the Sibylline Oracles we find in between a Jewish oracle a Christian interpolation, which is dated somewhere between the year 150 and the third century C.E.:

²⁸ See ch. 2.7.

²⁹ R. van den Broek, 'Juden und Christen in Alexandrien im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert' (1986), 103. B. A. Pearson, 'Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations' (1986), 150.

³⁰ 'The Sibylline Oracles' in: *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, 322, 331. Klijn, 'Jewish Christianity in Egypt' (1986), 168-172.

At least following verses of the Sibylline Oracles point to the baptism 1:324-386; 4:162-170; 6:1-28; 7:64-75; 8:251-336; 8:456-479; 12:30-34.

"Then indeed the son of the great God will come,
incarnate, likened to mortal men on earth,

—
Christ, the son of the most high, immortal God.
He will fulfill the law of God - he will not destroy it -
bearing a likeness which corresponds to types³¹,
and he will teach everything.

—
But when a certain voice will come through the desert land
bringing tidings to mortals, and will cry out to all
to make the paths straight and cast away
evils from the heart, and that every human person
be illumined by waters, so that, being born from above
they may no longer in any respect at all transgress justice."³²

The sixth oracle contains only twenty-eight verses, and it is presented as a hymn to Christ. It is quoted by Lactantius (ca. 300 C.E.) so it must date at least the third century.

"I speak from my heart of the great famous son of the Immortal,
to whom the Most High, his begetter, gave a throne to possess
before he was born, since he was raised up the second time
according to the flesh, when he had washed in the streams of the river
Jordan..."³³

The seventh book is a loosely structured collection of oracles, dated to the second to third centuries. The author is clearly a Christian, however, an unusual one. In our passage the provenance referred to is Syria, but since the book is an elusive one this is far from conclusive. Sacrifice is here replaced by a strange rite commemorating the baptism of Christ. The begetting of Christ is here, as in chapter six, closely associated, if not identified, with his baptism and also with a theophany by fire.³⁴

"Ah, Coele-Syria ---
wretched one, you did not recognize your God, whom once Jordan
washed in its streams, and the spirit flew like a dove.
He, before either earth or starry heaven,
was sovereign Word, with the Father and Holy Spirit.
He put on flesh but quickly flew to his Father's home.
Great heaven established three towers for him
in which the noble mothers of God now live:

³¹ I.e. which fulfils the implicit prophecies of the Old Testament.

³² Book 1:324-341. Transl. by J.J. Collins. In: *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1, 342-343.

³³ Book 6:1-5. Transl. by J. J. Collins. *Idem*, 407.

³⁴ J.J. Collins. *idem*, 408-9.

hope and piety and desirable holiness.
 They do not rejoice in gold or silver but in reverential acts
 of men, sacrifices, and most righteous thoughts.
 You shall sacrifice to the immortal great noble God,
 not by melting a lump of incense in fire or striking
 a shaggy ram with a sacrificial knife, but with all
 who bear your blood, by taking a wild dove,
 praying, and sending it off, while gazing to heaven.
 You shall pour a libation of water on pure fire, crying out as follows:
As the father begot you, the Word, so I have dispatched a bird,
a word which is swift reporter of words, sprinkling
with holy waters your baptism, through which you were revealed out
of fire."³⁵

These passages deserve a closer study, but this must be left till another time. We see, however, from the above passages in bold that the teaching of the Catholic Church was already presented in symbolic Jewish ways even before the great christological debates. It is hidden amidst many other opinions and teachings circulating in the Roman world, which was full of religious and philosophical ideas.

The pluriformity of Egyptian Christianity, with both Jewish and Gnostic influences, was seen in a number of esoteric groups or "schools". These schools recruited new members only so far as they were able to "see with the eyes of their mind". In Egypt Logos Christology was popular, and it was not able to deal with the "flesh" and creation in a proper way. The intangible Logos never became flesh. But in the *Epistula Apostolorum* and the Sibylline Oracles there is a great emphasis on the significance of the flesh.³⁶

This controversy is obvious in Egypt. It proves that the meaning of the Incarnation is gradually taking shape in Catholicism. The work of Pantaeus (about 180 C.E.) and the formation of the catechetical school in Alexandria were steps taken towards organized Catholic teaching, which was based on Jewish traditions and the Old Testament. Christianity was a movement comprised of individuals until the Pauline explanation of the Christian movement as a body, promoted in the *Epistula Apostolorum*, gained ground in Egypt.³⁷ Only this development could bring about a common feast expressing the idea of redemption based on the Incarnation and

³⁵ Book 7:64-84. Transl. J.J. Collins. *Idem*, 411-412.

³⁶ Klijn, 'Jewish Christianity in Egypt' (1986), 161-175.

³⁷ *Idem*, 174.

man's baptism. Therefore we seek in vain a general celebration of the Incarnation in the primitive Christian Church.

3.4. Syriac Christianity

It is a matter of dispute as to how Christianity came to Nisibis and Edessa in Syria. The Teaching of Addai, transmitted by Eusebius and the manuscript tradition of the fifth century³⁸, is the only existing literary source of the origins of Christianity in Syria. The problem is how and for whom the document was produced. E.N. Meshtsherskaja has made an attempt to trace the development of the Teaching of Addai from oral tradition through different literal versions to the form known today.³⁹ She finds that the basis of the document lies in its oral form, though it is possible to speak of it only hypothetically, referring to single details which are preserved in literary versions. The environment where the oral legend originated and spread from could be Jewish Christianity, which led other inhabitants of Mesopotamia to make the acquaintance of Christianity in its early Aramaic form.

The original literal fixing of the legend of Abgar took place quite certainly during the reign of Abgar IX⁴⁰, 202-216. At that time Christianity was professed as the sole official religion of the state, and the legend functioned as the ideological basis for it, being kept in the archives of the ruler.⁴¹

At the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century the legend of Abgar gained new popularity. It was part of an important ideological document "The Teaching of Addai", which presented the Orthodox faith of the Incarnation. It was

³⁸ *Hist. Eccl.* 1:13. The only preserved documents from this era are the following:

The manuscripts: Wright W: the catalogue of Syriac mss. from 1870-1972 in the British Museum contains different versions of the Teaching of Addai. Add. 1->

The Papyrus texts: The Fayyum papyrus in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (M.S. graec. theol. b. I. P), dated to the end of the fourth - end of the sixth cent. The papyrus of Göteborg in the communal Library in Göteborg, Sweden, sixth-seventh cent. The Papyrus of Nesson, discovered in 1937, in Palestine south of Jerusalem, in the ancient village of Nesson, sixth-seventh cent.

The Epigraphics: The (funeral?) inscription from Alkhat-Hadju-Keui, Pontos 1, fourth cent. The inscription from Kurdistan, Pontos 2, fourth-fifth cent. The Ephesian funeral inscription, fifth cent. The inscription carved in the gateway of Philippi, Macedonia, beginning of fifth cent. The funeral inscription of Edessa, found in a cave near Edessa, end-fourth cent. Meshtsherskaja, легенда об Абраге. 112-114.

³⁹ Легенда об Абраге - Равнесирийский литературный памятник (1984). Москва.

⁴⁰ Meshtsherskaja here puts Abgar VIII. *Idem*, 112. K. McVey in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1 (1992), p. 12, concludes that the ruler was Abgar IX, who died ca. 216 C.E.

⁴¹ Meshtsherskaja, *idem*, 112-114.

a polemic against the heresies, above all Arianism and Gnosticism, which made their appearance in Edessa. Yet Egeria tells us that she was shown the letters of Abgar and Christ while she was visiting Edessa in 384.⁴² Though the "official" teaching of Addai might have been in existence at that time, the old material - the letters - was still at hand.

From the early Christian years in Adiabene we have information in the Chronicle of Arbela, a manuscript from the 5th century, where a Nestorian Christian, Mshiha-zka by name, relates the history of the bishops, martyrs and kings beginning from the year 104 and ending in the year 544. The authenticity of this chronicle is much disputed, but the editor of the new translation, Peter Kawerau, considers it authentic.⁴³ After describing the purpose of the chronicle its writer begins with the words:

"The first of those bishops (*reshe*) who were in the land of Adiabene was - as the teacher Habel says - Mar Peqida, on whom the Apostle Addai himself laid his hands."

Thus we have no knowledge of the origins of Christianity in Adiabene, but the Apostle Addai is mentioned as a notable person in this tradition.

Because our only knowledge of the apostolicity of the Syrian Church is based on the Teaching of Addai, which is considered to be a legend, there have been later attempts to produce several theories of how in reality Christianity came to Edessa.⁴⁴

However, the Teaching of Addai offers in itself a most natural solution to the question. When the apostles went on to preach the new doctrine, it was very

⁴² *Itin. Egeriae* 19. For dating the journey see Wilkinson, *Egeria's travels* (1971), 29, 238-9.

⁴³ In the foreword of the new revision of *Die Chronik von Arbela* (1985) Kawerau clarifies the discussion about the chronicle and tries to point out that doubts are groundless. He refers here e.g. to the studies of Ruth Altheim-Stiehl. The main outlines of these studies are published in the same work under the title 'Der Beginn der Sasanidischen Reichsherrschaft', written by Ruth Altheim-Stiehl. 13-16.

⁴⁴ It has been suggested that it came from the east, i.e. through Adiabene and Mesene on the lower Tigris, where there was a remarkable Jewish influence. Segal, *Edessa, the Blessed City* (1970), 69, and 'When did Christianity come to Edessa?' (1980), 179-191. - It is also proposed that Christianity came to Edessa from Antioch first at the turn of the second and third centuries with Bishop Palut. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* (1962), 30-33. - Drijvers presented the latest theory in 1982: Because the Teaching of Addai does not occur in any source before the fourth century, he concludes that it is an anti-Manichean writing from the second half of the fourth century, and that its aim was to provide the Edessene Catholic Church with apostolic roots and to deny the teachings of Mani and his disciples - of whom the most popular was named Adda! Drijvers, 'Facts and Problems in Early Syriac-Speaking Christianity' (1982), 157-176.

natural to travel from Jerusalem to Antioch and from there to the east along the old caravan route, particularly because beyond the Euphrates there existed an old and noteworthy Jewish colony, and the language spoken there was an Eastern Aramaic dialect, differing very little from the mother tongue of the apostles. Whether the person who set out on the missionary journey was Thomas, Addai, Judas Thaddeus or somebody else we do not know.⁴⁵

The Chronicle of Edessa, which is considered to be reliable, provides important information concerning the most ancient history of Edessa, mentioning that a Christian church was destroyed in the floods of the year 201⁴⁶, so that there were certainly Christians in Edessa before the third century, with organized church life and a fairly large church building, to which the word *hajkla* refers. The murals of the *domus ecclesiae* in Dura Europos point to the fourth decade of the third century.⁴⁷ The Greek Abercios funeral inscription found in Heliopolis in Phrygia and dated to the last half of the third century, shows that there were a great number of Christians living in these regions.⁴⁸

There has been extensive scholarly discussion about the orthodoxy or heresy of the early Edessene Christians. This applies in particular to the Edessene Bardaisan (154-222), a convert from paganism to Christianity. Within its framework he created a doctrinal system of his own which gained foothold in Edessa with the teachings of Mani and Marcion.

W. Bauer and H.J.W. Drijvers have drawn conclusions from this, and insist that in Edessa Christianity began as a mixture of different Gnostic components and remained as such until the activities of St. Ephraem in the 4th century.⁴⁹ These

⁴⁵ J.J. Gunther has suggested that in the second quarter of the second century the Edessenes merged together the names of Judas Thaddeus, the original apostle of Syria, and Thomas, one of the seventy apostles, and Thomas, the apostle of the east. 'The Meaning and Origin of the Name Judas Thomas' (1980), 113-148.

⁴⁶ *Chronicon Edessenum*, ed. I. Guidi (1903), 4. P. Kawerau, *Ostkirchengeschichte I.* (1983), 6-7.

⁴⁷ C. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura Europos* (1979), 90-117.

⁴⁸ Segal, *Edessa, The Blessed City* (1970), 69.

⁴⁹ In 1934 W. Bauer denied any historical basis for the Abgar legend concluding that the Edessene chronicle too is a product of later Orthodoxy. *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, 12-15. Drijvers agrees in his *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, (1980).

views have been severely criticized.⁵⁰ The Chronicles of Arbela and Edessa, the *Acta Martyrum Syriacorum*, the favour enjoyed by Tatian's Diatessaron,⁵¹ and the information given by Eusebius that Edessa participated in the Paschal synod of the year 197⁵² support the thesis that there was an organized Catholic Church in Syria very early on. Yet it is possible that before the great councils there were different views within this Church.⁵³ Representatives of Edessa and Nisibis were present at the Council of Nicea⁵⁴ and also at later important synods.⁵⁵

It was noted long ago that rabbinic Judaism, which was closely connected with the religious court of Jerusalem, influenced practically every area of early Syrian Christianity. All early Syrian exegetes employed the same techniques as did the authors of the New Testament and the Qumran scrolls, and many elements can be traced to late Jewish literature written before the time of Christ.⁵⁶ The great 4th-century Syrian figures, Ephraem and Aphrahat do not have any particular connection with the theology of the contemporary or earlier Western Church Fathers. Gentile Christianity, which was greatly influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, is foreign to them.⁵⁷

What was the origin of these Jewish influences on the Orthodox Fathers of the Church? In Adiabene, Edessa, Nisibis and the lower parts of the Tigris and

⁵⁰ e.g. A. Vööbus, *A History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient I* (1958), 3-108. G. Quispel, 'The Discussion of Judaic Christianity' (1968), 81-93.

⁵¹ According to contemporary Church Fathers, Tatian was not a heretic. Altaner-Stauber, *Patrologie* (1978), 71.

⁵² Eusebius, *EccL.Hist.* V:23

⁵³ S. Hidal, *Hymnerna om paradiset* (1985), 79.

⁵⁴ Honigmann, 'Une liste inédite des pères de Nicée' (1950) gives the names: 137. ἀεὶ φίλος ἐδέσσης 188. ἰακώβ νησιδίας. Kaufhold, 'Griechisch-syrische Väterlisten der frühen griechischen Synoden' (1993) gives the names ΜΕΣΟΠΟΤΑΜΙΑ: ΑΙΘΙΛΑΑ ΕΔΕΣΗΣ, ΙΑΚΩΒΩΣ ΝΙΣΙΒΙΝ. In Syriac: 'ylylh' and Y'qwb.

⁵⁵ The list of the bishops of Edessa begins with the year 313, from Bishop Qona. Thereafter the bishops of Edessa can be put in chronological order for the next 1000 years. There is a clear list of the bishops of Arbela from the years 104-544 in the *Chronicle of Arbela*.

⁵⁶ Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (1975), 281.

⁵⁷ Beck, 'Ephraem Syrus' (1962), 524; Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca* (1974) 139; Murray, *idem*, 293.

Euphrates there lived a great number of Jews. In the Jewish academies of Sura, Nehardea and Pumbedita in Mesopotamia there was great interest in Bible studies and it is there that the great haggadic *midrashim* and *Talmud babli* were written. In Nisibis there was a rabbinic school from the first century till at least the second half of the second century. In the persecutions after the rebellion of Bar Kokhba the disciples of Rabbi Aqiba fled from Palestine to Nisibis and were active there for at least some while. The Jewish school in Nisibis was well known for its Tannaitic traditions.⁵⁸

It is probable that the first Christians came from among the Jews, as they did in so many other regions. They were well endowed with Jewish traditions before their acceptance of Jesus as Messiah. As a matter of fact, they were as learned as the Palestine rabbis. Palestine and Babylonia were the centres of rabbinic Judaism, as can be seen in the Talmudic traditions of both these areas: the *Talmud Babli* was compiled from Babylonian Jewish traditions and the *Talmud Yerushalmi* from Palestinian ones. Ephraem, the great fourth-century poet of Syria, uses in his hymns the late Jewish term for God's presence on earth: *shekhinah*.⁵⁹ The connections between Antioch and Edessa have aroused interest among scholars, but until now they have not been able to show any close connection between the theologians of these cities. Instead, we find similarities between the traditions of the later Greek and Latin Fathers and Aphrahat's and Ephraem's use of typology⁶⁰, which demonstrate the influence the great Syrian Fathers had on later Western Christianity. The Syrian Church was thus Jewish both in spirit and in form.

This justifies the present writer in building upon the thesis that Syrian Christianity was of Jerusalemite origin, strongly Jewish-influenced, plagued by many heresies and distinctive in comparison with the Western churches. After the break with the Synagogue the Christians in Syria too were independent of the rabbinical authorities, but they knew of no other source to draw upon, so they long remained faithful to the old traditions. Unfortunately, we possess very few sources describ-

⁵⁸ Neusner, *History of the Jews in Babylonia* (1965), 10-13, 113, 121-135. Aphrahat and Judaism (1971), 148.

⁵⁹ *RPared*: 5:1. *HNat* 3:13, 11:1.

⁶⁰ *Habel, Interpretatio Syriaca* (1974), 139; Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (1975), 292-3.

ing their liturgical life before the fourth century. Only the Odes of Solomon, the Dura-Europos *domus ecclesiae* and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* can be counted as early Syriac sources. The Odes of Solomon do not provide any clear liturgical information, but the verses tell something of the approach to Incarnation and baptism. They will be further discussed in chapter 5.2., and the evidence from Dura-Europos in chapter 5.3.

3.5. The *Didascalia Apostolorum*

The Didascalia Apostolorum belongs to the Syrian world, inferring from its Jewish-oriented contents. In its oldest shape it does not mention the feast of Epiphany, but its 21st chapter reveals early Paschal traditions, and these have been of great value to scholars because of the age of this document. The Jewish influence is notable. Many orders concern Jewish religious customs and their validity in the New Covenant.⁶¹

Didascalia was probably originally written in Greek, but only tiny parts of it have been preserved, not including the 21st chapter. According to R.H. Connolly, the Syriac translation was made between the years 300 and 330. It seems, however, that there must have been a common text in Greek which was different from the Greek copy in the hands of the Syriac translator.⁶² We are now fully dependent on the Syriac *Didascalia* whose revisor is commonly thought to have been a North Syrian bishop. However, there exist so many different recensions that it is difficult to conclude when the single parts were first written, and when the different compositions, which we know as manuscripts, were disseminated. There are different opinions, ranging from the third century until the fifth century, but the "höchstwahrscheinlich" is the first half of the third century.⁶³

The main bulk of the *Didascalia* does not mention Epiphany at all. Pascha and Pentecost are referred to, and the Paschal traditions have been the subject of

⁶¹ The *Didascalia Apostolorum* in Syriac, e.g. ch. III.19, IX (transl. p. 108), XIII (p. 136-7), XVI (p. 156-7), XXVI (passim),

⁶² Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, editio (1979). Introduction 28, 24.

⁶³ Altaner-Stuiber, *Patrologie* (1978), 84.

much discussion as one of the oldest ecclesiastical orders for the celebration of Pascha. Scholars have found it problematic that *Didascalia* does not mention Paschal baptism. This is, however, understandable because it is not possible to connect Paschal baptism with the Quartodeciman Pascha, whose traditions were preserved for a long time, especially in the Syrian church. Thus the *Didascalia* comes from the time before the establishment of Paschal baptism, i.e. from the third century, and reflects the ancient liturgical traditions traced in the Syrian Church, in St. Ephraem and Aphrahat.⁶⁴

Ratcliff has paid attention to the ninth chapter of the *Didascalia*, where any reviling of the bishop is condemned, "through whom you were sealed (signed), and through whom you became sons of the light and through whom the Lord in baptism, by the laying on of the hand of the bishop, bore witness to each one of you and caused his holy voice to be heard that said: 'Thou art my son: this day have I begotten thee.'"⁶⁵ He thinks that the Didascalist plainly asserts that the words were recited as a formula by the bishop, when laying his hand upon the head of each person being baptized. If it is so, the words sum up succinctly and dramatically the old *Eastern* baptismal tradition in doctrine and rite, he concludes. The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan is the archetype of the baptism of the Christian. God who was present at the Jordan and who pointed to Jesus as His 'beloved Son' is declared to be present at the baptism of the Christian.⁶⁶ This is a noteworthy idea. The conclusion of the *Eastern* baptismal tradition seems to be in line with the commonly accepted theory of the early Paschal baptism. I, however, do believe that we have to connect this expression rather to the Epiphany baptism, as I shall show in ch. 6.5.

For our theme the most important section of the Syriac *Didascalia* is the text which is intercalated between chs. III and IV: The Commandments from the Writing of Addai the Apostle. Three main feasts are mentioned :

"Observe the day of Epiphany (*denḥa*) of our Saviour, which is the chief of the festivals of the Church, on the sixth day of the *kanun ḥrai*

⁶⁴ More about this question in ch. 6.3. and 6.5.

⁶⁵ *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, editio p. 109, versio p. 104.

⁶⁶ E.C. Ratcliff, 'The Old Baptismal Tradition and its Resettlement' (1965), 23-24, 27.

in the long reckoning of the Greeks⁶⁷. ---Forty days before the day of the passion of our Saviour, you shall fast and then observe the day of the Passion and the day of the Resurrection... Upon the completion of fifty days after His resurrection you shall make a commemoration of His Ascension to his glorious Father."⁶⁸

The date of this document is obscure⁶⁹ but it seems to originate from the fourth century because of the mention of the 40 days fast.

The expression "according to the long reckoning of the Greeks" gives the impression that the Christians had many different calendars in use, especially in border areas. Epiphany could be celebrated on one day by some Christians and on another day by others, depending on which calendar was in use.

There is no precise mention of the purpose of the Feast of Epiphany, but it is obvious that it is the broad theme of Incarnation, the appearance of God's *kabod/doxa*. The scheme of three main feasts is clear. All these elements point to the Feast of Epiphany being recommended by this document for universal celebration after previously being only a local feast, celebrated on different dates in different areas.

3.6. Conclusions

The three main Jewish feasts eventually became increasingly eschatological celebrations, even in the Diaspora, where the feasts were celebrated in a modest way, yet still containing the important elements.

The consequences of the separation from the Synagogue were that the Christians were no longer dependent on the rabbinical authorities for determining the dates and themes of their feasts.

Egyptian Christianity was from the very beginning very diffused. The philosophies and Gnosticism had gained a firm foothold there. Yet Jewish-based Christianity is also seen in early Alexandrian documents. Christ's Incarnation and the baptism of believers are mentioned and they are clearly interconnected.

⁶⁷ January, 6.

⁶⁸ *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* III.8.6-8, transl. A. Vööbus.

⁶⁹ I have not succeeded in acquainting myself with the study of A. Vööbus concerning the transmission of the text in the manuscript tradition: 'New Light on the Text of the Canons in the Doctrine of Addai' (1975). *Journal of the Syriac Academy I*. (Magma al-luga as-suryaniya I)

Syrian Christianity was from the beginning very tightly bound up with Jewish thinking, but it was not mainly heretical, as some scholars have stated. Its peculiarity arises from the strong Jewish thinking to be seen in the writings of the Syrian Fathers, in its liturgy and symbols, which reveal the meaning of Christ's incarnation and of the baptism of believers.

In the basic *Didascalia* we find no mention of Epiphany, but we are provided with some information about Pascha. We note that Paschal baptism is not mentioned there. In the *Didascalia* Christ's baptism at the Jordan is presented as the archetype of the baptism of the Christian. In the canons of the Doctrine of Addai, intercalated between chapters III and IV, there is mentioned the Feast of Epiphany, but it has no other qualifier than the date, *Kanun* 6. It might be that the word *denha* already sufficiently reveals the meaning of the feast - God's appearance on earth. The intercalation is obviously younger than the main bulk of *Didascalia*, but comes yet from the fourth century.

4. THE CONCEPT OF FEASTS IN GENTILE CHRISTIANITY

4.1. Egyptian Gentile Christians

To obtain a view of the Gentile Christian approach to the feast of Christ's Incarnation/baptism it is good to look at Egypt where we have documents available and the question seems to be enigmatic in comparison with other practices.

The Jewish population had diminished in Egypt after the revolt of the year 117, and Gentile Christians, including many Gnostic groups, were maintaining the teaching of Christ and redemption. The Gnosticism of Basilides and Valentinus gained many adherents among the higher classes of society, but from the writings of Clement and Origen we know that in Alexandria there were also simple, poor people who took the Christian faith very practically and distrusted intellectuals. They insisted on the all-sufficiency of faith; but by faith they meant an unreflective acceptance of what was given to them on authority.¹ Theirs was a Christianity of which the incarnate Christ was the focus, where soteriological aspects ranked higher than intellectual ones. They demanded biblical proof for every doctrine taught and were prepared to criticize ideas that were felt to be unscriptural. The Gnostic elements which one might expect to find in primitive Egyptian Christianity are, however, lacking.²

In between these two tendencies there were many individualistic groups who expounded Christianity in their own way. In this complex situation there arose teachers who were able to take up the challenge of widespread Gnosticism and teach salvation and its component elements in such a way that highly educated people, while aware of Gnosticism, could find Catholic Christianity equally meaningful.

According to the testimony of Eusebius, Pantaenus was the first person to take up this challenge. He established a catechetical school in Alexandria and taught there, though no literary remains have survived. This school, like others, for example in Antioch and in Rome, was a private enterprise by a single teacher who had

¹ Clement, *Stromatum* VI:80, 89, 93. H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (1966), 53.

² G. af Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum according to Origen of Alexandria* (1984), 94.

gathered a circle of listeners. The ecclesiastical authorities interfered in the teaching of a school only in cases of obvious heresy, and likewise supported it when they found it useful.³ Clement was a companion and admirer of Pantaenus. Later Origen continued the work of these two at the request of his bishop, Demetrius.⁴

They established their teaching on the Jewish-based Christian preaching of the Messiah and the Son of God, who came to bring salvation for all mankind, but their approach to the great questions of the time was totally different from earlier Judaistic explanations. They tried to explain things to those who were acquainted with philosophical and Gnostic concepts. They were also philosophers themselves, but Christian philosophers, who maintained that radical monotheism was the full development of the recognition that God is greater than any of his works. All wisdom is summed up in Christ, who is the keystone of the arch of knowledge and its uniting principle.⁵ The Alexandrian school, which aimed to promote the Pauline idea of Christians as one body - the body of Christ, derived its arguments from its Jewish basis, but spoke to a Hellenistic audience.

4.2. Clement and St. Epiphanius

The earliest reference to the feast of Christ's baptism is to be found in Stromatum I of Clement of Alexandria (died before 215). Clement was a prominent teacher and philosopher of pagan origin who taught at the catechetical school in Alexandria, but nothing points to his having been a bishop or a presbyter.⁶ Thus his work did not lie so much in the liturgical or pastoral field, but in teaching. It was only under Bishop Demetrius (in Origen's time) that teachers came under ecclesiastical authority. Clement took trouble to avoid making the choice between obscurantist Orthodoxy and heretical reinterpretations of the faith. He was a

³ C. Richardson, *The First Apology of Justin the Martyr. Introduction* (1953), 230.

⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* V:10,11; VI:2,3. Altaner-Stuiber, *Patrologie* (1978), 188-189.

⁵ H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought* (1966), 39-40.

⁶ Altaner-Stuiber, *Patrologie* (1978): "Dass er Presbyter war, lässt sich weder der verderbten Stelle *Paed.* 1,37,3 noch dem Briefe Alexanders von Jerusalem (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI:11:6) mit Sicherheit entnehmen." 190.

trusted figure of whom the Alexandrian Church is proud.⁷ Clement's main work, *Stromateis*, is unsystematic in its presentation and in the thought which it expresses, and it is articulated in symbolic, enigmatic language. It is often hard to see the connection between the chapters, sections and sentences. This lack of apparent connection was part of Clement's purpose. He wrote down what came into his mind as it came into his mind. Clement's mind was acute, but the world which he faced was complex. In him the heritages of Israel, Greece and Alexandria met and served the Christian gospel.⁸ His purpose in chapter 21 was to show how Jewish institutions and laws are of far higher antiquity than the philosophy of the Greeks. He calculates the dates of Greek and Roman rulers and tries to insert Jewish history into the same framework. He states that nothing need stand in the way of mentioning the dates of the reigns of the Roman emperors in order to demonstrate the Saviour's birth, and he begins to calculate the dates of different Roman rulers. In section 145-146 we read:

"Our Lord was born under Augustus in the 28th year, when they first gave authority for a census. That this is true is written in the Gospel of Luke: 'Under Tiberius Caesar in the 15th year the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zacharias,' and again in the same Gospel: 'Jesus came to baptism at the age of 30.' That his preaching could not have lasted more than a year is written in the following passage: 'He sent me to preach the year of the Lord's favour.' These are the words alike of prophet and Gospel. So 15 years of Tiberius and 15 years of Augustus make up the 30 years leading towards the Passion. From the Passion to the disaster of Jerusalem occupied 42 years and three months, from the disaster of Jerusalem to the death of Commodus, 121 years, 10 months and 13 days. So from the Lord's birth to the death of Commodus comprises 194 years, one month and 13 days.⁹

There are some people who are more meticulous about the Saviour's nativity and adduce the day as well as the year - the 25th day of

⁷ R. van den Broek, 'Juden und Christen in Alexandrien' (1990), 109. H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought* (1966), 65.

⁸ E.F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (1957), 7-9.

⁹ The previous section of *Stromateis* (PG 8, col. 887, transl. by J. Ferguson in FC 85) gives the years of the rulers and sums up: "—So from Julius Caesar to the death of Commodus produces 236 years, six months." When one calculates them together the result yielded is that the interval between the death of Commodus and the birth of Christ computed in accordance with the ancient Egyptian calendar of only 365 days, gives January 6, 2 B.C. as the date of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, the twenty-eighth year of Augustus, as Clement said. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 119.

Pachon¹⁰ in the 28th year of Augustus.

The followers of Basilides also celebrated the day of his baptism, spending the previous night in readings. They place it in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, on the fifteenth (or according to others the eleventh) of the month of Tybi." (Οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ Βασιλείδου καὶ τοῦ βαπτίσματος αὐτοῦ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐορτάζουσι, προδιανυκτερεύοντες ἀναγνώσεως. Φασὶ δὲ εἶναι τὸ πεντεκαιδέκατον ἔτος Τιβερίου Καίσαρος, τὴν πεντεκαιδέκατην τοῦ Τυβὶ μηνός· τινὲς δὲ αὐτὴν ἑνδεκάτην τοῦ αὐτοῦ μηνός.)¹¹

In the stabilized Alexandrian calendar the Egyptian 15th and 11th of Tybi correspond to the 10th and 6th of January in the Julian calendar.¹² This late-second or early-third century evidence is the earliest reference we have by a Christian author to the commemoration of Christ's baptism, but it does not explain the origins of the feast celebrated by the sect of Basilides nor is there any hint of Epiphany celebrations in Clement's own ecclesia. There have been many suggestions to link this Gnostic feast of January 6th with several pagan festivals, but nothing points clearly to a widespread festival.¹³ It is noteworthy that Clement does not apply the name Epiphany to the feast of Basilides.

It seems that neither does Clement take the trouble to determine the true birthday of Jesus, ("some say this and some say that") because for him it is of no value in Christian theology. He takes more trouble to show that Christ was really born in history. Thus Clement gives no information about Christian celebration, either of the birth or the baptism of Christ. Only his opponents, the followers of Basilides, have a celebration of Jesus' baptism, and we have no evidence of a fixed feast celebrating Christ's birth or baptism designated by the name Epiphany or by any other name in the Christian *ecclesiae* in the 3rd century.

Gnosticism was built upon the concept of the Divine Logos. Egyptian Christianity, such as it was taught in the Alexandrian catechetical school, was deeply involved

¹⁰ May in the Julian calendar.

¹¹ *Socr. I.* 21.145-146. PG 8, col 888. Transl. John Ferguson, FC 85.

¹² Talley, *Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 119.

"Der 15. des Monats galt in der religiösen Vorstellung als Vollmondstag und Lichttag." Usener, *Das Weihnachtsfest* (1911), 20. See also Winkler, 'Die Licht-Erscheinung bei der Taufe Jesu' (1994), 216-217.

¹³ Talley, *idem*, 117.

with these immanent questions. Christ's birth in the flesh was mentioned, but transferred to the category of philosophical concepts, where it was discussed as an answer to Gnosis. There was no profound speculation about it on a Jewish basis, such as we have seen in early Jewish-Christian writings. Clement of Alexandria and Origen do not concentrate on the theology of the physical birth as do earlier Jewish apocrypha and the later great defenders of Orthodoxy in the fourth century. But baptism is central in their teachings because it was central for their opponents, too. Clement writes:

"For we are enlightened (Ἐφωτίσθημεν γάρ)¹⁴; that is, we came to the knowledge of God... Now, let us ask the wise: on that day when Christ was reborn (baptized), was He already perfect, or - a very foolish question - was He defective? (σήμερον ἀναγενηθεὶς ὁ Χριστός, ἤδη τέλειός ἐστιν, ἢ, ὅπερ ἀτοπώτατον, ἔλλιπής;) If the latter, then He needed to add to His knowledge. But since He is God, it is not likely that He learned even one thing more. No one can be greater than the Word, nor can anyone teach Him who is the one and only Teacher.--- But, if He is perfect, then why was one already perfect baptized?---This is what happens with us, whose model the Lord made Himself. When we are baptized, we are enlightened; being enlightened, we become adopted sons, we are made perfect; and becoming perfect, we are made divine. (Βαπτίζόμενοι, φωτιζόμεθα· φωτιζόμενοι, υἱοποιούμεθα· υἱοποιούμενοι, τελειούμεθα· τελειούμενοι, ἀπαθανατιζόμεθα.)"¹⁵

This is the way Clement teaches about man's baptism in connection with Christ's baptism. This became later the doctrine of the Church, and it is now emerging from behind the shadow of Gnosticism.¹⁶ Yet there is no hint of a Christian feast of the baptism.

More light on Christian and Gnostic Epiphany feasts is shed by St. Epiphanius (315-403) in his compendium of all heretics, *Panarion*, a medicine box against the heresies. Epiphanius was an ardent opponent of every heresy. He wrote the

¹⁴ St. Justin Martyr uses the same word in his first *Apology* LXI.6: καλεῖται δὲ τοῦτο τὸ λουτρὸν φωτισμός, ὡς φωτιζομένων τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν ταῦτα μανθανόντων. PG 6, col 432.

¹⁵ *Paedagogos* 6:25-26. PG 8, cols 280-281. *Christ the Educator*, translated by Simon P. Wood. FC 23. 25-26.

¹⁶ Celsus, the critic of Christianity, whom Origen sought to answer, argued that God cannot have created the body, or indeed anything mortal, and only Soul can have come from Him directly; and the idea of His coming down to men must be rejected as involving a change in Him, and a change necessarily for the worse. *Contra Celsum* IV.18. The aforementioned citation of Clement tries to answer to the argument of Celsus, like Origen, too.

Panarion to warn Christians of the poison of the heretics. Epiphanius was of Palestinian Gentile stock, travelled widely, living, for instance, with Egyptian monks, and finally settled at Salamis in Cyprus as bishop. Epiphanius put together all the possible traditions he knew concerning the different dates of Christ's birth and baptism, different Epiphany celebrations and different customs, and by the end of the 4th century there were already a great number in existence. In his writings Epiphanius describes the heretical "Epiphany" such as it was celebrated in Egypt:

"...The leaders of the idolaters...in many places hold a great feast on the very night of Epiphany, so that those who have placed their hopes in what is error may not seek the truth. (οἱ τῆς τῶν εἰδώλων θρησκείας ἀρχηγέται καὶ ἀπατηλοὶ εἰς τὸ ἐξαπατῆσαι τοὺς πεισθέντας αὐτοῖς εἰδωλολάτρας ἐν πολλοῖς τόποις ἐορτὴν μεγίστην ἄγουσιν ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ νυκτὶ τῶν Ἐπιφανείων, εἰς τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ πλάνῃ ἐλπίσαντας μὴ ζητεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν.) First of all, in Alexandria they hold festival in what is called the Coreum, which is a great temple, namely the sacred precinct of Core. They stay awake the whole night singing hymns to the idol to the accompaniment of flutes. They keep it up the entire night, and after cockcrow torchbearers descend into an underground shrine and bring up a wooden statue seated naked on a litter, having a seal of a cross inlaid with gold upon the forehead, and two other such seals on both hands, as well as another two upon the two knees themselves, making altogether five seals impressed with gold. They carry the statue in a circle seven times around the very centre of the temple to the accompaniment of flutes, kettledrums, and hymns, and thus revelling carry it back down to the place underground. Asked what the rite means, they say: 'Today at this hour Core (meaning the virgin) engendered Aeon.' (ταύτη τῇ ὥρᾳ σήμερον ἡ Κόρη *τουτέστιν ἡ παρθένος* ἐγέννησε τὸν Αἰῶνα.)

This is also done in the city of Petra (this is the capital of Arabia, which is called Edom in the scriptures), in the temple of the idol there. They sing hymns to the virgin in Arabic, calling her in Arabic 'Chaamu', which means Core or 'virgin', and the one born from her 'Dusares', which means 'only begotten of the Lord'. The rite is also performed in the city of Elusa on that night as in Petra and Alexandria...¹⁷

The first sentence is to be understood as meaning that the leaders of the idolaters hold their feast (Coreum) on the same night as the Christians had their Epiphany, which Epiphanius later states to be the commemoration of Christ's birth.¹⁸ Yet Epiphanius does not agree with Clement about the year of Christ's birth:

¹⁷ *The Panarion of Epiphanius* 51:22:8-11. Transl. Philip R. Amidon 1990.

¹⁸ 51:22:3

"For the Saviour was born in the 42nd year of Augustus, Emperor of Rome, in the consulship of the same Octavius Augustus, his 13th, and of Silanus, as the Roman consular calendar states.---

The Saviour, then, was born in the 42nd year of Augustus, Emperor of Rome, in the consulship mentioned earlier, 29 years after Augustus annexed the Jews.-

...the birth in Bethlehem, which took place in the 42nd year of the reign of Augustus, taken in its entirety, after his fifth year when Antipater, Herod's father, was appointed procurator...¹⁹

Epiphanius was a zealous opponent of heresies, but his knowledge of the doctrinal formulation of the Christian Church seems defective.²⁰ Epiphanius was dependent upon the teachings of St. Ephraem the Syrian, the famed and recognized theologian of the Church. His writings were well-known to Epiphanius, because they were translated into Greek in Ephraem's life-time.²¹ In addition, by stating the day of Christian Epiphany as January 6th and giving it the theme of Christ's birth he was dependent upon Ephraem's *de Nativitate* hymns.

Epiphanius also knew other traditions concerning the dates of Christ's birth and baptism and their celebration among the people, but they do not apply to Egypt. He rejected them all, being convinced of the correct dates concerning Christ's birth, baptism and suffering:

"(The Saviour) was born at the eighth hour and appeared to the shepherds and to the world through the angels' testimony: he appeared also to Mary and Joseph. And at that same hour the star too appeared in the East to the Magi two years before they arrived in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, when Herod asked the Magi the exact time when the star had appeared and learned from them that it had been since two years before...

...(Jesus) was baptized on what is for the Egyptians the 12th of Athyr (and for the Romans) the 8th of November, meaning sixty full days before Epiphany, which is the day of his birth in the flesh, as is proved by the Gospel of Luke... " (τουτέστιν πρό ἐξήκοντα ἡμερῶν πλήρης τῆς ἡμέρας τῶν Ἐπιφανείων, ἧ ἔστιν ἡμέρα τῆς αὐτοῦ κατὰ σάρκα γεννήσεως, ὡς ἔχει ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ κατὰ Λουκᾶν εὐαγγελίου)²²

¹⁹ *Panarion* 51:22:3,18,22.

²⁰ Altaner-Stuiber, *Patrologie* (1978). 315.

²¹ We have the testimony of Jerome in *De viris illustribus* that he himself had read Ephraem's writing about the Holy Spirit. PL 23, col 745.

²² *The Panarion of Epiphanius* 51.16.1-2, transl. Philip R. Amidon.

"Christ was born on the 6th of January, thirteen days after the winter solstice and the increase of light and day. The pagans celebrate that day, the idolaters, that is, on the 25th of December, which the Romans call Saturnalia, (ἐγεννήθη Χριστὸς τῇ πρὸ ὀκτῶ εἰδῶν Ἰανουαρίων μετὰ δεκατρεῖς ἡμέρας τῆς χειμερινῆς τροπῆς καὶ τῆς τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας προσθήκης. ταύτην δὲ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐορτάζουσι Ἕλληνες, φημί δὲ οἱ εἰδωλολάτραι, τῇ πρὸ ὀκτῶ καλανδῶν Ἰανουαρίων, τῇ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις καλουμένη Σατουρνάλια,) the Egyptians Kronia, and the Alexandrians Kikellia. For the 25th of December is the dividing point which is the solstice, and the day begins to increase with the additional light. The thirteenth day is reached on the 6th of January, with one-thirtieth of an hour added to each day up to the day of Christ's birth, as Ephraem, the wise man of the Syrians, testifies (ὡς καὶ ὁ παρὰ τοῖς Σύροις σοφὸς Ἐφραῖμ ἐμαρτύρησε) in these words in his Exegeses: 'The advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, the birth in the flesh or the complete incarnation, which is called Epiphany, (οὕτως γὰρ ὠκονομήθη ἡ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ παρουσία, ἡ κατὰ σάρκα γέννησις εἴτ' οὖν τελεία ἐνανθρώπησις, ὃ καλεῖται Ἐπιφάνεια,) was so arranged that there was an interval of thirteen days from the beginning of the increase of light. For it was necessary that this should prefigure the number of our Lord Jesus Christ himself and his twelve disciples, which filled up the number of the thirteen days of the increase of light.'²³

The Saviour, then was born in the forty-second year of Augustus, Emperor of Rome, in the consulship mentioned earlier, twenty-nine years after Augustus annexed the Jews.²⁴

---The Saviour suffered on the 20th of March...He was born then in January, on the eight day before the Ides of January, which for the Romans is the evening of the 5th of January preceding the 6th. For the Egyptians it is the 11th of Tybi, for the Syrians or Greeks the 6th of Audynaïos, for the people of Cyprus or Salamis the 5th of the fifth month...and for the Hebrews the 5th of Tebeth. For even on this point the word of the prophet had to be fulfilled: 'The ark of God came in to us', (he means the complete incarnation of Christ) 'on the fifth day of the fifth month', as took place then among the Hebrews.

- - - around the eleventh month he came to John and was baptized in the Jordan River in the thirtieth year of his Incarnation. This was on the 8th of November, (...περὶ τὸν ἐνδέκατον μῆνα ἦλθε πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ τῷ τριακοστῷ ἔτει τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐνσάρκου γεννήσεως, πρὸ ἕξ εἰδῶν Νοεμβρίων,) which for the Egyptians is the 12th of Athyr--- and for the Hebrews the 7th of Marheshvan...²⁵

²³ Cf. Ephraem the Syrian *HNat* 5:13.

²⁴ 51.22.3 - 51.22.19.

²⁵ 51.23.5 - 24.5.

For he was born in the forty-second year of Augustus. But it says that (he was conceived) on the 20th of June or the 21st of May (I cannot tell which) in the consulship of Sulpicius Camerinus... For in fact the certain date of Christ's birth is the 11th of Tybi. - - - Nevertheless, everything (goes on to show that on the) 11th of Tybi, by Egyptian reckoning, the birth of the Lord in the flesh took place. (ὁμως ἐκ πανταχόθεν [δέδεικται ὅτι τῆ] ἐνδεκάτῃ Τυβί κατ' Αἰγυπτίους ἡ προειρημένη τοῦ κυρίου ἔνσαρκος γέννησις ἐγένετο.)

And around that same date thirty years later the first sign was performed at Cana in Galilee, when the water became wine. (καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν τὴν ἐνδεκάτην μετὰ ἔτη τριάκοντα γέγονε τὸ πρῶτον σημεῖον ἐν Κανᾷ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ὅτε τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνος ἐγένετο.) So it is that in many places even today this occurs because of the miracle which occurred then as a sign to the unbelievers, as in many places springs and rivers attest which turn into wine. An example is the spring of the city of Cibyra in Caria, at the very hour when the waiters drew the water and he said, 'Give it to the head steward'. The spring at Gerasa in Arabia offers the same evidence. (For we) ourselves have drunk from the spring in Cibyra, and our brothers from the spring in Gerasa, which is in the martyrs' shrine. Many too in Egypt can attest this concerning the Nile. So that on what is for the Egyptians the 11th of Tybi, everyone draws water and stores it away in Egypt itself and in many other lands... (διόπερ ἐν τῇ ἐνδεκάτῃ τοῦ Τυβί κατ' Αἰγυπτίους πάντες ὑδρεύονται ὕδωρ καὶ ἀποτιθέασιν ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ Αἰγυπτῶ καὶ ἐν πολλαῖς πατρίσιν.)²⁶

It is obvious that Epiphanius did not know the origins of the celebration of the feast of Epiphany.²⁷ He was mainly interested in calculating different historical dates and exposing the intrigues of the heretics. He knew that heretics celebrate Christ's baptism on January 6, which Epiphanius thinks is the wrong day - for him 8th of November is the correct date - and that the Church has a tradition of Christ's birth, the carnal Epiphany, on the same day of January 6. The themes of Christian Epiphany, as we know them today, are presented there: the birth and baptism of Christ, the miracle at Cana and the adoration of the Magi. This has led scholars to conclude that the Coreum of January 6 mentioned by Clement and here Epiphanius is the first stage and the origin of the Christian Epiphany.

However, they are two different feasts, one heretical celebrating Christ's baptism, and one Christian, celebrating Christ's birth or carnal Epiphany, which happen to coincide on the same day, at the time when the Roman calendar was taken as a basis everywhere in the Byzantine empire.

²⁶ 51.27.4 - 51.30.3. See closer ch. 5.4.

²⁷ As Bradshaw has said: "When a variety of explanations is advanced for the origin of a liturgical custom, its true source has almost certainly been forgotten." *The Search for the Origins* (1992), 70-71.

Epiphanius was displeased that the leaders of the idolaters celebrated on exactly the same day as the Christians had their feast of Epiphany, because for Epiphanius the Feast of Epiphany was already a fixed feast of the Catholic Church, or at least on the way to being recognized as such.²⁸ The idolaters are cunning, keeping people away from the true teaching of the Church by having their Coreum, a competing feast, on the same day as Christian Epiphany; this is what Epiphanius seems to mean. This is in line with the previous information given to us by Clement about the feast of Basilides, which Clement does not call Epiphany. We see here a gap: the Gnostic feast of Coreum, on the one hand, and the Christian Feast of Epiphany on the other. Epiphanius is the only link between these two feasts, and even he seems not to know the real relation between them. Therefore I would not lay much weight upon Epiphanius' trustworthiness in this matter.

4.3. Gnosticism in Egypt

What is the system that Clement and Epiphanius are referring to when speaking of the Feast on January 6th? Whence do the Gnostics draw their teachings and what do they teach about Christ's Incarnation and baptism? What is the relation between them and the Catholic Christianity at that time?

One of the most potent forces operating in the Church's environment, particularly in the second and third centuries, was Gnosticism. This is the name applied to an amorphous group of sects or schools of thought about which theologians like Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus inform us. It is better to regard Gnosticism as a trend which was broader and older than Christianity. As the product of syncretism, it drew upon Jewish, pagan and Oriental sources, and brought a distinctive attitude and certain characteristic ideas to the solution of the problem of evil and human destiny.²⁹

4.3.1. Jewish-based

The Church Fathers inform us that the first Gnostics came from the Orient, more accurately from the Samaritan-Palestinian area, and their teachings arose from the

²⁸ *Didache Apostolorum* with its scheme of three feasts was a well-known document in the Church and we know Epiphany celebrations from different parts of the Church in Epiphanius' time. In the *Didache* (ch. XIII) there is also a strong refusal to attend the feasts of the pagans.

²⁹ "Es steht kein philosophisches Erkenntnisideal, kein erkenntnistheoretisches Wissen an, sondern ein Wissen, das zugleich eine erlösende, befreiende Wirkung hat." Rudolph, *Die Gnosis* (1990), 63-64, 169-175. Cf. I.Tam. 6-26.

biblical Jewish tradition.³⁰ In most Gnostic systems Jewish, more correctly heterodox Jewish, ingredients were prominent. Some of the later New Testament documents also combat what appear to be Gnostic influences. Simon Magus is the first person whose name we know in connection with Gnosticism.³¹ His followers seized upon the Christian teachings and endeavoured to influence the Christian congregations as did most later Gnostics, too. Simon was obviously a representative of the aforementioned intelligentsia of Oriental-Jewish origins with a certain element of Greek culture.³²

In Gnosticism the story of Adam is important with regard to the history of the world and the life of men. In the fall of Adam the whole of humanity sinned and the creation was corrupted. But in Adam also a number of souls are spared - he is the keeper of souls -, and these souls will be reunited with their bodies on earth at the predetermined end of the world. God has ordained his plan for the world and salvation for the elect, and the Evil One cannot change it. These things are God's secrets and only people of understanding can know them; upon them their hope is set. In early Jewish Wisdom literature³³ Wisdom is connected with God or a figure substituting for Him. The whole of Salvation history is under His guidance. She protects her own people and guides them to know God. She is like a Saviour and bestows Immortality. Torah and Wisdom lead to a special awareness of Salvation: one has to possess knowledge and be wise in order to attain Salvation. The Torah is equal to redemptive *Gnosis*.³⁴

Syria (Antioch), where we can trace the beginnings of the Gnostic congregations, and Alexandria, where *Gnosis* reached its bloom, are both prominent centres of Greek-Oriental cultures, and there Gnosis came in touch with the philosophical

³⁰ "Ein Grossteil der älteren und neuen Originalschriften hat diese Angaben bestätigen können. Vor allem durch die koptischen Nag-Hammadi-Texte ist die These, dass die Mehrzahl der gnostischen Bildungen am Rande des Judentums entstanden sind, weitgehend erhärtet worden." Rudolph, *idem* 296-297.

³¹ Acts 8:9-25. St. Justin Martyr, who was also from Samaria, informs us that Simon was active there under the Emperor Claudius (41-54). *Apologia I*. 26:1-3. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I. 23:1-4, and Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VI. 9-18, know the system of the Simonians in more detail. "Für den historischen Simon ist sicherlich anzunehmen, dass er in Samarien eine gnostische Gemeinde gründete, die von dem sich ausbreitenden Christentum als ernsthafte Konkurrenz betrachtet wurde." Rudolph, *Die Gnosis* (1990), 305.

³² Rudolph, *idem*, 315-319.

³³ Proverbs, the Wisdom of Solomon and Jesus Sirach are dated from the fourth to first centuries B.C.

³⁴ Rudolph, *idem*. 298-302.

and religious movements of the time.³⁵

4.3.2. Philo, Basilides and Valentinus

The Gnosticism that we know is transmitted by three individuals.

Philo (about 30 B.C. - 45 C.E.) was a considerable personage in the Jewish community of Alexandria. He tried to interpret Jewish theology in terms of Hellenistic Philosophy, but there is nothing to show that he knew Jesus or his teachings. Philo's works were originally written to a small group of prominent Jews in Alexandria. He wholeheartedly accepted the Platonic distinction between the ideal, or intelligible, and the material worlds, but maintained that all their best ideas had been anticipated in the Jewish Scriptures. Two aspects of his thought are of special interest for the study of Christian doctrine: the method of allegorizing Scripture, and his concept of Logos. As intermediary between God and the universe the Logos has a double rôle: it is God's agent in creation, and it is also the means by which the mind apprehends God.³⁶

After C.E. 70, when Judaism turned back in upon itself and found congenial expression in Talmudic concepts, the liberalizing thought of Philo was doomed to extinction among those of his own race. It is a necessary inference, therefore, that some time after the destruction of Jerusalem certain members of the Alexandrian Church, of either Jewish or Gentile extraction, must have begun to notice the works of the Alexandrian philosopher and to appreciate their worth in constituting an attractive bridge between the Jewish and Gentile outlooks.³⁷

Jewish Gnosis does not seek an answer to the question of Jesus, but tries to find the solution to the problem of existence by using the old Jewish basis as proof for the systems Simon and Philo themselves had created. This is a kind of academic debate of intellectuals, and does not meet the religious desire of the masses. Thus Philo's notions form the basis for a development of Christian Gnosis.

Basilides is the first significant representative of the Christian *gnosis*, who saw himself as such and wanted to be a Christian Theologian. He was active in Alexandria during the reign of Emperors Hadrian and Antoninus Pius (117-161).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 303-304.

³⁶ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (1978), 8-11.

³⁷ Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1957), 237.

We do not know if he is from Egypt or perhaps from Syria. Selwyn claims that he is of Jewish origin³⁸, but there is no evidence whatever to support this. On the contrary, Frend finds that he was not uninfluenced by current anti-Jewish feeling.³⁹ We know nothing more precise about his teachings. "Während die einen Quellen, angeführt von Irenäus, ein dualistisches, der bisherigen gnostischen Überlieferung verwandtes System zeichnen, bietet Hippolyt ein wesentlich monistisches, stark griechisch-philosophisches Lehrgebäude," Rudolph concludes.⁴⁰ Redemption consists in the coming of the Father's first-begotten, *Nous*, in human form to release the spiritual element imprisoned in men's bodies. The Light of the Gospel shone on Jesus, the son of Mary, in his baptism, and he became Christ, a purely spiritual being, temporarily encased in a body, who had been sent by the Father to liberate mankind from Yahweh and his angels.⁴¹ Irenaeus cites the Gnostic Kerinthos, who, according to Hippolytus, taught in the same way as his contemporary Basilides, in following words:

"Jesum autem subjectit, non ex Virgine natum; fuisse autem Joseph et Mariae filium similiter ut reliqui omnes homines, et plus potuisse justitia et prudentia, et sapientia ab hominibus. Et post baptismum descendisse in eum, ab ea principalitate quae est super omnia Christum figura columbae; et tunc annuntiasse incognitum Patrem et virtutes perfecisse."⁴²

Jesus was not born from the virgin, rather he is the son of Joseph and Mary, in the same way as all other people. He has, however, more righteousness, comprehension and wisdom. After the baptism Christ descended on him, from the supreme authority which is over all, in the form of a dove and announced the unknown Father and completed virtues.

Valentinus was a slightly later contemporary to Basilides. He taught at Alexandria and later at Rome in the middle decades of the second century. We know about his teachings from the writings of St. Irenaeus and Hippolytus.⁴³ Much light has been thrown on Valentinus's own teaching by the papyri discovered at Nag

³⁸ 'The Feast of Tabernacles, Epiphany and Baptism' (1912), 230.

³⁹ W.H.C. Frend, *Saints and Sinners in the Early Church* (1985), 37, 46.

⁴⁰ *Die Gnosis* (1990), 334.

⁴¹ Hippolyt, *Refutatio* VII.26.8. Frend, *idem*, 48.

⁴² Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.26.1.

⁴³ *Adv. Haer.* I. 1-8 and *Refutatio* VI. 21-37

Hammadi.⁴⁴ According to them, above and beyond the universe dwells the supreme Father, *Bythos*, the unbegotten *Monad* and perfect *Aeon*, and by His side *Sige* (Silence), who is His *Ennoia* (Thought). From these proceed three pairs of aeons. Only the aeon *Nous*, which is *monogenes*, possesses the capacity for knowing and revealing the Father. The aeons *Nous* and *Aletheia* produce at the Father's behest, a new pair of aeons, Christ and the Holy Spirit, to instruct the aeons in their true relation to Him. Order having been thus restored, they sing the praises of the Father and produce the Saviour Jesus as the perfect fruit of the *Pleroma*.

In the Valentinian systems there are three classes of men - the carnal, the psychical and the pneumatic. Those who are carnal cannot in any case be saved, while in order to attain redemption the pneumatic only need to apprehend the teaching of Jesus. The psychical class can be saved, though with difficulty, through the knowledge and imitation of Jesus.⁴⁵

Many of the Gnostic teachers sincerely regarded themselves as Christians, and there is an element of truth in the thesis that their systems were attempts to restate the simple Gospel in terms which contemporaries would find philosophically, even scientifically, more satisfying.⁴⁶ The root incompatibility between Christianity and Gnosticism really lay in their different attitudes to the material order and the historical process. Because in general they disparaged matter and were disinterested in history, the Gnostics were prevented from giving full value to the fundamental Christian doctrine of the incarnation of the Word.⁴⁷

In classical Antiquity the word σωτήρ corresponds more to the concept of 'liberator', and this well suits the Gnostic 'Salvator' figure, which can also be an 'Apparition' or 'Messenger' bringing the message of salvation through redemptive knowledge in the name of the highest God. "Es bedürfte auch Jesus der Erlösung,

⁴⁴ The manuscripts included in the Jung Codex, edited in the *Coptic Gnostic Library* volumes.

⁴⁵ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (1978), 23-24.

⁴⁶ "Erlösung, Kreuzigung und Auferstehung sind für die Gnosis weithin als symbolische Vorgänge von kosmischem Ausmass verstanden worden und unterlagen dementsprechend ganz neuen Deutungen. Dies war eine der Tatsachen, die die Gefährlichkeit der gnostischen Lehren für das orthodoxe christliche Verständnis unter Beweis stellte." Rudolph, *Die Gnosis* (1990), 168-170.

⁴⁷ Kelly, *idem* 27-28.

damit er nicht von der Einsicht (*Ennoia*) des Mangels, in die er versetzt war, zurückgehalten werde," as Rudolph quotes Clement of Alexandria, who transmits the teachings of Valentinus.⁴⁸

Gnosis had no organized hierarchical congregation because such was alien to its concept of salvation. As for liturgical practices, Clement of Alexandria informs us of a New Moon Feast observed by the Gnostic Carpocratians. The first day in the week, our Sunday, was probably also their Lord's Day. Otherwise we would be informed about it in the writings against the Heresies.⁴⁹

Because Gnosticism was a response to the polemic concerning the divinity of Jesus, it had great influence among people interested in the person of Jesus. However, it promised redemption only to the chosen people and thus was beyond the reach of the poor and wretched.

4.3.3. Gnostic baptism

The water rites are included in Gnosticism apart from Christianity, and they arose from Jewish purification rites, and many of them of heretical origins. Total immersion in flowing (i.e. living) water was a regular occurrence, as well as sprinkling and pouring. Baptism means first initiation to the community, secondly purification or entering into the *pleroma*, thirdly a means to attain immortality, and fourthly initiation into the secrets of Gnostic wisdom. Some Valentian groups had a redemption ceremony of their own by means of immersion in water. They also baptized the dying. For the Gnostics baptism is an act which gives the spirit (*pneuma*) of immortality and redemption, grants the resurrection and makes them 'pneumatic'. But more significant for them than baptism is chrismation, which is mostly, however, linked with the baptismal ceremony before or after baptism.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ex Theodoto 22,7. Rudolph, *Die Gnosis* (1990), 141-142, 230.

⁴⁹ Rudolph, *idem*, 232.

⁵⁰ *Idem*, 244-248

*Evangelium Veritatis*⁵¹ mentions some ceremonies which are certainly associated with baptism-chrism: divesting, baptism in water, investiture unction with holy oil (probably performed as a signation-sealing with the cross), rising up.⁵² *Evangelium Philippi*⁵³, which is closely related with the *Evangelium Veritatis*, has a strong emphasis on chrism as more important than baptism.⁵⁴ The chrismation was performed for πνευματικοί,⁵⁵ while the other groups seem to remain outside. In *Pistis Sophia*, which is related to Valentinian gnosis⁵⁶ and is dated to the third century⁵⁷, the three levels of the mystery are also present: "...and those of the Midst will baptize them, and they will give them the spiritual inunction and they will seal them with the seals of their mysteries."⁵⁸

In the polemic tractate *The Testimony of Truth* the validity of water baptism is denied with the observation that Jesus did not baptize any of his disciples either. Instead the Baptism of Truth is recommended, i. e. turning away from the world. The practice is directed mainly towards the central ecclesiastical institutions of Baptism and the Eucharist. It is not desirable to represent the secret of the invisible power with visible and impermanent things. Perfect redemption is the Gnosis of the quantity without words. It is not fleshly - the body is mortal - nor psychical either because the soul also comes from incompleteness and is only the dwelling-place of the pneuma. Therefore redemption must also be pneumatic. Cultic activities were spiritualised, i.e. they were reduced to mere symbols.⁵⁹

⁵¹ EV is a Nag Hammadi text belonging to the Valentinian school. It is edited and translated in Nag Hammadi Studies, vol. XXII/ 1985, 82-122. E. Segelberg considers it to be a homily delivered after the act of chrismation. 'The Baptismal Rite according to some of the Coptic-Gnostic Texts of Nag-Hammadi' (1962), 120.

⁵² E. Segelberg, 'The Baptismal Rite according' (1962), 123.

⁵³ Edited and translated in NHS, vol. II/1971.

⁵⁴ Segelberg, *idem*, 126-127.

⁵⁵ *Idem*, 119.

⁵⁶ Fr. M-M. Sagnard, 'La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de Saint Irénée' (1947), 420f. E. Segelberg, *idem*, 128.

⁵⁷ A. von Harnack, Carl Schmidt, Walter Till. See closer e.g. E. Segelberg, *Masbuta* (1958), 168.

⁵⁸ *Pistis Sophia*. Transl. Violet Macdermot. NHS IX/1978, 197.

⁵⁹ Rudolph, *Die Gnosis* (1990), 237-8.

4.3.5. Theses relating to the History of Religions

It has been customary to find the origins of the Christian Feast of Epiphany, in the History of Religions view, in the Gnostic celebrations on January 6. The Gnostic groups of Basilides and Valentinus gave a demonstration of their teaching at the old Coreum feast on the sixth of January, and Epiphanius describes it while warning of the danger posed by different heretical ideas.⁶⁰ The theme of the feast, however, was not the baptism of Jesus Christ, but the idol Core giving birth to Aeon, which was thought to take place in the baptism of Jesus. We do not have any evidence that the name of this feast was Epiphany, as we have seen. According to the Jewish law the worship of idols was strictly forbidden. The statue of Core was no doubt an idol for those who wished to abide by the Jewish Scripture. The movement, which later became defined as the Catholic Church, was threatened from all sides, but it forcefully resisted every conception which it felt to be extra-biblical and thus heretical, committing itself oecumenically to the Pauline teaching of the divinity of the Incarnate Saviour. Thus it seems improbable that in the case of such a crucial teaching as the birth and baptism of Jesus this movement would have concurred with the practice of a group which it considered to be heretical. If it had been the decision of the leaders of the Church, so that their "true teaching" about the Incarnation would oust the "wrong teachings" of the Gnostics, it would have caused Christians - especially the *simplices* - to experience fatal uncertainty as to the truth of the Church.

The Gnostics were not concerned about combining their teachings with the old Egyptian traditions of the Coreum feast. They did not think it was difficult to adopt pagan customs to describe their concept of the Divine Truth, especially when their concept of salvation was so much dependent on the deeds of an individual, as the pagans too had taught. The core of Christianity in its Pauline form, which was the basis of the teaching of the movement which later became Catholic in the Roman Empire, was that salvation is God's act, which every willing man may receive without any merits of his own, and that is received in baptism. After baptism "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,⁶¹" that is; after receiving salvation there is nothing more to do but to live in this status, "in Christ". Everyday living is the crucial test: a man has to strive to abide in salvation or "in

⁶⁰ *Panarion* 22-24.

⁶¹ Gal. 2:20

Christ⁶², because the demonic powers constantly attempt to trip him up and deflect him out of the status of salvation⁶³. The Gnostic teachings were totally different and for salvation far more was needed than was within the reach of ordinary men.

The Christians strive to abide in the Old Testament and in the Jewish traditions, because they were taught by Jesus. The adversaries often claim the same, but "je mehr sich mit der Gnosis die Tendenz ausbreitet, die Autorität des Alten Testaments zu relativieren, wenn nicht überhaupt zu verwerfen, und die heilsgeschichtlich begründeten positiven Beziehungen zum Judentum in Frage zu stellen, desto stärker wächst auf der antignostischen Seite die Neigung, die Einheit des Christentums mit dem wahren Judentum zu betonen."⁶⁴

The concepts and teachings of Gnostics and of the Christian teachers were undoubtedly confused in people's mind, as seems to be the case even today, but the liturgical function was the "official" representation of the teaching in Christianity as well as in Gnosticism. It could also be understood in a way that was not intended, but at least liturgical practice strived to present the way of thinking of the Catholic Church. Therefore I reject the former thesis of the Gnostic Origin of the Feast of Epiphany.

4.4. Origen

Origen (d. 254) was a great teacher who succeeded Clement in Alexandria. He received a good training in philosophy, although he had Christian parents. In his youth he taught in the catechetical school in Alexandria, but settled later in Palestine, in the Gentile-Christian city of Caesarea. In his old age he wrote a long apology entitled *Contra Celsum* in which he says:

"If anyone makes a rejoinder to this by talking of our observances on certain days, The Lord's Day which we keep, or the Preparation, or the Passover, or Pentecost, we would reply to this that..." (Ἐάν τις πρὸς ταῦτα ἀνθροπέσῃ τὰ περὶ τῶν παρ' ἡμῶν κυριακῶν, ἢ πα-

⁶² Luke 15:4

⁶³ Mark. 4:34-36; 2 Cor. 2:14-17

⁶⁴ Herndl, *Studien zur Epistole Agnostikonum* (1965), 84-87, 89

ρασκευῶν, ἢ τοῦ πάσχα, ἢ τῆς πεντηκοστῆς δι' ἡμερῶν γινόμενα-
λεκτέον καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο...)⁶⁵

Origen does not speak of Epiphany, but only of the old biblical feasts which came to be connected with the events of the Church - the *passio Christi* and *Ascensio Christi*. Preparation - fasting - is also old Jewish custom, which had already gained a foothold in the early stages of Christian teaching, both in Jewish and in Gentile churches. If in some Jewish-Christian circles it was the practice to hold a feast celebrating Christ's Incarnation, it had not reached the Gentile Church in Caesarea. It seems that the leading teachers of the Church did not have any need to develop new universal customs, because the old ones seemed to be sufficient to reflect the faith of Christians. First new challenges, more especially the danger posed by Arius, raised the need of an universal celebration of Christ's true Incarnation.

In his homily on the book of Ezekiel Origen compares the numbers of the date on which Ezekiel received his vision of the heavenly cherub-chariot (Ezek. 1,1: in the 30th year, 4th month, 5th day) with the numbers connected with Jesus' life. He says that Jesus was about 30 years when he began his ministry "and the heavens were open in the River Jordan". In the fourth month, according to the Hebrew calculation, Jesus was baptized and this event took place on the fifth day of the fourth month.⁶⁶ This shows that Origen knew a tradition which claimed that Christ was baptized on January 5th. It might be the same tradition of which Clement was speaking. But Origen uses the date as usual in an allegorical way, which shows how little he was interested in the historicity of the Bible. From *Contra Celsum* we understand that for Origen the only thing that matters is communion with God, which is achieved by upright living and contemplation of the truth. For the wise man all days are the same, as they are in God's sight - celebrations are otiose. Origen's notion of worship and festivals has much in common with the philosophical tradition of the religiosity of Late Antiquity on

⁶⁵ *Contra Celsum* 8:22. PG 11, col 1857r. Translated by Henry Chadwick.

⁶⁶ "Et dominus Jesus Christus incipiens erat quasi triginta annorum secus fluvium Iordanem, et aperti sunt caeli. — Ab hoc anno sumera mihi quartum mensura et intelligit baptismum Iesus in quarto mense novi anni. Et cum mense qui apud Romanos Ianuarius nuncupatur, baptismum Domini factum esse cognoscimus, qui est mensis quartus ab anno novo juxta supputationem Hebraeorum. Et quia de quatuor elementis mundi substantia corpus assumpsit, recipiens etiam sensus humanus, ideo forsitan et in quarto mense, et in quinto de mensis in illius visionem." *Hom. Ezekiel* 1:4.

which his pagan opponent's argument also depended. Origen was a sophisticated Christian, well-acquainted with Greek thought; we may not assume that his fellow believers shared his views on the nature of Christian festivals. Educated pagans as well as Christian thinkers might spiritualise away the significance of particular moments of time.⁶⁷

Origen's view of Incarnation was in line with the later Catholic Church, as was his view of baptism. Yet he as a theologian did not concern himself with making his thoughts accessible to the common people. They remained subjects of discussion among the highly educated and philosophically orientated. To present these thoughts in the form of a liturgical celebration was the duty of the bishops, and it seems that the bishops did not deem it necessary. Perhaps sermons were the only church practice influenced by Origen's ideas during his lifetime.

Would Origen then possibly know the tradition of the Feast of Tabernacles as the eschatological fulfilment of the Messianic age? It seems that very soon the Gentiles began to take an antagonistic attitude towards the Jews, because they did not accept Jesus as Messiah. The allegorical method of interpretation caused eschatology to be viewed differently from the way early Jewish Christians understood it. It was now seen to point to the future, to the Lord's second coming, not merely to the Messianic age, which began with Christ. Origen, as well as St. Methodius of Olympus⁶⁸ and others, uses the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles as an allegory. They regarded the human body as a transitional place on the way to eternal life, as the booths were also a temporary dwelling-place for the Israelites on the way to the promised land.⁶⁹ This view already occurs in 2 Cor. 5:1: "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Didymus the Blind of Alexandria (313-398) continued this line of thought when he wrote that the Feast of Tabernacles will be realised in the coming world of the Resurrection, when

⁶⁷ E.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (1990), 100-101.

⁶⁸ Methodius was opposed to Origen's spirituality, though he was in many things dependent on him. We do not know when he was active. Altaner-Stüber, *Patrologie* (1978), 215.

⁶⁹ Methodius of Olympus, *Convivium (Symposium)* IX, 1-5; 233-257. Origen, *Hom. Num. XXIII, 11*. J. Denain, 'La Fête des Tabernacles dans l'exégèse patristique' (1957), 267, 270.

mortal corpses will be resuscitated to be immortal. The body changes at that moment into the divine tabernacle (*theia skene*).⁷⁰

Thus these Gentile Christians had quite different ways of thinking from the early Jewish Christians, and it was their Church that dominated. Heretical views and feasts were abandoned, but the Jewish-based ways and feasts were preserved only to the extent that was necessary according to the canonical Gospels and St. Paul, whose reputation as a preacher of the true Gospel was now restored. The Feast of Tabernacles, though it was seen by the Jewish Christians as a fulfilment of the foretold descent of God's Son, was not one of these.

4.5. The Papyrus Piece on Epiphany

O. Cullmann has drawn attention to one interesting piece of papyrus found in Egypt, and dated to the beginning of the fourth century. It seems to be a kind of liturgical formula intended for a church choir in the celebration of Tybi 5.⁷¹ The size of the papyrus is 26 x 11 cm and it has writing on both sides.

The *recto* has four lines:

1. + ογενηθησεβηθλεεμκαιανατραφεισενναζαρετκατηγησασεντοικαλιλεα
2. ηταμεσιμιωνεξουρανουτωαστερωσφανεντωσπημεναισακκραουροντες
3. εθαυμασανουγονηπεσουντεσελεγανδοξατοπατριαληλουηα
4. δοξατουιωκαιτοαγιωπνεματιαληλουηααληλουηααληλουηα.

The *verso* has three lines:

1. τυβι ε
2. ++ εκλεκτοσοαγιοσιωαννησοβαπτιστησωκυριξασμετανοια
3. ενολωτωκοσμωεισαφεισιντωναμαρτιωνημων.

⁷⁰ *Comm. in Zach.* 194.

⁷¹ O. Cullman, 'The Origin of Christmas' (1956), 25-26. He refers to the article of G. Bickell 'Das älteste liturgische Schriftstück' in *Mitteilungen aus der Sammlung der Papyrus. Erzherzog Rainer*, 1887, II. P. 83-86. The dating is made by K. Wessely in *Österreichischen Monatschrift für den Orient* 1884, P. 152. It is based mainly on the doxology of the piece, "welche der vorarianischen Zeit angehören muss, da später die Katholiken zu der abgesonderten Erwähnung des Vaters, die Arianer aber an der Gleichstellung der göttlichen Personen Anstoss genommen haben würden."

The editor of the papyrus, G. Bickell has corrected the text in the form:

Recto:

1. Ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐν Βηθλεὲμ καὶ ἀνατραφεὶς ἐν Ναζαρέτ, κατοικήσας ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ,
2. εἶδομεν σημεῖον ἐξ οὐρανοῦ· (τῷ) ἀστέρος φανέντος, ποιμένες ἀγραυλοῦντες
3. ἐθαύμασαν· (οὐ) γονυπεσόντες ἔλεγον· δόξα τῷ Πατρὶ, ἀλληλούια·
4. δόξα τῷ Υἱῷ καὶ τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι, ἀλληλούια, ἀλληλούια, ἀλληλούια.

Verso:

1. Τυβὶ ε`
2. Ἐκλεκτὸς ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής, ὁ κηρύξας μετάνοιαν
3. ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.⁷²

The bold letters *τω* and *ου* do not seem to fit fluently into the text. Bickell has developed a theory, according to which the piece of papyrus consists of antiphonal verses, which are meant to be recited in between certain psalm verses at the feast. In Psalm 33 (LXX 32) there are words *τῷ* and *οὐ*: the former after the five first verses and the latter after the 16th verse. Bickell thinks that *τω* is showing, when the psalm-reader has to read the verses 5-15, and "the choir" continues by its part until the next break is shown by *ου*. There are still several problems with this theory. First, Psalm 33 is according the old lectionaries never read at Epiphany. The psalms which were read do not have this system of *τω* and *ου*. It is also difficult to see why the important rubrics are hidden in between the other text. Bickell notes that one can understand the letters *ου*, if *ουγονηπεσουντεσελεγαν* means "not falling on their knees they said". It would be "eine rubricistische Anweisung an die Gemeinde, hier nicht niederzuknieen."⁷³

It is obvious throughout the text that the writer of the papyrus did not have sufficient knowledge of Greek. Nor did Bickell correct the original text here properly. The word *τω* is difficult to explain, but it does not seem to be central in understanding the totality. In the case of *ου* it is easier to find a solution. If we replace it with the word *οὐν* (meaning 'then, consequently') the sentence is

⁷² Bickell, *idem*, 83-84.

⁷³ *idem*, 84.

clearer.⁷⁴

My translation:

Recto

1. Born at Bethlehem, brought up at Nazareth, dwelt in Galilee.
2. We have seen a sign from heaven, the shining star. Shepherds tending their flocks
3. were amazed, and then falling on their knees they said: Glory to the Father. Hallelujah.
4. Glory to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Verso

1. Tybi 5
2. Elect is the holy John the Baptist, who has preached repentance
3. in the whole world for the forgiveness of our sins.

0. Cullmann has put forward a theory concerning these lines, too. He thinks that the first line is recited after the reading of the biblical account of the story of Christ's birth at Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt, and the return to Nazareth. After the reading of the Magi from Matthew there is recited the second line, and after the reading of Luke 2 the response would have been the third and fourth lines.⁷⁵ This does yet not fit the lectionary system found in ancient documents. The gospel passages were not read in that order.

I agree with Cullmann that each of the four lines form a totality, and they are meant to be recited in turn. But what has been inserted in between these lines might well have been verses of the psalms belonging to that day, e.g. the Psalm 87 seems to suit well to the sentences referred to: the first line after the fourth verse, the second line after the fifth verse, the third line after the sixth verse, and the last line at the end of the psalm. This system is still in use in the festal services within the Byzantine tradition.

In spite of how these sentences were presented it seems that the earliest signs of

⁷⁴ οὐν should be after the word γοιυνησοῦντες, but the Greek here is in any case incomplete.

⁷⁵ Cullmann, 'The Origin of Christmas' (1956), 26.

the Feast of Epiphany appear there: the physical birth of Jesus, the sign⁷⁶, the star, the shepherds and the salvation through the forgiveness of sins and baptism; the last one implicitly. The same signs are depicted in earliest Christian art.⁷⁷

O. Cullmann draws still broader conclusions: "It concerns (= verso) the feast of Epiphany of January 5-6, when Christ's baptism in the Jordan was commemorated. The fragment (= recto) concerns that part of the festival devoted to the birth of Christ."⁷⁸ However, Cullmann has not taken into consideration the fact that Tybi 5 is, according to the stabilized Alexandrian calendar, December 31, not January 6, and thus the commemoration of this liturgical piece cannot be the Christian Epiphany of January 5-6. In addition, I cannot see how we could use this fragment as evidence for the commemoration of Christ's baptism on that day. The mention of John the Baptist might refer to his commemoration on that particular day, as Bickell notes. Incarnation, John the Baptist and forgiveness of sins are the main themes of this piece, but the fragment is so short that one cannot draw further conclusions as to its total contents.

This papyrus conveys, however, a strong sense of the celebrations around Christmas and Epiphany.⁷⁹ If it originated from later times, we could consider it a part of the cycle of commemorations during the festal time. If the dating is correct, it might point to the same instability of the date of the feast, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In the *Epistula Apostolorum* the third chapter, preserved only in Ethiopic, contains the following sentence: "(He) was wrapped (in swaddling clothes) and made known at Bethlehem, and that he was reared and grew up, as we saw."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Cf. Is. 7:11,14 and Luke 2:12

⁷⁷ See closer ch. 5.3.

⁷⁸ Cullmann, *idem*, 25-26.

⁷⁹ L. Kunz considers the poem to be of high quality on both a musical and literary level: "Die Texte der drei ältesten Epiphanie-Troparien haben nicht nur einen liturgischen sondern auch einen überaus hohen musikgeschichtlichen und literaturgeschichtlichen Wert, der um so höher ist, als sie aus so früher Zeit stammen." 'Die Struktur der drei ältesten Epiphanie-Troparien' (1941).

⁸⁰ Transl. by R. McL. Wilson. *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol.1, 193.

Whether this a coincidence or whether it has it some connection with the text of line 1 of our papyrus, is difficult to say.

Would this papyrus then be a witness to a Gnostic feast on Tybi 5? As we have seen the Gnosticism of Basilides regarded the Father as the supreme God, and thus the first part of the doxology could be Gnostic. The Son and Holy Spirit seem, however, not to belong to the Gnostic ideas. Jesus and the Holy Spirit form a pair, as we have seen, but Jesus is not called the Son of God in the Gnostic systems. The Gnostic origin is unprobable, as other scholars already have pointed.

4.6. St. Athanasius and St. John Cassian

The first mention of baptism in connection with the Christian Feast of Epiphany in Egypt occurs in the 16th section (canon) of a collection, which is preserved in its entirety in an Arabic translation from the eleventh century. It is divided into 107 sections, which are also used in its scientific edition. The Arabic translator attributes the document to St. Athanasius (the Great) of Alexandria (295-373), and W. Riedel, the editor of the work, agrees,⁸¹ as also later scholars. We have a fragmentary Coptic version of it, preserved in a sixth-seventh century papyrus, but the division of the sections are not found there, and the text corresponding to the 16th canon is very brief. The purpose of the 16th canon is to request the bishops to show responsibility to the poor,⁸² and it runs in the Arabic version as follows:

"A bishop shall not be any Sunday without almsgiving. And the poor and orphans shall he know as doth a father, and shall gather together at the great festival of the Lord, vowing and distributing much alms and giving unto each whereof he hath need. And at the feast of Pentecost he shall refresh all the people, because that on that day the Holy Ghost came down upon the church. *And at the feast of the Lord's Epiphany, which was in (the month) Tūbah, that is the (feast of) Baptism, they shall rejoice with them. The bishop shall gather all the widows and orphans and shall rejoice with them, with prayers and hymns, and shall give unto each according his needs; for it is a day of blessing; in it was the Lord baptised of John.*"

(wa-yaḡibu 'aydan 'an yafrāḡū 'ūlayka fī 'īd zuhūr 'al-rabb 'alladī kāna fī tūba 'a'nī 'al-ḡitās yaḡma'u 'al-'usquf ḡamī' 'al-'arāmil wa-'al-

⁸¹ W. Riedel & W.E. Crum, *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria* (1904). P.X-XXI

⁸² Didascalia Apostolorum stresses also the necessity at the Feast of Pascha to "serve those who are poor and needy and refresh them diligently." *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, ch. 21. Editio p. 218, translatio p. 201.

'aytām wa-yafraḥu ma'ahum bi-ṣalawāt wa-tarātīl wa-yu'tī kull wāḥid mā yahtāḡuhu li-'annahu yawm baraka fīhi 'i'tamada 'al-rabb min yūḥannā.)

"The poor shall rejoice with thee, o bishop, at all the feasts of the Lord and shall celebrate with thee *these three seasons*, (hā'ulā'i 'al-ṭalāt 'awqāt) each year: the Paschal feast shall be kept unto the Lord our God and a feast at the end of the fifty days and the new-year's feast, which is (that of) the gathering (or the bringing forth) of the harvest and the fruits. The last of all fruits is the olive, which is gathered in that day: wherefore by the Egyptians this is called the feast of the beginning of the year. As with the Hebrews New Year's Day was at the Pascha, which is the first of Barmūdah. *So again in the month Tūbah did our Saviour appear as God, when, by a wondrous miracle, He made the water wine.--*" (wa-'aydan fī šahr tūba 'allaḡī fīhi ṣahara muḥalliṣnā ka'ilāh lammā ḡa'ala 'al-mā'ḥamran bi-'aḡab mu'ḡiz-) ⁶³

The festal system is referred to here so that Passover and Pentecost are quite clear, but the Feast of the Lord's Epiphany, "that is the baptism, — a day of blessing, because in it was the Lord baptized of John" is not determined in an exclusive manner. In another passage in the same collection, § 66, the three feasts occur in an unambiguous manner: "...at the Paschal feast and at the feast of Pentecost and at the feast of Baptism on the eleventh of Tybi." In the former citation the date of Epiphany is determined only by the New Year feast, "which is the ingathering of the harvest". No other date is given. In the Coptic fragment of the same document we can sense, though it is very scantily preserved, the same scheme of three feasts: Pascha, Pentecost and New Year, the latter of which has the theme of harvest.⁶⁴ Harvest time in Egypt covers a long period, so that it is necessary to give a more precise determination of the time, and here it is the gathering of olives. The different versions of the festal calendar are given in the enclosed Table I.

In ancient times the Egyptian calendar began the new year in Thot, in the season when the Nile began to flood. The sighting of Sirius on the eastern horizon at sunrise, on 19 July, fell close to the beginning of the flood of the Nile, and thus to the Egyptian New Year, the first day of the first month of the Inundation season, that is, 1 Thot. The Egyptian word for "year" has no astronomical connotation; it

⁶³ Riedel-Crum, *The Canons of St. Athanasios*, 26-28.

⁶⁴ Some scholars, such as Talley, do not pay attention to this sentence as the determination for the themes of Epiphany. *Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 123.

ST. Athanasius, Canon 16:

The Arabic versio:

a)
"And at the feast of the Lord's Epiphany, which was in (the month) Tûbah, that is the (feast of) Baptism, they shall rejoice with them. The bishop shall gather all the widows and orphans and shall rejoice with them, with prayers and hymns, and shall give unto each according his needs; for it is a day of blessing; in it was the Lord baptised of John."

b)
The poor...shall celebrate with thee these three seasons, each year: the Paschal feast shall be kept unto the Lord our God and a feast at the end of the fifty days and the new-year's feast, which is (that of) the gathering in of the harvest and the fruits. The last of all fruits is the olive, which is gathered in that day; wherefore by the Egyptians this is called the feast of the beginning of the year. As with the Hebrews New Year's Day was at the Pascha, which is the first of Barmudah.

c)
So again in the month Tûbah did our Saviour appear as God, when, by a wondrous miracle, He made the water wine.---

The Coptic fragment:

--times of the year--
--feast of the Lord--
--the feast of the Pascha--
--of Pentecost--
--feast of the beginning of the [year which] is the feast of [the--] of thy crops
(γένημα).

Canon 66 of the same document:

The Arabic versio:

"The bishop shall not fail in all this thrice a year: at the Paschal feast and at the feast of Pentecost and at the feast of Baptism on the eleventh of Tubah."

The Coptic versio:

They shall not neglect to keep these feasts yearly: the feast of the Pascha and the feast of the Pentecost and the feast of the Epiphany which is the eleventh day of (the month) Tobe.

means "renewal", each year being a beginning.⁸⁵ When Augustus gained the victory over Mark Antony, he ordered the Julian calendar to be used in Egypt, and the Egyptian New Year, the first of Thot, came to correspond to the end of the Roman month of August.⁸⁶ The Alexandrian calendar, adjusted to the length of the Julian one, spread with Christianity and was fairly complete by the late fourth century.⁸⁷

The author of the canons explains here, as well as he is able, the right time for the celebration of the New Year in his time. It is obvious that this New Year was not determined from the commonly known beginning of the Nile flood, nor the Jewish New Year, which is, according to him, the Pascha, but with the new Julian system of reckoning. It was quite new and more difficult to grasp, and therefore the author attempts to connect it with the familiar old Egyptian seasons; the harvest was one of them, more exactly the harvest of olives. The olives are perfectly formed by the end of July. They are still green, and the oil content of olives increases progressively until the skin turns black when it is really ripe. Harvesting of olives takes place in the autumn: during October for green table olives and in December for black ones.⁸⁸

It seems that different traditions occur here: the feast of harvesting the olives, the Roman New Year feast and the Feast of Epiphany. This gives us the clue that the New Year's Day mentioned in the document is the 1st of January, according to the Roman calendar.

I have some questions to ask: If the harvest of olives is completed towards the end of December, could it refer to the Feast of Tabernacles, the celebration of the harvest of fruits, as an old custom used by those of Jewish Christian descent? Could it coincide here with the new Roman New Year feast? Or is this New Year's day, which was now being introduced into Egypt, a secular celebration,

⁸⁵ G. Bickermann, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (1980), 40-43.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁸⁷ Talley, *Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 109-110.

⁸⁸ Hepper, *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Bible Plants* (1992), 107. The present clones of olives are very old, originating from the times of the Roman Empire. *Evolution of Crop Plants* (1976), ed. N.W. Simmonds, 219.

which the Christians were allowed to join in by the permission of the bishop?⁸⁹ What does the author mean by connecting this New Year's Day with the celebration in Tybi, "when our Saviour appeared as God"? Why is the exact date of Epiphany - the eleventh of Tybi - which is not the Roman New Year's day, mentioned only once, and in another connection than the first time it is mentioned?

We have noted that the liturgical piece of papyrus contained Epiphany-like celebrations on Tybi 5, which is New Year's eve, according to the Roman calendar. This seems to indicate that the date of Epiphany was not fixed in Egypt in the first half of the fourth century. It was connected to the Roman New Year feast as well as to the old feast of harvest. It might point to the Epiphany on the eleventh of Tybi being a new date for an important celebration which pushed the old harvest feast into the background and became the third great festival celebrated by the Christians. Here we might see how the old Egyptian harvest festival, perhaps also including the rites of the Feast of Tabernacles, is slowly moving to a new date and forming universal practice in the Church.⁹⁰

The Lord's Epiphany (in Arabic *'id zūhur al-rabb*) is presented as the feast of baptism, but on the other hand "in the month Tubah our Saviour appears (*zāhara*) as God", and there is a reference to the miracle at the wedding at Cana. This means that baptism - whether it is the Lord's baptism or the baptism of the faithful - is not the only theme of this festival, though it seems to be the primary one.

What does the author mean by saying that Epiphany is the feast of baptism? Does he mean the commemoration of Christ's baptism, or the mass baptism of the faithful which had taken place on this very day, or perhaps the memorial day of

⁸⁹ R.A. Markus points out that the secular feasts were celebrated by Christians, e.g. Lupercalia, the feast of the genius of Carthage, by the permission of the ecclesiastical authorities. The letter of Pope Gelasius I or Pope Felix III to the Roman senator Andromachus (before 489) reveals that this had been the custom earlier, because it had no overt religious import in the eyes of its Christian participants. Now the letter further prohibits this custom: "Take your stand: either celebrate the rites in the fullblooded manner of your ancestors, or give them up as vain superstition which is manifestly incompatible with the profession of a Christian. Let pagans only, to whom the rite belongs, carry it out." *Ad Andromachum*, 17, 26, 30. Augustine also strives to dissuade his congregation from taking part in festival banquets in Carthage. *The End of Ancient Christianity* (1990), 131-132.

⁹⁰ Talley has drawn attention to this passage, too: "There seems every reason that we should see here a reflection of the Old Testament texts which order the observance of the three pilgrim feasts." *Liturgical Time in the Ancient Church* (1981), 48.

the baptism, when the baptized recalled their own baptisms to be strengthened in faith? I think that in Egypt we cannot separate them from each other. I shall return to this question later.

There arises also the question why the bishop had to rejoice with poor and orphans especially at the Lord's Epiphany, and what does this rejoicing entail? It might refer to the rejoicings described in the connection with the Egyptian Epiphany immersions, to which subject I shall return at the end of this chapter. The document reminds the bishop that he ought to take care of those who do have no one with whom to rejoice on this day, so that nobody would be excluded from the rejoicings.

We also possess another document which is useful in this matter: St. Athanasius' first festal letter from the year 329. L.-Th. Lefort has edited and translated the Coptic manuscripts of Athanasius' letters, which were sent soon after Epiphany to the Egyptian churches to regulate the time of Pascha. The first letter begins:

"Dear friends, the moment calls us to celebrate, because the Sun of Righteousness has risen to us by declaring with its bright rays the moment of this feast."⁹¹

This is the only passage in the letters which refers to the winter feasts. They mainly speak of Pascha. Scholars have seen here a reference to Christmas on the 25th of December. Athanasius also points that it is important to celebrate at the right time, because "the matter is connected with the practice of virtue, as says St. Paul: (Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season)..."⁹² We cannot know whether Christmas or Epiphany is meant, but we can see that the festal times and seasons were not fully clear for the audience, because of the different systems of calculation, and the festal letters are intended to fill this gap.

John Cassian (360- about 432) writes in Egypt at the end of the 4th century about the ancient custom observed to indicate the time of Easter, as follows:

"In the country of Egypt this custom is by ancient tradition observed that -when Epiphany is past, which the priests of that province regard as the time, both of our Lord's baptism and also of His birth in the

⁹¹ S. Athanasie *Lettres festales et pastorales* 1-2.

⁹² 2 Tim. 4.2. My translation from Lefort's French.

flesh⁹³, and so celebrate the commemoration of either mystery not separately as in the Western provinces but on the single festival of this day - letters are sent from the bishop of Alexandria⁹⁴ through all the churches of Egypt, by which the beginning of Lent, and the day of Easter are pointed out, not only in all cities, but also in all the monasteries."⁹⁵

Here is the first clear information regarding the fixed feast of Epiphany in Egypt which was celebrated with the joint theme, not separately of the birth on December 25 and the baptism on January 6, as was already usual in the West in Cassian's time. The passage reveals that Epiphany was a familiar feast to Cassian and to those he wrote to, and there existed an episcopal order for its celebration, but the emphasis on its themes was different in different parts of Christendom. In the passage cited above it is possible to see the Lord's baptism as the primary theme of Epiphany in Cassian's church, and his birth in the flesh as the secondary, imported one, but there is also the possibility that Cassian's emphasis lies only on the unitive character of the Egyptian Epiphany on January 6, contrary to the western practice of celebrating the festivals on December 25 and January 6. I should prefer the latter alternative.

The Coptic archbishop Basilios (1991) considers Epiphany a Christianized form of the ancient Egyptian festivities associated with the Nile as one of the principal dynastic gods of the Egyptians. According to him the Coptic Synaxarion states that the Messiah appeared on that day as the Son of God and the sacred Lamb to take away the sins of the world. On that day, the faithful are purified from sins by the holy water in a way equivalent to baptism.⁹⁶

The archbishop seems to be ready to accept the results of modern research concerning the origins of the feast in pagan festivities. But crucial for the celebra-

⁹³ ...ut peracto Epiphaniarum die, quem provinciae illius sacerdotes vel Domini baptismi, vel secundum carnem nativitatis esse definiunt...

⁹⁴ Eusebius mentions that Dionysius, who was the Bishop of Alexandria 247-264, wrote "well-known paschal letters". Only fragments of them are preserved. Best preserved are the paschal letters of St. Athanasius the Great and of St. Cyril of Alexandria. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VII:20-21. Altaner-Stauber, *Patrologie* (1978), 210-11, 277, 284.

⁹⁵ *Collatio* 10,2. Transl. by Edgar C.S. Gibson in *NPNF* vol. 11.

⁹⁶ Feasts: Epiphany' (1991). *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4. 1103.

tion is that the Synaxarion⁸⁷ clearly transmits the original meaning of the feast: "The Messiah appeared that day as the Son of God" for the redemption of mankind, and "the faithful are purified from the sins, equivalent to their baptism." The original themes of Epiphany are here to be seen in the proper order, and there is a possibility that they have been transmitted to us from the very beginning of the common celebration of this feast in Egypt.

Thus I believe that in Egypt there never was a time before the council of Nicea when Epiphany was solely a feast of baptism, focused on Christ's baptism or on the baptism of believers. As long as its roots reach, the feast has had even in Egypt two themes: Incarnation and baptism.

In the Egyptian Epiphany we can find traditions which point to old non-Christian customs. Archbishop Basilios writes of them:

"This feast is preceded by a vigil and a nocturnal mass. The chief purpose of this function is the sanctification of the water, which in bygone days was brought to the middle of the nave in a large receptacle. --- After the completion of the liturgy the receptacle is moved to the narthex where the continuation of the offices ends with the faithful plunging into the holy waters. This practice was suppressed in modern times to avoid the confusion ensuing therefrom and did not exist in the primitive Church; when its original performance on the banks of the Nile was forbidden by the caliphs after the advent of the Arabs, it was transferred to the churches. Under Muslim rule, however, this feast was celebrated with great pomp, and the Muslim historian al-Mas'udi gives a lively description of the occasion under Ikhshid Muhammad ibn Tughj in the year 941. The bank of the Nile was illuminated by endless torches, and the Egyptians - both Copts and Muslims - emerged in their best apparel. Many plunged into the Nile in the belief that its sanctified water would heal them from all ailments. This is reminiscent of an ancient Egyptian legend, when

⁸⁷ Synaxarion means the collection of the vitae of the martyrs and the saints, added to historical and ecclesiastical knowledge. I have been unable to obtain information about the Egyptian Synaxarion traditions.

people re-enacted the search for Isis in the waters of the Nile at the place where Seth had killed her husband Osiris and scattered his limbs. In those days, Egyptians also illuminated the Nile bank and plunged into its waters.⁹⁸

When the theology of the Christian Epiphany had developed it amalgamated old customs, giving them a new content. This is the way the Christian Church has acted everywhere.

The Nile plays a significant rôle in every national religion of Egypt. For the Christians too the Nile was important. When other religions maintain that their gods bring fertility and happiness to the people, it is clear that Christians thought in the same way. The elementary "gnosis" of Christian faith was that baptism brings new life to the baptismal candidate. We know that baptism took place first in the natural water places: rivers, lakes, wells, even seas.⁹⁹ The Nile was surely a popular place of baptism for every "Christian" group. According to old customs, people used to plunge into the Nile at Epiphany. Why? Pagans did it because of Isis and Osiris, but Christians did so because they believed that Christ was baptized on this very day, he sanctifies the waters by descending into them, and the water has therefore special power to sanctify and heal.¹⁰⁰ In the absence of old Egyptian sermons we have to turn to the writings of some Church Fathers, who reflect the universal faith of the Church: St. Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of "saving waters" and of "the ablution as a symbol of our obligation to be clean from all sins and transgressions."¹⁰¹

This christianizes the old pagan custom of plunging into the Nile. Archbishop Basil thinks that "this practice did not exist in the primitive Church." The distinction between pagan and Christian customs might have been sharp in the primitive Church, but the Nile and water were of such central importance for Egyptians that

⁹⁸ 'Feasts: Epiphany', p. 1103 in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4. (1991) See also Peter Grossmann, 'Epiphany tanks', p. 968 in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3. (1991).

⁹⁹ Tertullian, *De bapt.* IV

¹⁰⁰ Tertullian, *De bapt.* IV-V speaks of God's Spirit hovering over the waters. Origen says that the sanctified water shares the power of the Holy Trinity, *Fragm. of John XXXVI* (GCS X). See chap. 5.4. about John Chrysostom, etc.

¹⁰¹ *Mystag. catech.* 1:3; 5:2. FC, vol. 64.

old customs slowly gained new content and continued to live. When the caliphs forbade the celebrations on the banks of the Nile the Church decided to continue it inside its own buildings, using the Epiphany tanks inside them. In 1884 A.J. Butler described the Epiphany ceremony as follows:

"The midnight office is recited in the narthex beside the greater tank, which has been filled with water. --Beside the tank is placed a candelabrum with three tapers which are lighted. Then comes the benediction of the water, various prayers and lessons recited over it: moreover the pontiff censes it and stirs it crosswise with his pastoral staff, as do also other bishops present in due order. This benediction lasts about two hours; but when it is over, the patriarch blesses also all the clergy and the congregation, sprinkling them with the holy water. Originally the custom was for the people to rush tumultuously into the water, each striving to be one of the three whom the patriarch dipped thrice, and who were thus supposed to receive a special blessing. Those who failed of that distinction dipped themselves; and when the men had finished, they retired to the choir, while the women came and disported themselves, according to Vansleb, quite drapeless. --After the aspersion follows the ordinary office of matins and a festival of the qorban.

The earliest churches of all - those distinctly anterior to the Muslim invasion - have no such tank. Such, for instance, are the Church of the White Monastery and most of the churches of the desert; while, on the other hand, buildings decidedly later than the Muslim era, such as Abu Sargah (in Old Cairo) and Abu-s'Sifain (between Cairo and Old Cairo) have a tank which is plainly part of the original structure. That anciently in Egypt the festival of Epiphany was associated specially with the sacrament of baptism admits of no question; but what was the exact nature of the association, how far the Epiphany tank was used as a font for baptismal immersion, and for what period such usage lasted, are problems which seem beyond solution. But the presence of the lighted candles at the ceremony of consecration looks like a baptismal reminiscence, as was also the undressing of those who plunged in the water.

—The Melkites retain the Epiphany consecration of water in a somewhat different form. A small cross -- is blessed and thrown into a river--and a number of men plunge in and struggle for its possession; for it is supposed to bring to the owner a blessing for the coming year.—The like ceremony lingers to this day also in Armenia.¹⁰²

The illuminations on the bank of the Nile might rise from pagan customs, and for practical reasons, too, but it can also refer to the old Tabernacles celebrations with torches, φῶτα, in Jerusalem and in the Diaspora, too. Could the old pagan traditions have been merged into the Jewish Tabernacles and Hanukkah celebrations, and from this fusion then have arisen the customs connected with the celebration of ecclesiastical Epiphany? The only firm fact is that from the Nile, water and baptism arise the visible elements of the early Egyptian feast of Epiphany. The preference for the theme of baptism at Epiphany arises from the Nile - which has coloured the Egyptian way of celebrating the feast of Christ's Incarnation. The outer forms of a celebration tend to be the central matter in the festival, and the true theme might remain in their shadow, if it cannot be visible demonstrated with sufficient clarity. Such developments we observe around us even today, and it has caused many celebrations to change or disappear.¹⁰³

4.5. Persecutions and Commemoration Day

In the early Church baptism obliged the believer to testify (μαρτυρίαν) to his faith even under pain of death. Sometimes even unbaptised people were martyred for their faith. Such were many of the catechumen martyrs of the early Church and in their case one may refer to a baptism of blood. The baptized who died for their faith were also baptized with a baptism of blood.¹⁰⁴ Martyrdom was not required of the Gnostics nor did they have the concept of baptism of blood.¹⁰⁵ "Baptism makes us imitatively partakers of the sufferings of Christ," taught St. Cyril of

¹⁰² Butler, A.J. *Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, vol. 2 (1884), 346-9.

¹⁰³ Western Christmas celebrations being the most common example.

¹⁰⁴ Tertullian, *De bapt.* XVI; Origen, *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, 30, 39. Cf. Talley, 'Historische Elemente zur Formulierung einer christlichen "Festkunde"' (1981), 116.

¹⁰⁵ Origen, *Exhort. Mart.* 45-46; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* IV:7,6-8.

Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ The authors of the Gospels described the death of Jesus as divinely ordained. He went to death in willing obedience to God. Those who preserved and revered the memory of the martyrs explained their deaths in the same way. Both Jews and Christians, Greeks and Romans, gave meaning to their lives through their deaths. Their way of exiting from this life affirmed the values for which they lived and gave a legacy to those who valued them and their commitments. The voluntary death was one of the ideals on which the Church was founded.¹⁰⁷

The persecutions befell the Church periodically, but never was there time to relax during the two first centuries, because one could never be certain that one would be spared. The persecutions of Nero (64), Domitian (c. 80) Marcus Aurelius (161-), Decius (248-251), Diocletian (303-304) and Galerius (305-) were the most widespread. To submit to persecution meant the acceptance of the consequences of an uncompromising commitment to Christ. Persecution was to be expected and was accepted as a prelude to the coming of Antichrist and the end of age. The Christians were conscious of possessing the power of binding and loosing their fate on the earth. They saw themselves in deadly conflict with Antichrist represented by the tortures, but deeds rather than words made Christians.

Early on links were seen between the Incarnation and martyrdom. St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote a panegyric on St. Stephen, the protomartyr. He begins by saying that the fruits of Christ's Incarnation were first seen in the martyrdom of St. Stephen, who is the model and premise for martyrdom. After him came the martyrdoms of St. Peter, St. James and St. John. He says this with special reference to the martyr calendar after Christmas: the memorial of St. Stephen is on the 26th of December and St. Peter, St. James and St. John in order after him.¹⁰⁸ This line of thought reveals the Christian logic that without the Incarnation of Christ there would be no martyrs.

The persecutions had the effect of limiting the Church's liturgical life. Buildings,

¹⁰⁶ *Mystag. catech.* 2:6.

¹⁰⁷ *Draper, A.J. & Tabor, J.D. A Noble Death* (1992), 156, 189.

¹⁰⁸ *Excursus in Sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem.* PG 46, cols. 701-722.

the Holy Scriptures and church office-holders were in danger of destruction. Maintaining contact was difficult, as was developing customs observed in common. Every single church constructed its way of life on the grounds of its own inheritance.

We have one passion story which makes mention of Epiphany, from the persecutions of the year 304. Let us take a look at the background to this information. The persecutions of Decius were like the anti-Jewish pogrom of 38 recorded by Philo, but the first edict of Diocletian on February 24, 303 was concentrated on the organisation of the Church, its life, the buildings, copies of the Scriptures and its influential members.¹⁰⁹ The first reaction of the Christians was to take flight. The churches were in flames. During the summer 303 came a second edict, ordering that all bishops should be arrested and forced to sacrifice to the Roman gods. The third edict was promulgated in the autumn 303 and it brought about a difficult situation when the jails were full of stubborn refusers. The arrested clergy had to be forced to sacrifice and then they were freed. The reign of Diocletian was at an end, and his successor Galerius turned the persecution into all-out war on Christians, be they lay or clerical. The fourth edict in the early spring of 304 ordered Christians to sacrifice to the gods on pain of death. This was immediately enforced in the provinces under Galerius' control, but only towards the end of the year in Diocletian's provinces. In the west in Constantius' provinces there is no evidence of mass obligation of sacrifice.¹¹⁰

Passio sancti Philippi episcopi Heracleae is a typical story of the persecution at the time of these edicts. The scene is set in Thrace, in the city of Heraclea, on the river Hebrus, and also in the governor's city Adrianopolis. The time was year 304. At the beginning of the *Passio* episcopus Philippus is presented, and when the rumour of the persecutions come to his church, we are told what he says:

"— Praedictum jam, si creditis, fratres, tempus advenit. Nutantis saeculi extrema volvuntur: imminet pertinax diabolus, et potestate paullisper accepta¹¹¹ servos Christi non venit perdere, sed probare.

¹⁰⁹ Eusebius, *De martyribus Palaestinae*, III.1.

¹¹⁰ Frend, *Rise of Christianity* (1984), 452ff.

¹¹¹ corr. arrepta in Cavalleri's work.

Epiphaniae dies sanctus¹¹² incumbit: quae res admonitionem nobis praestat ad gloriam. Nullae ergo impiorum minae, nulla vos tormenta terreant, nam et patientiam perferendi, et mercedem tulerandi dolores militibus suis Christus indulget."¹¹³

"...The holy day of Epiphany is approaching, which offers us a reminder of (access) to glory..."

This passage has set scholars investigating whether there really was a feast of Epiphany in Thrace as early as the beginning of the fourth century. There are several problems posed by the document. The rumours of the persecutions brought to the Thracian Church seem to point to the first edict given in February, and there is no celebration of Epiphany approaching at that time. Or was an earlier sermon on Epiphany attached to the events at hand?

Botte has drawn attention to the explanation that this passage received already 80 years ago. The Bollandist Franchi de' Cavalieri has noted that it has nothing to do with the Feast of Epiphany, but in the original Greek text, which has not been preserved, the expression which was probably used means Christ's appearance at his second coming, as St. Paul says: "...ζήσωμεν ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι, προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ", (... lives in this world awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.)¹¹⁴

The date of the Latin translation is not known, but it may have been made at a time when the feast of Epiphany was already known everywhere. Then the word is connected with the festival, not the *parousia*, as may have been meant in the original text. The clause under discussion may thus be reconstructed in the original Greek of the martyrion as follows : ἡ ἡμέρα τῆς ἐπιφανεῖας τοῖς ἀγίαις ἐφέστηκε.¹¹⁵

The fact that the translator failed to translate the word ἐπιφανεῖα may, however, show that at the feast of Epiphany which was familiar to him they really did

¹¹² corr. sanctis in Cavalieri's work.

¹¹³ Passio Sancti Philippi Episcopi Heraclense. P. Theodorici Ruinart, *Acta Martyrum Sincera* (1859), 440-448

¹¹⁴ Titus 2:12-13.

¹¹⁵ de Cavalieri, *Note Agiografiche*, fasc. 5, (1915), 98. B. Botte, *Les origines de la Noël et de l'Épiphanie* (1932), 26-27.

remember the believer's baptism, which was the gate to the Kingdom of Heaven, if the seal remained unbroken. At both the Passover and Epiphany vigil is read, according to the Armenian lectionary¹¹⁶, the story of the three young men being thrown into the fiery furnace. The baptismal order of the Passover vigil we know from Egeria and the Armenian lectionary. The lectionary gives the passage of Dan. 3 about the three men, and their song of thanksgiving is recited when the neophytes come from the baptistry to the Martyrium to celebrate the Eucharist.¹¹⁷ Thus the believer's baptism at these feasts is also linked with the idea of the martyr's baptism of blood.

Georg Kretschmar has propounded the thesis that there was a memorial day of baptism for those baptized:

Die Einmaligkeit der Taufe und ihre bleibende Gültigkeit treten in Spannung zueinander; daraus entsteht das Bedürfnis nach einem festen Gedenktag der Taufe. Die Ostervigil war aber nur wenig geeignet, diese Funktion zu übernehmen. Der Osten entschied sich, das Taufgedenken nicht an den Jahrestag der je eigenen Taufe zu knüpfen, sondern an den Gedenktag der Taufe Jesu und damit der Stiftung der Taufe. Dies steht dann in Analogie zur Feier des Gründonnerstag als Gedenktag der Einsetzung des Herrenmahles und ist nicht weniger legitim, soviele Bedenken sich auch gegenüber dem Ritus der Wassersegnung und gar ihrem Verständnis als Konsekration erheben lassen. Auch dieser Brauch bestätigt aber noch einmal, wie selbstverständlich die Taufe christologisch, von Jesus her begriffen wird.¹¹⁸

He establishes his thesis:

Ursprünglich ist wohl eine Benediktion am fließenden Wasser im Freien gespendet worden. Daraus ist später ein Ritus geworden, der an einem Wasserbecken in der Kirche oder in ihrer Nähe vollzogen wurde und den Charakter einer jährlichen Taufgedächtnisses annahm. Urheber der Wassersegnung war Patriarch von Antiochien Petros am Ende des fünften Jahrhunderts. Alle Wasserweihe-Gebete an Epiphantias sind nahe identisch mit dem Grundstock des antiochenischen Gebetes. In Ägypten ist die Wassersegnung an Epiphantias erst später übernommen worden. In diesem geweihten Wasser ein Tauchbad zu nehmen ist bis heute der Brauch gewesen.¹¹⁹

Kretschmar sees Commemoration Day as a later development, which produced the

¹¹⁶ See p. 157f.

¹¹⁷ *Itin. Egeriae* 38.2. Wilkinson, *Egeria's travels: The Old Armenian Lectionary*, 253-277.

¹¹⁸ Kretschmar, *Die Geschichte des Taufgottesdienstes in der alten Kirche* (1970), 270.

¹¹⁹ *Idem*, 269-270.

need for the consecration of water. It could, however, also be earlier without any formula for the consecration of water being preserved. In the earliest times natural water was not consecrated, because it was considered to be "living water". But later, when water was carried or piped into church, it needed to be consecrated, both for baptism and for sprinkling the baptized - in Egypt special dipping - in remembrance of their baptism and the associated baptism of Christ. Once again there is the thought of the baptism of believers, not primarily commemorating the baptism of Christ, which was, nevertheless, the basis for every Christian baptism. It is natural to consider Epiphany, which had the theme of baptism from the very beginning, as the earliest Commemoration Day of baptism. Baptismal vows were renewed by sprinkling sanctified water upon the baptized.¹²⁰ The idea of renewal of the covenant, familiar from the Old Testament and Qumran, comes close to this. In Judaism the Feast of Tabernacles was, at least in some circles, considered to be the feast of the renewal of the covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel.¹²¹

St. Gregory of Nyssa for his part confirms this in his Epiphany sermon, where he connects baptism, its remembrance and martyrdom:

"These are the words of a soul truly regenerated: these are the utterances of the newly-baptized man, who remembers his own profession, which he made to God when the sacrament was administered to him, promising that he would despise for the sake of love towards Him all torment and all pleasure alike."¹²²

4.8. Conclusions

In Egypt the Christian Church was led after the Jewish revolt by Gentile Christians who had received philosophical training and were able to answer the challenge posed by Gnosticism. Clement and Origen in the third century mention only Passover and Pentecost as Christian festivals. We can find no trace of any universal Christian Feast of Epiphany in their time, but they know a Gnostic feast of Jesus' baptism on the 6th of January. St. Epiphanius is not reliable when transmitting the earlier tradition of the Church.

¹²⁰ From ancient times, after the water consecration in Epiphany, the faithfuls have plunged into the water, in Jordan or anywhere else, committing themselves this way to the baptismal vows. See e.g. Seeman, *Die abramsische Wallfahrtsliteratur* (1976), 182. Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem* (1914), 180-201.

¹²¹ As we have seen in ch. 2.2.

¹²² *Oratio in diem lanternum*, PG 46, col 597. See ch. 6.7.2.

This Gnostic feast commemorated, according to Basilides, the event when light descended upon Jesus, the natural son of Mary and Joseph, and he became the Christ who proclaimed the authority of the supreme Father. Thus the Gnostics did not as a matter of fact "celebrate the baptism", as Clement says, but the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, and this descent of the Spirit also takes place when a person is baptized. He becomes 'pneumatic', i.e. the highest being in the classification of men. It is improbable that the Catholic Church had taken over this Gnostic Feast to illustrate its central doctrines of Incarnation, Redemption and Baptism, because both groups had different conceptions of these things, and simultaneous celebration would have caused fatal confusion.

The liturgical papyrus, dated to the beginning of the fourth century, throws some light on the early celebration of Epiphany. It contains what are probably antiphonal verses for a feast of the Church celebrated on the 31st of December (Tybi 5), yet with Epiphany-like themes. This fragment, though it provides us with scanty information, confirms that the theme of the feast was Christ's birth and the possibility of *katharsis* from sin. Baptism is not mentioned in this piece, which does not exclude the possibility that it could have occurred elsewhere in this papyrus as one of the festal themes.

In the fourth century St. Athanasius mentions the third feast of Epiphany as "baptism" and "the appearance of our Saviour as God". John Cassian agrees with this description. St. Athanasius determines the date of Epiphany in a complex way, which indicates that it was not fixed, but depended on the calendar in use. On the one hand it was the harvest of olives (October-December), on the other hand New Year's Day, probably according to the Roman calendar (Jan. 1), and in addition Tybi 11 (Jan. 6).

One may conclude that the early feast of Epiphany had overall the same themes, the appearance of the Saviour and the baptism which Christians undergo in order to receive the benefits of the divine Incarnation. Only local circumstances led to the emphasis given to certain points in the celebrations. Whence did these special stresses arise? One obvious reason is the persecutions, which necessitated standing fast in one's baptism by recalling it on certain occasions in order to be ready for blood baptism. The most solemn day for recalling one's baptism is the feast of the Incarnation and baptism. Epiphany was probably the first commemoration day of baptism, having its roots in the renewal of the covenant.

5. THE INCARNATE KYRIOS AND SAVING WATERS IN SOME EARLY CHRISTIAN SOURCES

I have presented some evidence against the thesis that the early Church adopted the Gnostic feast to introduce its teaching on the Incarnation of Christ. We have also noted that Epiphany is not traceable in the early Gentile-led Church. Can we, however, find in the earliest writings, which were later declared to be Catholic, some traces of the idea that was to establish itself in liturgical form in the very near future? This idea consists of the Incarnation of the Son of God, purification from sin through baptism, which is rooted in Christ's baptism, and martyrdom - the baptism of blood - which one has to take into consideration when submitting to Christian initiation.

Richardson has classified the earliest Christian literature as follows: 1) letters, 2) apologies, 3) apocrypha, 4) poetry, 5) martyr acts, 6) Christian forms of Gnostic and anti-Gnostic literature.¹ I shall here deal with only a small, but representative sample of them. Of the letters I shall take the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Epistle to Diognetus*. The former comes from an the Egyptian environment, the latter from the intelligentsia of Asia Minor. Of the apologies I shall deal with the *First Apology of Justin*, and of poetry with the *Odes of Solomon*. St. Justin was acquainted with Palestinian Jews and Christians, and in his writings we may sense some indication of Palestinian views. The Odes originate from Syria, being the only early source from that area. Some evidence from scanty early Christian art - though later than these writings - seems to support the literary material. The traditions of saving waters - derived from baptism - also require more detailed study. From these ideas, I believe, arises the need to celebrate the Incarnation, not in isolation, but in connection with the conception of baptism.

5.1. Early Christian Writings on Incarnation, Reconciliation and Baptism

Though there is no single formulation of the doctrine of Redemption from the time of the Martyrs, it is yet possible to discover some currents of thought. The *Dideche* presents Christianity as a 'way', and some apologists throw their whole

¹ 'Introduction to Early Christian Literature and Its Setting' (1953). 16-18.

weight behind the concept of Redemption as Illumination.² Christianity may, however, be regarded in the early centuries as primarily a cult rather than a code. In the East the cult is a matter of mystical transplantation, and it expresses itself in terms of mystical transfiguration.³ This we can see in some early documents presented here.

The Epistle of Barnabas is widely held to be of Alexandrian origin and it is thus one of the earliest certain witnesses to Christianity in Egypt.⁴ Its *terminus post quem* is probably 116 and its *terminus ante quem* certainly 140 C.E.⁵ The Incarnation of the Lord is there explained to be necessary because only flesh can become a sacrifice.

"For this reason the Lord endured the sacrifice of His flesh to corruption, that we might be sanctified by the forgiveness of sin, that is, by the sprinkling of His blood.--

For, if He had not come in the flesh, there is no conceivable way in which men could be saved by beholding Him, since, even when they look at the sun, which will perish and is a work of His hands, they cannot gaze straight at its rays. For this purpose, therefore, the Son of God came in the flesh, that He might round out the total of the sins of those who persecuted His prophets to death.--

Since, then, He was to be revealed in the flesh and to suffer in the flesh, His suffering was revealed in advance.--

(Ἐν σαρκὶ οὖν αὐτοῦ μέλλοντος φανεροῦσθαι καὶ πάσχειν, προεφανεροῦτο τὸ πάθος.)

But what does knowledge say? Let me tell you! Hope (it says) in the one who will be revealed to you in the flesh, in Jesus.--

(τί λέγει ἡ γνώσις, μάθετε· Ἐλπίζετε [φησὶν,] ἐπὶ τὸν ἐν σαρκὶ μέλλοντα φανεροῦσθαι ὑμῖν Ἰησοῦν.)

--He himself was going to be manifested in the flesh and dwell among

² I. Clement 59,2; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedag.* PG 8, col 280. (See p. 85.) Justin, *Apol.* I,61. (See p. 126.)

³ Turner, *The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption* (1952), 114-116. A. Collins, *The Origin of Christian Baptism* (1989), 37-39.

⁴ Pearson, 'Earliest Christianity' (1986), 137 and refer. Klijn, however, thinks that it is far from an established fact 'Jewish Christianity in Egypt' (1986), 166.

⁵ Pearson considers it to have been written around 115-117, reflecting the final split between Church and Synagogue. *Idem* (1986), 150-151. L.W. Barnard puts the date slightly later: 'A Note on Barnabas' (1961), 263. See also MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts on Jews and Judaism* (1990), 21-22.

us. (ὅτι ἐμελλεν ἐν σαρκὶ φανεροῦσθαι, καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν κατοικεῖν,)⁶

Jesus was incarnated, he suffered and died as a victim "so that we might be cleansed through the forgiveness of sins, which takes place when his blood is sprinkled" (5:1), and "so that he might conquer death by giving a sample of the Resurrection." (5:6)

This is what God did for humankind, but participation in these benefits takes place in baptism, as Barnabas writes:

"But let us inquire if the Lord took care to give a revelation beforehand about the water (of baptism) and the Cross. Concerning the water, Scripture says with regard to Israel that they will not receive the baptism that brings forgiveness of sins, but will build for themselves.— (Ζητέσωμεν δὲ, εἰ ἐμέλησε τῷ Κυρίῳ προφανερῶσαι περὶ τοῦ ὕδατος καὶ σταυροῦ. Περὶ μὲν ὕδατος γέγραπται ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ, πῶς τὸ βάπτισμα, τὸ φέρον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, οὐ μὴ προδέξωνται, ἀλλ' ἑαυτοῖς οἰκοδομήσουσι.)

Notice how he described the water and the Cross together. He means this: Blessed are they who put their hope in the Cross and descended into the water. For He speaks of their reward 'in due season'; at that time, He says, I will repay.—

(Αἰσθάνεσθε, πῶς τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸν σταυρὸν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ὤρισε. Τοῦτο γὰρ λέγει· Μακάριοι, οἳ, ἐπὶ τὸν σταυρὸν ἐλπίσαντες, κατέβησαν εἰς τοῦδωρ, ὃ τὸν μὲν μισθὸν, λέγει, ἐν καιρῷ αὐτοῦ, τότε, φησὶν, ἀποδώσω.)

This means that we go down into the water full of sins and foulness, and we come up bearing fruit in our hearts, fear and hope in Jesus in the Spirit.

(Τοῦτο λέγει, ὅτι ἡμεῖς μὲν καταβαίνομεν εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ γέμοντες ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ ῥύπου, καὶ ἀναβαίνομεν καρποφοροῦντες ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ τὸν φόβον, καὶ τὴν ἐλπίδα εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἔχοντες τὸν αἰῶνα.)⁷

Barnabas presents baptism as the baptism of believers. He does not connect it with the baptism of Jesus, because it was a difficult notion to comprehend in Egypt, being full of different philosophical and Gnostic connotations. He sets aside the speculation of Logos Christology⁸, and moves straight to the baptism of believers. The Epistle of Barnabas takes for granted the unitive notion of Incarnation and baptism for redemption, thus confirming its existence in early Catholic

⁶ *Ep. of Barn.* 5:1, 10-11; 6:7, 9a, 14c. Transl. by Francis X. Glimm. FC 1.

⁷ *Ep. of Barn.* 11:1, 8, 11. Transl. by Francis X. Glimm. FC 1.

⁸ The birth, whether virgin or not, is only a means for the Logos to become visible. The Logos itself remains unaffected by the flesh. Similarly, what has the Logos to be given at his baptism that he did not already possess? Klijn, *Jewish Christianity* (1986), 170-171.

Christianity in Egypt.

St. Justin Martyr obtained knowledge of Christianity in Palestine after having studied several philosophical systems. He received baptism and finally settled in Rome, where in the rôle of a Christian philosopher he taught those who desired to become better acquainted with Christianity. He was martyred in ca. 165.

He agrees with Barnabas when he writes:

"We worship and love, next to God, the Logos, which is from the unbegotten and ineffable God, since it was on our behalf that he has been made man, that, becoming partaker of our sufferings, he may also bring us healing."⁹

The Logos, being divine, yet not the Father himself, accounts both for the divinity which Christians have found in Jesus, and in retrospect for the divine appearances in the Old Testament. The Reason (Logos) incarnate in Christ is also the diffused reason that speaks in every man. (Justin is not deeply interested in the cosmic action of the Logos.)¹⁰ He taught of the Incarnation in his First Apology as follows:

"We are speaking the truth that Jesus Christ alone was really begotten as Son of God, being his Word and First-begotten and Power, and becoming man by his will he taught us these things for the reconciliation and restoration of the human race."

Παραδεχθῆναι ἀξιούμεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι τὸ ἀληθὲς λέγομεν· καὶ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς μόνος ἰδίως υἱὸς τῷ θεῷ γεγέννηται, Λόγος αὐτοῦ ὑπάρχων καὶ πρωτότοκος καὶ δύναμις· καὶ τῇ βουλῇ αὐτοῦ γινόμενος ἄνθρωπος, ταῦτα ἡμᾶς ἐδίδαξεν, ἐπ' ἀλλαγῇ καὶ ἐπαναγωγῇ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίου γένους.¹¹

The Incarnation also took place for the benefit of sinful humankind, and it is received in baptism, as he describes:

"How we dedicated ourselves to God when we were made new through Christ I will explain... Those who are persuaded and believe that they can live accordingly, are instructed to pray and beseech God with fasting for the remission of their past sins... Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are reborn by the same manner of rebirth by which we ourselves were reborn; for they are then washed in the water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit... It was

⁹ *Apol.* II.13. Transl. H. Bettenson.

¹⁰ Richardson, "The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr. Introduction" (1953), 233.

¹¹ *Apol.* I. 23. Transl. C. Richardson.

said through the prophet Isaiah how those who have sinned and repent shall escape from their sins. He said this: 'Wash yourselves, be clean, take away wickedness from your souls...'¹² So that we should not remain children of necessity and ignorance, but sons of free choice and knowledge, and obtain remission of the sins we have already committed, there is named at the water, over him, who has chosen to be born again and has repented of his sinful acts, the name of God the Father and Master of all... (ἀφέσεως τε ἀμαρτιῶν ὑπὲρ ὧν προημάρτομεν τύχωμεν ἐν τῷ ὕδατι, ἐπονομάζεται τῷ ἐλομένῳ ἀναγεννηθῆναι, καὶ μετανοήσαν τι ἐπὶ τοῖς ἡμαρτημένοις τὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων καὶ Δεσπότης θεοῦ ὄνομα.) This washing is called **illumination**, since those who learn these things are illumined within (καλεῖται δὲ τοῦτο τὸ λουτρὸν **φωτισμός**, ὡς φωτιζομένων τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν ταῦτα μανθανόντων).¹³

The *Epistle to Diognetus*, written by an unnamed master of Greek style, consists of two quite disparate parts. The first ten chapters constitute, in the form of a letter, a defence of faith to an unknown high-ranking person named Diognetus. The two last chapters were obviously written by a different person. The place of origin is mostly suggested to be Asia.¹⁴ The date of this letter is disputed. It has been suggested that the first part originates from the time before Marcionism (ca. 150)¹⁵ or else from the 2nd half of the 2nd century¹⁶. The author speaks of redemption using high-flown sentences, but he neither mentions Incarnation nor baptism. Redemption is "for the sake of men" and it is received "by means of faith."¹⁷

The last chapters, which seem to have been inserted later, well suit the context of the former part, developing further the idea of the appearance of the Word. These chapters have been seen as part of a separately composed homily for the Epiph

¹² Isa. 1:16-20. This passage is read as first in connection with the baptismal instructions in Jerusalem, according to the Arm. lect. 121.

¹³ *Apol.* I.61. Transl. C. Richardson.

¹⁴ Richardson, *The Early Christian Fathers* (1953), 207-8.

¹⁵ Nielsen, *The Epistle to Diognetus: Its Date* (1970). Notes 3-7 discuss the earlier attempts at dating.

¹⁶ Altaner-Stauber, *Patrologie* (1978), 77. C. Richardson, *The Early Christian Fathers* (1953), 206. T. Baumert, *Zur datierung der Schrift an Diognet* (1988), 105-111.

¹⁷ *Ep. to Diogn.* 7-8. FC, vol. 1. Transl. G. Walsh.

any.¹⁸ There we read:

"It was for this reason that He sent the Word, that He might appear to the world. Dishonoured by the populace, He was preached by the Apostles and was believed in by the Gentiles. He was from the beginning. He appeared as new, but was found to be old and ever young, when He is born in the hearts of the saints. He is the Eternal One, who in our day is accounted to be the Son. Through Him the Church is enriched, and in the saints His unfolded grace is multiplied. This grace gives understanding, makes mysteries clear, announces the acceptable times, rejoices over the faithful..."

οὐ χάριν ἀπέστειλε λόγον, ἵνα κόσμῳ φανῆ, ὅς ὑπὸ λαοῦ ἀτιμασθεῖς, διὰ ἀποστόλων κηρυχθεῖς, ὑπὸ ἐθνῶν ἐπιστεύθη. Οὗτος ὁ αἰεὶ, ὁ σήμερον υἱὸς λογισθεῖς, δι' οὗ πλουτίζεται ἡ ἐκκλησία καὶ χάρις ἀπλουμένη ἐν ἀγίοις πληθύνεται, παρέχουσα νοῦν, φανεροῦσα μυστήρια, διαγγέλλουσα καιρούς, χαίρουσα ἐπὶ πιστοῖς...¹⁹

The phrase "who in our day is accounted to be the Son" indeed has incarnational reference, but Talley thinks that it is difficult to know whether this reference is to the conception or the Nativity in Bethlehem or to the baptism in the Jordan.²⁰ I think we have here an attempt to describe Christian redemption in its totality: the initiation rite which includes Christ's Incarnation, the remission of sins, entry into the Kingdom of Heaven and the hope of life everlasting. The concept of salvation consists of the Incarnation of Jesus and the baptism of the believer as a human response to it. Even if this passage was written later than the main bulk, it does not diminish its value as the interpreter of the thinking of the early Church.

5.2. The Odes of Solomon

J. Rendell Harris published *The Odes of Solomon* for the first time in 1909²¹, and quite soon J.H. Bernard suggested them to be Hymns of the Baptized.²² Selwyn accepts this in his article of 1912 but wonders how all this wealth of symbolic phraseology and usage can be found in its flourishing exuberance around the ceremony of Christian baptism. He concludes that the imagery of baptism was

¹⁸ Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 123-124.

¹⁹ *Ep. to Diogn.* 11, 3-5. *FC*, vol. 1. Transl. G. Walsh.

²⁰ Talley, *idem*, 124.

²¹ J. Rendell Harris, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, (1909).

²² Bernard, 'Odes of Solomon' (1910), 1-31.

taken over from that of the Feast of Tabernacles, as we have already noted²³, and more especially from the unique ceremony of the water-bearing from Siloam.²⁴ Selwyn's observations about the Old Testament passages adapted to Christian baptism are noteworthy, though his opinions of the direct dependence of the Odes on the Feast of Tabernacles are oversimplified. In 1920 J. R. Harris and A. Mingana published a facsimile edition of the Syriac manuscript of the Odes, a new translation and a more detailed study of them. After studying the arguments of Barnard and others they conclude that the Odes, taken *en bloc*, are not baptismal hymns, and the references to baptism as they may remain are merely occasional and not structural.²⁵ It is, however, certain that the Odes are songs of the baptized, but not in a way which refers to the *act* of baptism, but pointing to the *life* the baptized lived in the Church after their conversion, which totally changed their way of life. To me the Odes seem to be a hymnbook of the Church, where the faithful recall their baptism and all the benefit they gained from it.

H. Hess has classified the salvation motifs of the Odes as follows:

1. evils from which the redeemed are delivered, e.g. error, death, chains, Sheol, folly, hatred;
2. agencies or modes of God's saving activity, e.g. grace, water, name, truth, light, knowledge of the Lord, sign, glory;
3. the effects of redemption, e.g. renewal of the inner person, clothing, life, fruits of salvation, love, peace, understanding;
4. state or status of the redeemed, such as rest in the Lord, belonging to the Lord, holy ones, members of the Lord, inscribed in the book, being in the true covenant, etc.²⁶

He finds that the emphasis on truth, knowledge, light, rest, perfection and incorruptibility led some earlier commentators to classify the Odes as Gnostic. Yet, the Odist's soteriology seems clearly to presuppose the Incarnation, death and Resurrection of the Messiah. The explanation is that Egyptian Gnosticism had some

²³ p. 38.

²⁴ E.C. Selwyn, 'The Feast of Tabernacles, Epiphany and Baptism', 225, 240.

²⁵ Harris-Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, vol. II. (1920) 187-197.

²⁶ Hess, 'Salvation Motifs' (1989), 182-189.

roots in common with the early Judaeo-Christian inheritance: they both arise from late Judaism.²⁷ This proves the early date of the Odes, as many scholars have already pointed out. The common opinion is that the Odes were written in the first century or in the second half of the second century.²⁸

The contents of the Odes are suitable for every gathering of Christians, where praise and thanksgiving for salvation is recited by the faithful. With one exception - the total lack of reference to the Eucharist excludes the possibility that the Odes formed part of the Sunday liturgy or the Baptismal Rite of the Church.²⁹

The primary *Sitz im Leben* of the Odes might well have been the annual memorial day of the baptism, which most naturally applies to the Feast of Epiphany. The metaphors of water, light, clothing and crown easily lead thoughts to any connection with baptism. Since the Odes are in addition praise for the salvation brought by the Incarnation and by the forgiveness of sins, we are precisely in the midst of the themes of the early Feast of Epiphany:

"He became like me that I might receive Him.
In form he was considered like me, that I might put him on.

And I trembled not when I saw him;
because he was gracious to me.

Like my nature He became, that I might understand him,
And like my form, that might not turn away from Him."

He has allowed him to appear to them that are his own;
in order that they may recognize him that made them;
and not think that they came of themselves."³⁰

²⁷ So also Per Beskow and Sten Hidal in the Introduction of their Swedish translation of the Odes. (*Salomos Oden*, 1980), 77. The lines in *the Odes of Solomon* use expressions that Gnostic texts do too, but Charlesworth who defends the catholicism of the Odes says that we need similarity in ideas, not only in expressions to prove that the Odes are Gnostic. Rudolph, *Die Gnosis* (1990), 141-2. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (1973), 321. *Salomos Oden* (1980), utg. av Per Beskow och Sten Hidal, 77-78.

²⁸ R. Harris - A. Mingana in the new edition of the Odes in 1920 (*The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*) assume that they were written at Antioch in the first century (p. 69). Among recent authors, Brian McNeil chooses the first half of the second century (*Or Chr* 67/1983, 122) and Luise Abramowski proposes the second half of that century (*Or Chr* 68/1984, 90). See H. Hess, 'Salvation motifs' (1989), note 4.

²⁹ This has been an enigma to scholars, and it has led e.g. to the speculation that the Odes might originate from the Encratic congregation. Beskow-Hidal, *Salomos Oden* (1980), 84, 87-88.

³⁰ *Ode VII: 4-6, 12*. Transl. by J. Charlesworth.

*The womb of the Virgin took (it),
and she received conception and gave birth.

So the Virgin became a mother with great mercies.

And she labored and bore the Son but without pain,
because it did not occur without purpose.
And she did not seek a midwife,
because he caused her to give life."³¹

These verses point to the Divine Incarnation and the benefits man gets from it. They remind us of the famous saying of St. Irenaeus: "Because of his perfection the Divine Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ became defective, such as we are, so that we might become as perfect as he himself is."³² God's *doxa* descending upon the earth is seen in the verse: "He has allowed him to appear to them that are his own." The virgin birth is presented very clearly, too.

The vision of Ezek. 47 of the stream that went forth from the temple is used in the imagery of baptism³³:

For it spread over the face of all the earth,
and it filled everything.

Then all the thirsty upon earth drank,
and thirst was relieved and quenched;

For from the Most High the drink was given.

Blessed, therefore, are the ministers of that drink,
who have been entrusted with his water.

Because everyone recognized them as the Lord's,
and lived by the living water of eternity.

³¹ Ode XIX:6-9. Transl. by J. Charlesworth.

³² "Solus enim venit et firmum magistrum sequens, Verbum Dei Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum: qui propter incensam suam dilectionem factus est quod sumus nos, uti nos perficeret esse quod est ipse." *Adv. Haer.* 7, Preface, PG 7, col. 1120.

³³ Hanna-Margana points out that the vision of Ezekiel is not meant here, but rather the prophecy of Isaiah: "...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (11:9b), which refers to the Divine Wisdom. *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* (1920), 195. Beskow-Hidal are, however, in favour of the vision of Ezekiel. *Solomon's Odes* (1980), 58.

Hallelujah.³⁴

Living water, common in both Gnostic and Christian use, occurs as follows.

And I was established upon the rock of truth,
where he had set me.

And speaking waters touched my lips
from the spring of the Lord generously.

And so I drank and became intoxicated,
from the living water that does not die.

And my intoxication was not one with ignorance,
but I abandoned vanity.³⁵

Fill for yourselves water from the living spring of the Lord,
because it has been opened for you.

And come all you thirsty and take a drink,
And rest beside the spring of the Lord.

Because it is pleasing and sparkling,
and perpetually pleases the self.

For more refreshing is its water than honey,
and the honeycomb of bees is not to be compared with it;

Because it flowed from the lips of the Lord,
and it named from the heart of the Lord.

And it came boundless and invisible,
and until it was set in the middle they knew it not.

Blessed are they who have drunk from it,
and have rested by it. Hallelujah.³⁶

The Odist expresses his thanksgiving for God's act in rescuing him,³⁷ but it is difficult to decide when the Odist means God and when the Son, since he clearly identifies the two. He portrays the unity between God and the Son in terms of the

³⁴ Ode VI:10-13,18. Transl. by J. Charlesworth.

³⁵ Ode XI:5-8. Transl. by J. Charlesworth.

³⁶ Ode XXX. Transl. by J. Charlesworth.

³⁷ Ode XXV,1: "I was rescued from my chains, and fled unto you, my God."

activity by the Son who appears just like our previous authors.³⁸ He puts emphasis on the appearance of the Messiah and his Incarnation³⁹, and very clearly exults his salvation because he has taken off a corrupt garment and put on a garment of incorruption and light,⁴⁰ which takes place in baptism.

J. H. Barnard has studied the connections between the Odes and the Epiphany hymns of St. Ephraem the Syrian, and has pointed out that Ephraem used the Odes in his hymns.⁴¹ R. Harris - A. Mingana have also written about this connection.⁴² Murray, however, thinks that though Ephraem has striking images in common with the Odes, very few passages bring us seriously to consider dependence.⁴³ The Odes were a source where metaphors and themes known to Christians at that time were at hand for the poets to create new Christian poetry in order to meet the growing ecclesiastical needs. The Epiphany hymns of St. Ephraem, which will be dealt with later, were of this kind.

In our documents Redemption is conceived primarily as 'rescue', with special consideration given to the factors from which men are rescued: bondage to demons and all that this implies. But one is not only rescued, but also cured of the miasma of sin. We are not only redeemed *from* something, we are also redeemed *into* something. We are not only 'brought from darkness into light' and 'from the power of Satan into God', we are also made 'partakers of the Divine Nature'. This takes place in baptism. If we cannot be saved by ourselves, it is equally clear that we cannot be saved without ourselves.⁴⁴ Two dimensions, or better three,

³⁸ Charlesworth, 'Odes of Solomon. Introduction' (1985), 728-9.

³⁹ Ode VII:3-6; XLI:3f.

⁴⁰ Odes XV, 8 and XXI, 3. The garment of light is a Syrian peculiarity that occurs in many writings. Adam and Eve had this garment of light before the Fall, but as a result of the sin they loosed it noting immediately that they were nude. In baptism men are allowed to put on again this garment of light. See e.g. Ephrem the Syrian, HNat. 17:4,6; Sog. 1:39; Sog. 2:23; HEpiph. 12:4.

⁴¹ J.H. Barnard, 'The Odes of Solomon' (1910); *The Odes of Solomon* (1912).

⁴² Harris-Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* (1920), 189-191.

⁴³ Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (1977), 337.

⁴⁴ Origen, *In Gen. Hom.* 9.3. "But what does it profit me, if the seed of Abraham, 'which is Christ' should possess 'the cities of his enemies for an inheritance', and should not possess my city? If in my city, that is in

belong to the Christian Redemption.⁴⁵ It is at once an act wrought by God on man's behalf, and an act done by Christ as Man before God. It demands the existence of an Incarnate Person both human and divine for their accomplishment.⁴⁶ But this is in vain unless man does not receive it, and the third necessary act is the baptism of the believer.

5.3. Iconography

It is necessary to have a glance at early Christian iconography in our search for evidence to support the material which we have drawn from the textual sources. "What the word announces to the ear, the paintings shows silent to the eye", declares St. Basil the Great.⁴⁷

Would the pictures reveal something of the connection between the Incarnation and baptism, possibly reflecting the early celebration of redemption embedded in these two ideas?

The earliest Christian pictures, the wall-paintings of the catacombs and the carvings in Roman sarcophagi, are dated about 230-300. They are derived from the general pictorial representations of Antiquity, but rearranged so as to express a Christian idea, which is very frequently the idea of salvation. The sarcophagus in Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome is a good example of this. On the side of the sarcophagus are carved pictures of the baptism of Christ, of a shepherd carrying a sheep, of a seated philosopher holding an open scroll⁴⁸, of a praying woman⁴⁹,

my soul, which is 'the city of the great king', neither his laws nor his ordinances should be observed? What does it profit me, that he has subjected the whole world and possess the cities of his enemies if he should not also conquer his enemies in me?" FC 71, transl. R.E. Heine.

⁴⁵ as also to the Jewish one: "Der alttestamentliche Jahwekult ist ursprünglich und primär *actio dei*, das kultische Hauptgewicht liegt auf der Selbsoffenbarung Gottes in der Theophanie als dem Kernstück des Kultakts. Hymnus (*tehillah*) und Bekenntnis (*toda*) sind die *reactio* des Menschen, seine Antwort, in der er auf die Gottesoffenbarung 'reagiert', und die zur Theophanie gehört wie das Echo zum Schall." A. Weiser, 'Zur Frage nach den Beziehungen der Psalmen zum Kult' (1950), 517.

⁴⁶ Turner, *The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption* (1952), 116-121.

⁴⁷ 'Α γὰρ ὁ λόγος τῆς ἱστορίας διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς παρίσται, ταῦτα γραφικῆ σιωπῶσα διὰ μνήσεως δεικνυσιν. *Homilia of the 40 Martyrs*. PG 31, col.509 A

⁴⁸ Christians gave to the image of the classical philosopher a new value as a symbol of Christ, the "true philosopher". A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography* (1968). XLVII. W. Weidle names this "Christian catecheses". *Baptism of Art* (1948?). 36.

and of Jonah, thrown overboard and about to be swallowed by a sea monster.⁵⁰ (See picture 1) The same pictorial program is shown on a lamp from the early third century.⁵¹ The message it gives is that the world to come, where the departed are, is like a pastoral scene in this world, full of harmony and peace. The baptism of Christ points to the means to gain this harmony. Jonah is the type of a rescued person who finds peace after his trials.⁵²

The good shepherd was a common figure in pagan Antiquity, as it was in early Christianity. Even before the coming of Christ, the Good Shepherd was the symbol of the σωτήρ, the author of salvation, and in John 10:28 Jesus is linked with this tradition by his guaranteeing the σωτηρία.⁵³ The parable of the Good Shepherd⁵⁴ refers to Christ, who bears his lost sheep - mankind - on his shoulders, and brings it back to the heavenly fold, to the host of angels.⁵⁵ According to the Christian conception, the σωτηρία which the Good Shepherd brings is the salvation of the world. This is also an Old Testament idiom, found in Ezekiel 34.⁵⁶ For the individual this salvation begins with baptism. It is for this reason that early Christianity associated the picture of the Good Shepherd with the mystery of rebirth.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ The Orant has different meanings according to the context.

⁵⁰ Effenberger & Severin, *Das Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst*. Abb. 10/ Seite 19.

⁵¹ *Idem*. Abb. 1.

⁵² "Wie Jona durch das rettende Eingreifen Gottes aus dem Bauch des Meeresungeheurers befreit wurde und unter der gourd Ruhe und Erquickung finden dürfte, so mögen auch die Verstorbenen von ihren Sünden und aus aller Todesbedrängnis befreit werden und in ihren Gräbern Frieden finden." *Idem*, p.74. On the Jonah cycle see also Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem*. 45-48.

⁵³ John 10:11,28. J. Quasten, 'The Painting of the Good Shepherd at Dura-Europos' (1947), 4.

⁵⁴ Matt. 18:12-14; Lk. 14:4-7.

⁵⁵ Quasten, *idem*. Cf. Origen, *In Gen. Hom.* 9.3: "Because of their sins God said to them (Israel): 'Behold you have been separated by your sins and because of your sins you have been scattered under the whole heaven.' -I will gather you, says the Lord- The good shepherd had, necessarily, the ninety and nine having been left on the heights, to descend to the lands and seek the one sheep which was lost and when it was found and carried back on his shoulders, to recall it to the sheepfold of perfection on high." FC 71. Transl. R.E. Heine.

⁵⁶ "For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness -I will feed them with good pasture, - I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed-." Ezek. 34:11-12,14a,16a.

⁵⁷ Quasten, *idem* 4.

Clement of Alexandria exclaims:

"To make it easy for us to understand the supreme wisdom, if you will, of the all-holy Shepherd and Guide, the almighty Word of the Father, He makes us a metaphor, calling Himself the Shepherd of his sheep. He is truly the Educator of His children, who are little ones. In fact, through Ezechiel, He makes a long address to the rulers in which He presents a helpful description of His wise care: 'The lame I shall bring back, and I shall feed them on my holy mountain'.⁵⁸ This is the promise of Him who is the Good Shepherd.

Feed us, Thy little ones, for we are Thy sheep! Yes, O Master, fill us us with Thy food, Thy justice. Yes, O Educator, shepherd us to Thy holy mountain, the Church, which is lifted up above the clouds, touching the heavens! 'And I shall be their shepherd,' He says, 'and I will be near them,' as the garment is to the skin'.⁵⁹ He wills to save my body by clothing it with the cloak of immortality, and my flesh He has anointed (Σῶσαι βούλεται μου τὴν σάρκα, περιβαλὼν τὸν χιτῶνα τῆς ἀφθαρσίας· καὶ τὸν χιτῶνα μου κέχρικεν).⁶⁰

The shepherd who wishes to redeem and give immortality by anointing represents Christ who saves man through baptism administered by the Church.

The early iconographic programme in the baptistery of Dura-Europos, so far as it is preserved, is distinguished from the iconographic ensembles of the catacombs by the relationship that it establishes between its subjects and their arrangement on the walls. Thus the scene of Adam and Eve, which in the catacombs may be placed anywhere, is in the Dura baptistery in the most central spot in the room, behind the font, adjacent to the Good Shepherd with his flock. The scene represents clearly the Fall and the salvation, the latter taking the predominant space. The other remaining fragments testify that the images were intended to celebrate the baptismal rite: the Samaritan woman at the well, Christ walking on the water, the victory of David over Goliath, the healing of the paralytic and the Resurrection of Christ with the scene of the holy women at the tomb (picture 2).⁶¹

Iconography here points to the common religious theme: the power of God which assures the salvation of true believers. The inspiration of the earliest Christian art

⁵⁸ Cf. Ezech. 34:11-16

⁵⁹ "καὶ ἔσομαι, φησὶν, αὐτῶν ποιμὴν, καὶ ἔσομαι ἐγγὺς αὐτῶν, ὡς ὁ χιτῶν τοῦ χρωτὸς αὐτῶν". Cf. *Idem* and Isa. 51:5.

⁶⁰ *Paedagogus* I, 9. PG 8, cols 349-352. Transl. by Simon P. Wood, FC 23, 75.

⁶¹ Quasten, 'The Painting of the Good Shepherd at Dura-Europos' (1947), 20.

is liturgical, and it is linked with the events which are most crucial for a Christian: his baptism - his "birth" in the Kingdom, and his death - his entry into the Kingdom.⁶²

Salvation is the central concept of all early Christian thinking, and all writings, paintings, carvings, and liturgical practice, too, are submitted to it. The earliest pictures do not, however, reveal any clear visible connection between Incarnation and baptism.

But there is something to be said on this subject. The baptism of Christ is one of the most popular biblical scenes. Sometimes there is a dove above Christ's head. The dove has been explained as a symbol of peace, not representing the Holy Spirit.⁶³ B. Bagatti thinks that, as stated by Irenaeos⁶⁴, it is a symbol of Christ and redemption. Christ is depicted for the most part as a little boy and John the Baptist appears as an adult below the picture of Christ (pictures 1, 3).⁶⁵

According to Weidle, the early Christians painted on the walls of the Callixtus catacomb the whole mystery of salvation beginning from a baptism.⁶⁶ Scholars do not take a definite stand as to whether the baptismal scene depicted is the baptism of Jesus or that of a neophyte.⁶⁷ In line with the idea of salvation, which is signified by these biblical pictures, it is natural to see the baptism as being Christ's baptism, in which the baptism of Christians has its roots, especially when the early iconographical setting is found to be symbolic and not historical.

⁶² *Idem*, 22. A. Grabar writes that these "offices" concern the individual rather than the entire community. Death is always individual, but baptism is not. In the early Church it was the concern of the whole community, which is demonstrated, for instance, by the Eucharist and the communal repast.

⁶³ Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem* (1985), 57.

⁶⁴ "ἐπίσημον ὀγδοάδα ὑπάρχοντα, καὶ ἔχοντα ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν ἅπαντα τῶν στοιχείων ἀριθμὸν, ἐφάνερωσεν, ἐλθόντος αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα, ἢ τῆς περισσεῖας κάθοδος, ἧς ἐστὶν Ω καὶ Α' *Adv. Haer.* I. PG 7, col. 607.

⁶⁵ G. Ristow, *The Baptism of Christ* (1967). Pictures on pages 7 (sarcophag, in Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome), 11 (fresco in Callixtus catacomb, Rome), 16 (fresco in Marcellinus catacomb, Rome), 18 (sarcophagus in Arles), 21 (mosaic in the baptistry of the Aryans, Ravenna. G. de Jerphanion (1930) explains this picture presenting John the Baptist as a shepherd and Christ as Apollo. *La voix des monuments*, 178), 23 (ivory plate in Maximian Cathedra, Ravenna).

⁶⁶ W. Weidle, *The Baptism of Art* (1948?), 16-17.

⁶⁷ G. de Jerphanion, *La voix des monument* (1930), 178. A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography* (1968), 9.

An unsolved problem is why Christ is depicted in the earliest baptismal paintings in the form of a young boy.⁶⁸ The theme of the child Jesus being baptized also occurs in Armenian art (picture 4),⁶⁹ and the Armenian church has preserved until our days the original form of the Feast of Epiphany together with the themes of Christ's birth and baptism. I think the solution to this problem might be found in the theology of the Feast of Epiphany. St. Irenaeus writes:

"For this reason the Logos of God became man as an infant, although He was perfect, not on His own account, but because of the infancy of man He was made capable for a man to understand Him."⁷⁰

As man remains spiritually a child without baptism, so also Jesus became a child in order to give man in baptism the possibility of becoming "adult", the person which he was created to be.

"Following only the true and mighty Master, the Logos of God Jesus Christ, our Lord, who because of his tremendous love was made what we are, so that He might make us such as He himself is,"

as St. Irenaeus says.⁷¹ The Neophytes were commonly called 'children' in early documents, though it is obvious that most of them were adults. This reflects their theological status as newly born children in the Kingdom of God. The close connection between Christ's baptism and the baptism of a believer is expressed in the aforementioned pictures.

The baptism of Christ was celebrated in connection with his birth in order to bring this orthodox teaching into prominence in the Church, which was surrounded by many other "Christian" teachings.

Thus the earliest baptismal pictures also have concealed within them the theme of

⁶⁸ Snyder (1985) suggests that the little naked Jesus was the boyish wonder-worker of the healing scenes, who for his first "sign" heals the water, which represents the environment. *Ante Pacem*, 58.

⁶⁹ Grabar, *Christian Iconography* (1968), picture 233, and page 91.

⁷⁰ "καὶ διὰ τοῦτο συνενηπίαζεν Υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τέλειος ὢν, τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, οὐ δι' ἑαυτὸν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου νήπιον οὕτω χωρούμενος, ὡς ἄνθρωπος αὐτὸν χωρεῖν ἠδύνατο." (Et propter hoc coinfantiatum est homini Verbum Dei, cum esset perfectus, non propter se, sed propter hominis infantiam sic capax effectus, quemad modum homo illum capere potuit.) *Adv. Haer.* IV, 38.2. PG 7, col 1107.

⁷¹ "Solum autem verum et firmum magistrum sequens, Verbum Dei Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum: qui propter immensam suam dilectionem factus est quod sumus nos, uti nos perficeret esse quod est ipse." *Adv. Haer.* V. Praefatio. PG 7, col 1120.

The same idea is also found in St. Athanasius (*De Incarnatione Verbi* 54. PG 25, col 192 B), St. Gregory of Nazianzus (*Poema dogmatica* 10, 5-9. PG 37, col 465) and St. Gregory of Nyssa (*Oratio catechetica magna* 25. PG 45, col 65 D).

the incarnation of Christ. Christ's Incarnation and its soteriological value for the whole of mankind was depicted in early Christian art in other ways too, with the scene of the adoration of the Magi. It is the iconographic sign that indicates the principal argument in favor of the salvation of each believer: the fact of the Saviour's Incarnation and his work on earth.⁷² The wall painting in the catacomb of Vigna Massimo in Rome represents the three Magi bringing gifts to a seated lady with a child in her lap. Behind them is the scene of the miracle at the wedding at Cana and of Moses striking water from the rock (picture 5).⁷³ The Magi are also depicted on an bowl for sanctified water made c. 390 C.E.⁷⁴, and it can point to the connection between the Incarnation and the waters sanctified by Christ's baptism. In the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome there is a picture which perhaps depicts the prophet Isaiah alongside the Virgin and Child, indicating that the birth of the divine child was prophesied by Isaiah.⁷⁵

As Christ's historical birth became of significance liturgically and dogmatically, icons depicting the Nativity began to be developed. The basic form of the Nativity icon contains the crib with the child and shepherds and the Magi adoring the Christ-child. With the Council of Ephesus the Virgin Mary gained the central place in this icon. The scene begins to look like a cave, and in many icons the crib is depicted as an altar in the cave. Strictly speaking, this is a reference to the actual cave under the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, which had become well known through the accurate description given by pilgrims. This historical scene of the Nativity appears, however, at a much later date than the baptismal scene.⁷⁶ It tells us that the historical birth of Jesus was of significance in the early Church only in connection with his divine origin, and this could be depicted in other ways too, for example there is an icon of Christ where the cross in the *nimbus* is inscribed with the greek letters $\omicron \omega \nu$.

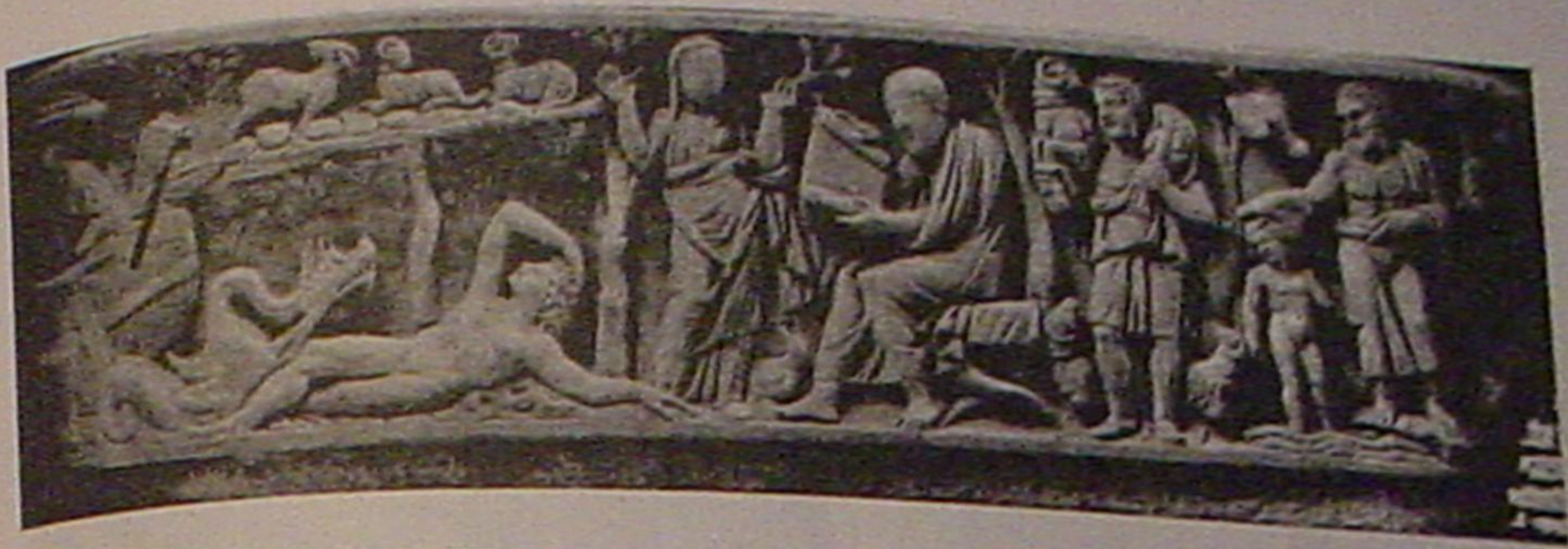
⁷² A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography* (1968), 12.

⁷³ *Idem*, picture 26. Often the image-makers made a direct comparison between the miracles of Moses and those of Jesus. Thus Moses striking the water and the miracle at Cana are related, and the rock represents Christ. *Idem*, p. 143-144.

⁷⁴ Museum of the Thermes, Rome. Two fragments of it are in the collection of the Byzantine Museum in Berlin. Effenberger-Severin, *Das Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst* (1992), Kat. 30.

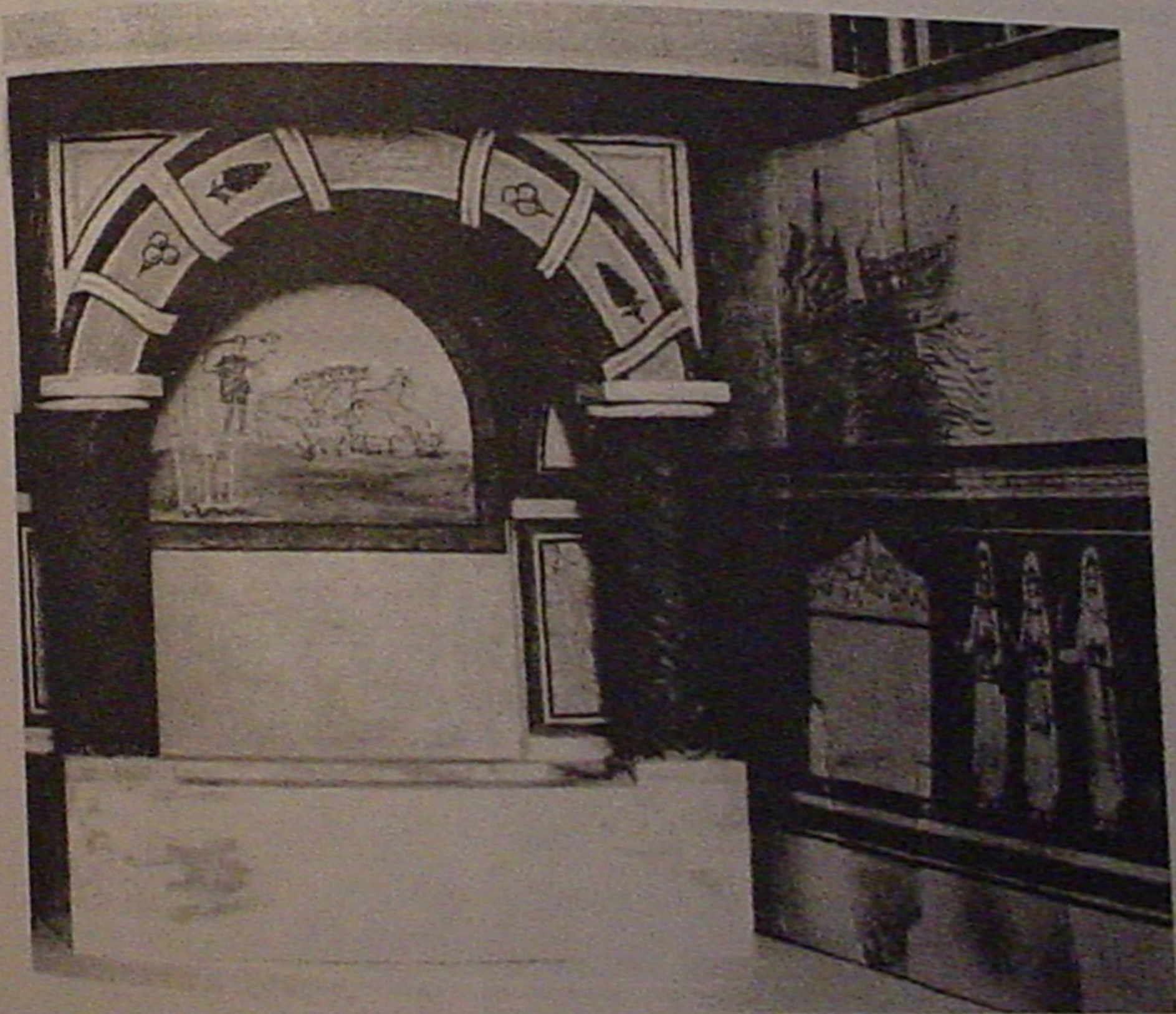
⁷⁵ A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography* (1968), 141.

⁷⁶ G. Ristow, *The Nativity* (1967), 21-22. K. Weitzmann, *Studies in the Arts at Sinai* (1982), 36-39.



Above: Picture 1. Sarcophagus.
Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome.

Below: Picture 2. Small-scale model
of the baptistery from the Christian
chapel, Dura. Yale University Art
Gallery.



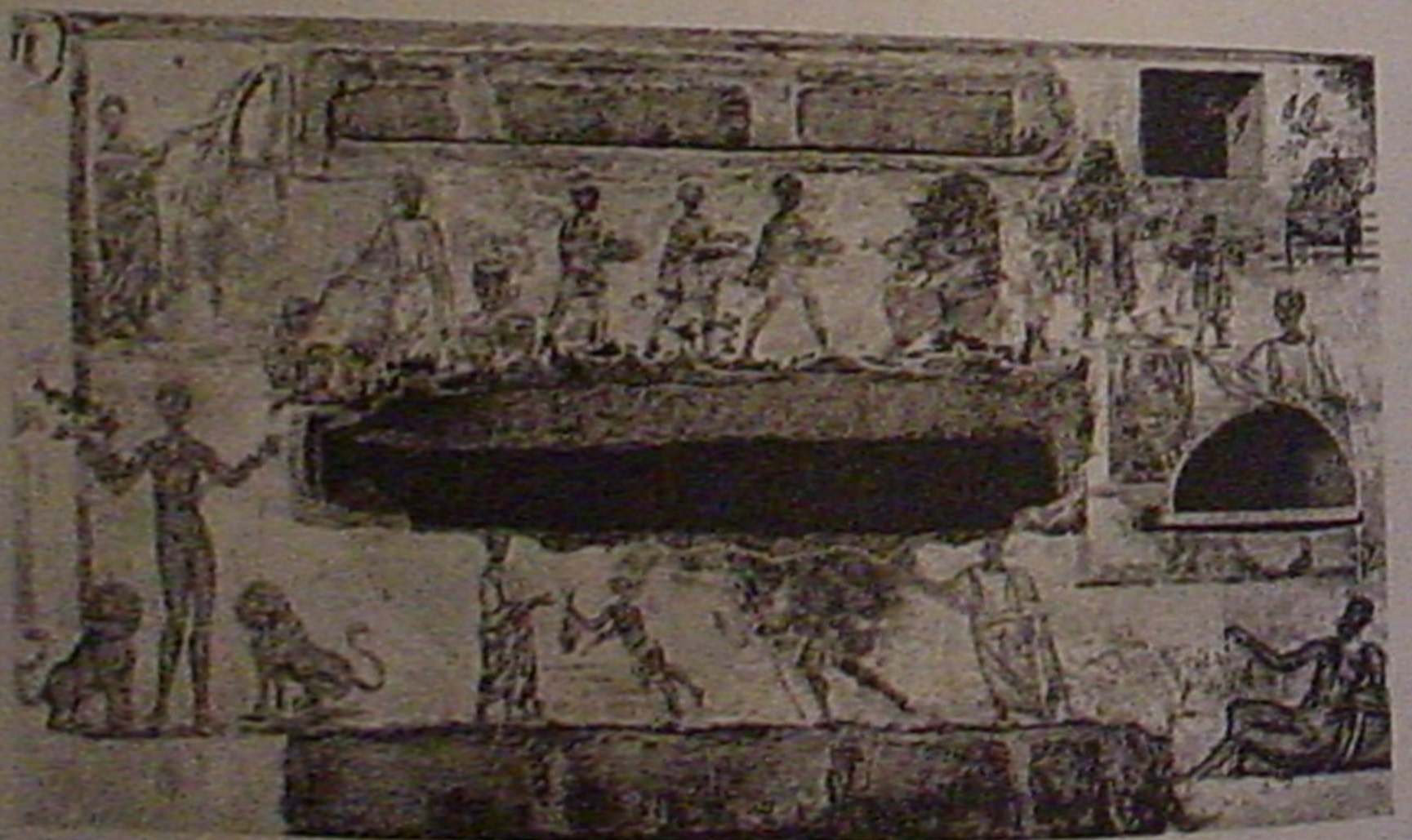


Above: Picture 3. Wall painting, catacombs of St. Calixtus, Rome.



Right: Picture 4. Miniature from an Armenian Gospel.

Below: Picture 5. Catacomb of Vigna Massimo, Rome.



5.3. The Miracle at Cana and the Drawing of Water

Epiphanius connects the miracle at the wedding at Cana with the birth of Jesus, saying that "around that same date thirty years later the first sign was performed at Cana in Galilee when the water became wine."⁷⁷ We know that this is not the real reason. How did the theme of the water changing into wine become transferred to the Feast of Epiphany?

The theme is quite common in the ancient world. We know several places where this is said to have taken place. Pausanius and Pliny Jr. witness to water changing into wine, the last occasion being on January 5 on the island of Andros.⁷⁸ The feast of Dionysius was probably the initiator of this tradition, and it might be nothing more than folklore, without any connection with any particular religion.

The main point of the Cana wedding in connection with our feast might not be the miraculous wine, but something more. The author of St. John's Gospel reveals his message of salvation at the very beginning: the Logos, who is not a mediator but God himself, became flesh, repentance is preached, an opportunity is given to be converted and receive salvation, which is given in Baptism in the church, which is the appearance of God's love. At the Cana wedding Christ reveals to his disciples his Divine *doxa* (John 2:11), which had been hidden from the world since his birth.⁷⁹ Thus the disciples knew from the beginning that he also has power to fulfil his promise of salvation. This is the main reason which connects the Cana miracle to the themes of Epiphany. St. Ephraem has the same idea:

He who is Lord of all, gives us all,
and He who is Enricher of all, borrows from all.

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⁷⁷ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51.30.3. Transl. by P. Amidon.

⁷⁸ *Naturalis Historiae* II. 106. T. Talley, *Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 115. R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, vol. I. (1968), 340.

⁷⁹ "What happened in Cana is a sign, which reveals the glory of Jesus and leads those whose faith is ready (the disciples) to a deeper understanding of the person of Jesus. This revelation of the glory of Jesus is not a timeless 'epiphany', but has a fixed place at the 'beginning' of a whole series of signs which Jesus performs. — The three clauses of 2:11 are a programmatic statement of what the signs essentially are and should be: the unveiling of the glory of the Word made flesh. — John takes the Incarnation so seriously that the veil of the *σάρξ* is never removed and the Divine glory of Jesus is never displayed except to the true eyes of faith. — It is a manifestation (an 'epiphany') visible to the spiritually open eyes of the believer." Schnackenburg, *idem*, 334-337. See also Ellis, *The Genius of John* (1984), 43.

He made water into wine as Maker,
 but, on the other hand, He drank some of it as a poor man.
 From His own He mixed it at the wedding feast -
 His (own) wine He mixed and gave (it) to drink where He was
 invited.

HNat. 4:203,206-207

In Latin Christianity one of the themes of Epiphany is the Transfiguration.⁸⁰ This transformation is also an event where Christ's *doxa* is revealed⁸¹ and thus it may be a simple alternative to the Cana wedding story. Epiphanius, again, is here misleading us while he sees the Cana miracle oversimplified and connected with imagined dates.

The drawing of water at this feast mentioned by Epiphanius⁸² and John Chrysostom⁸³, is another theme connected with this feast. Epiphanius mentions that "everyone" does it "in Egypt as in many other lands."⁸⁴ We might see here, too, a heathen custom which was grounded in local traditions. It does not seem to belong essentially to the Egyptian Gnostic systems. Among the Gnostic Sethians the cup of living water was the instrument of participating in immortality. Rudolph finds it difficult to say whether the common expression "living water" is connected with the gift of Gnosis or with some water-rite.⁸⁵ The idea of the healing power of special water was common, as was also water changing into wine.⁸⁶ The Nile certainly held a central place in Egyptian culture and religion, and several months, especially those of the season of inundation, had festivals whose themes were related to one or another stage in the rising and falling of the Nile. None of

⁸⁰ "Quidam autem die Epiphaniarum baptismi, alii transformationis in monte quae facta est esse opinantur." *Filastrius Episcopi Brixienensis Diversarum Hereseon Liber. CXL.4.* (Filastrius, the bishop of Brescia, wrote ca. 385-391 this document which contains inter alia a list of major festivals: Nativity, Epiphany, Pascha and Ascension, "in quo ascendit in caelum circa pentecosten.")

⁸¹ Luke 9:31-32

⁸² See p. 89

⁸³ See next page.

⁸⁴ *Paranion* 51.30.3.

⁸⁵ Rudolph, *Die Gnosis* (1990), 238, 245.

⁸⁶ *id.* p. 33.

these, however, is found on 11 Tybi⁸⁷ in the composite calendar of known Egyptian festivals in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods compiled by Ginzel.⁸⁸ No feast either is said to include the rite of drawing of water.⁸⁹

In 1896 M. Margoliouth published manuscript Or. 4951 of the British Museum, which contains some services of the Egyptian Melkite church, written in the Palestinian Syriac dialect, the rubric directions and several of the headings being in Karshuni, and also embodying prayers and liturgical "formulae" in Greek transcribed into Syriac characters. The manuscript, which is dated to the 12th or 13th century, has a special consecration of the inundation water called the Liturgy of the Nile.⁹⁰ It is an adaptation of the consecration of the water as celebrated in the Greek Church, but clearly adapted to the Egyptian environment. It takes place when the Nile inundates, i.e. after Pentecost and before the feast of St. Mark in Alexandria (Sept. 23). A basin with Nile water is put on the shore of the Nile and the clergy go there in procession. The water in the basin is consecrated by dipping the cross in it, and then it is poured into the Nile and offered to the people to drink. Its purpose is to thank God for the fertility the Nile brings and to pray "that Thou mayest prepare its lifting up in peace, and that it may mount up by Thy grace to the border of its measure."⁹¹

This old custom is a witness to the varied practice which the Christian water-rites had in different circumstances. They all have their origins in the idea that by descending into the water of the Jordan Christ consecrated the waters, the source of life for all life on earth. The water which is miraculous at special times is in Christianity connected with Christ's descent into water at his baptism, but at the same it is widened in scope to apply all waters at all times, as Christ is the source of all life on the earth. When St. John Chrysostom speaks of the drawing of water

⁸⁷ Equivalent to January 6.

⁸⁸ Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 114. F.K. Ginzel, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen Chronologie*, Bd I (1906), 205-207.

⁸⁹ Talley, *idem*, 115

⁹⁰ 'The Liturgy of the Nile' (1896). Ed. and transl. with introduction by Rev. G. Margoliouth. 677-731.

⁹¹ *Idem*, 722.

in connection with the Feast of Epiphany he is referring to a custom that is part of the fixed catholic Feast of Epiphany:

"For this is the day on which he was baptized and sanctified the nature of the waters. (Αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἡμέρα καθ' ἣν ἐβαπτίσαστο, καὶ τὴν τῶν ὑδάτων ἡγίασε φύσιν.) Therefore also on this solemnity in the middle of the night all who are gathered, having drawn the water, set the liquid aside in their houses and preserve it throughout the year, for today the waters are sanctified. And this evident marvel is produced, that this water is not corrupted by the long passage of time, but through an entire year or even two or three years the water drawn today remains pure and fresh, and after such a long time it rivals that just drawn from the spring."⁹²

We also meet miraculous water in the pool of Bethesda. The origin of the moving of the water in Bethesda is pagan.⁹³ Recent excavations have shown that during Christ's lifetime the Pool of Bethesda outside the walls of Jerusalem, as they then were, was a therapeutic centre dedicated to Asclepius or, earlier on, to some pagan healer-god. The miraculous troubling of the water which was caused, according to John 5:4, by an angel of the Lord, was originally caused by the deity of the site. Jewish angelology could provide a real bridge between Judaism and paganism. In late Judaism we find "angels of rivers", which notion is preserved for a long time. There is an example of it in Christian iconography, where the Jordan is depicted as a living being.⁹⁴ The passage in John 5 tells us that Christ performed the miracle instead of the angel. We are not dealing here with any polemics against paganism but with the idea that all the positive actions that up to then had been carried out by the mediation of angels (a belief held in pagan religions as much as in Judaism) had now been transferred to Christ. He shows his superior power, which is not limited by any conditions or special time - a power independent of any help from angel or man, and equivalent to that which raises Christ above all the powers of heaven and earth. Christ is seen as the fulfilment of all that was right in paganism, which was expressed in the symbols of some pagan cults - in particular the cult of Asclepius. In this perspective, Asclepius, Eshmun

⁹² *Homilia de baptismo Christi et de Epiphania*. PG 49, cols 365-366. Translation in: Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 114-115.

⁹³ I refer in what follows to Jerzy Klinger's article 'Bethesda and the Universality of the Logos' (1983), 169-185.

⁹⁴ The mosaic in the Arian baptistry at Ravenna. See e.g. Ristow, *The Baptism of Christ* (1967), 18, 21.

and Serapis could be viewed as incomplete manifestations of this same divine Logos, who was manifested fully only in the person of Christ.

Thus the drawing of sanctified water is to be seen as a Christian continuation of the former pagan customs met especially in the cultures where a source of water is of central importance, as in the case of the Nile in Egypt.

5.5. The Need for a Feast to celebrate the Incarnation

The doctrine of salvation occurs in liturgical form before it was determined in verbal form in the synods. *Lex orandi lex credendi est*. There were no dogmatic declarations except the early creeds. The apologies were not books of dogmatic theology, and the material for an apology arose from the liturgical life of the church. This means that the baptismal, Sunday, Pascha, Pentecost and eucharistic celebrations, the evening service and the lectionaries express the contents of the Christian faith. The Quartodeciman Pascha commemorated Christ's saving sufferings, and it had no connection with his Incarnation.⁹⁵ Pentecost was the celebration of Christ's Ascension and the descent of the Spirit, and neither had any direct connection with the Incarnation. Incarnation needed a celebration which could announce its central saving message to the people in a liturgical manner. In particular this feast was needed to prevent the introduction of foreign ideas into the Catholic *ecclesiae* in Syria and in Egypt. The components of this feast grow from traditional Judaism, with which the Syrians were well acquainted - especially from the scene of the Feast of Tabernacles with its tradition of lights -, from the Gospel of John, and from the existing liturgical material.

But something else was needed before the feast of Epiphany gained its world-wide significance. In Alexandria there arose a significant person, the priest Areios, whose conception of Christ's human nature caused a new controversy, and the bishops of Alexandria, Alexander and Athanasius, arose to resist his teachings. Areios' explanation of Christ as the highest created being made void the concept of salvation, such as it was already seen in the *Epistula Apostolorum*: Christ descended through the firmaments of heaven and by his descent into Sheol released those who were prisoners there. By ascending again through the firma-

⁹⁵ See closer chs. 6.3. and 6.5.

ments unto God he conquered the power of the demons.⁹⁶ If Christ is only a human being, though the highest of them, he is not able to vanquish demons, because this warfare between God and demons was seen to take place in the upper spheres. The battle upon earth was a reflection of the battle in heaven. Thus everybody who seeks shelter in Christ is safe from the demonic powers. This act of sheltering takes place in baptism. In the Egyptian Church the philosophical and apologetical tradition of Origen was influential, and in its shadow it was easy for Areios to teach his own doctrine. Now the Incarnation, alongside baptism, became the central theme in the Church, beginning from Alexandria. The decree of Nicea caused the need to bring fixed teaching to the liturgy among the faithful, and this strengthened the theme of Christ's Incarnation in the feast of Epiphany, first in Syria⁹⁷, and later more widely in the empire.

5.6. The Liturgical Premises for the Feasts

The Christian church, unlike Gnosticism, laid stress on community and equality.⁹⁸ If it was only necessary to gather together for the Eucharist and prayer, the ordinary *domus* would be quite adequate; but the first Christians were Jews and accustomed to meeting at synagogue services, and they continued to attend. Conflict, however, broke out very soon. John 16:2-3 reflects this by saying: "They will put you out of the synagogues; ---and they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me." After this disagreement there were probably two kinds of synagogues: for "them" and for "you", as it is possible to infer from the Gospel of Matthew: "and they will...flog you ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν (in their synagogues)⁹⁹," and from the epistle of St. James: "If a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν (into your assembly)..."¹⁰⁰ In the locality where the Christians did not succeed in convincing the majority of Jews of the arrival of Messiah, they had to seek another place for their gatherings, an

⁹⁶ *Epistula Apostolorum* 12-14, 18, 27, 51.

⁹⁷ See ch. 6.4.

⁹⁸ James 2:2-4

⁹⁹ Mat. 10:17

¹⁰⁰ James 2:2

ordinary house.¹⁰¹ The members of many Pauline house-churches seem to have been drawn almost entirely from the non-Jewish population, and the pattern of organization must have been recognizable and acceptable in their environment.¹⁰² Christians probably also built new synagogues for themselves, as Eusebius testifies.¹⁰³

We have noted that in Edessa a church, called *hajkla*¹⁰⁴, was destroyed in the floods in 201.¹⁰⁵ A.T. Kraabel concludes that the synagogues of the Diaspora were determined architecturally more by local customs and influences than by any notion of Jewish theological or architectural norms.¹⁰⁶ Only after the destruction of the Temple, and even then only after the Bar Kokhba revolt failed to restore it, did synagogue buildings begin to take on their symbolic functions through the architectural articulation of sacred premises.¹⁰⁷ More and more the synagogue became a substitute for the lost Temple, and acquired some of its functions, characteristics and aura.¹⁰⁸

In Christian synagogues normal liturgical life continued as before, but conscious of the fact that the awaited Messiah, of whom all the Scriptures had foretold, had

¹⁰¹ Acts 19:8-9, 20:7-8

¹⁰² White, L. Michael, *Building God's House in the Roman World* (1990), 104.

¹⁰³ "Πῶς δ' ἂν τις διαγράψειε τὰς μυριάδους ἐκεῖνας ἐπισυναγωγὰς, καὶ τὰ πλήθη τῶν κατὰ πᾶσαν πόλιν ἄθροισμάτων, τὰς τε ἐπισήμους ἐν τοῖς προσευκτηρίοις συνδρομάς, ὧν δὴ ἕνεκα μηδαμῶς ἐπι τοῖς παλαιοῖς οἰκοδομήμασιν ἀρκοῦμενοι, εὐρείας εἰς πλάτος ἀνά πάσας τὰς πόλεις ἐκ θεμελίων ἀνίστων ἐκκλησίας." *Hist. Eccl.* 8:1:5

"Συντετέλεσται δὴτα καθ' ἡμᾶς ἅπαντα, ὅπηνίκα τῶν μὲν προσευκτηρίων τοὺς οἴκους ἐξ ὕψους εἰς ἔδαφος αὐτοῖς θεμελίους καταρριπυμένους, τὰς δὲ ἐνθέους καὶ ἱεράς γραφάς κατὰ μέσας ἀγοράς πυρὶ παραδιδόμενας αὐτοῖς ἐπείδομεν ὀφθαλμοῖς· τοὺς τε τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν ποιμένας οὐκ μὲν αἰσχρῶς ὥδε κακεῖσε κρυπταζομένους." *Hist. Eccl.* 8:2:1.

¹⁰⁴ L. Michael White thinks that one cannot draw special conclusions from the name *hajkla*. Note 52 on p. 191-192 in his aforementioned book.

¹⁰⁵ See page 74

¹⁰⁶ 'The Social Systems of Six Diaspora Synagogues' (1981), 89.

¹⁰⁷ L. M. White, *Building God's House in the Roman World* (1990), 64. He refers to J. Gutmann, 'The Origin of the Synagogue: The Current State of Research' (1975), 76, n. 40, ; and A.T. Kraabel, 'The Diaspora Synagogue: Archeological and Epigraphic Evidence since Sukenik' (1979), 500-502.

¹⁰⁸ A.T. Kraabel, 'The Diaspora Synagogue: Archeological and Epigraphic Evidence since Sukenik' (1995), 120-121.

come. After ordinary houses took on the function of places for liturgical gathering, they are called *domus ecclesiae*. In Nazareth, Capharnaum and Dura-Europos there are remains of houses which had been converted into *domus ecclesiae*.¹⁰⁹ There are signs of attempts to make them look more like synagogues by creating niches and apses.¹¹⁰

In Jerusalem, the spiritual centre of the Church, the Upper Room, where Jesus ate the Last Supper with the disciples, became the meeting place of the Christians living in the capital, and it was converted into a Christian synagogue. Another possibility is that the Christians obtained the use of one of the seven synagogues on Mt. Zion, and the Upper Room was only the place of meeting.¹¹¹

According to Eusebius, the Christians handed over their buildings and sacred writings during the persecutions, and this made it impossible to maintain the traditional Jewish-based cult.¹¹² In time Gentiles formed the majority in the Church and only the main scheme of the Jewish-Christian cult was preserved under their leadership. They felt free to introduce new elements and further develop old ones. It was also not possible for the Jewish Church to remain entrenched in the bygone world; their rites and customs had to be taken over by the new Church dominated by the Gentiles. This is the procedure that eliminated the christianized Feast of Tabernacles and erected on its remains the Christian Feast of Epiphany.

On the same age as the Christian assembly rooms are the baptistries, of which there are more remains than of ancient house-churches. It tells us of the centrality of the Christian rites of initiation in the life of the Church during and after the persecutions.

The earliest dated baptistry is situated in the *domus ecclesiae* of Dura Europos.

¹⁰⁹ B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision* (1984), 122-132.

¹¹⁰ *Idem*, 113-115.

¹¹¹ *Idem*, 116. Epiphanius, *De mensuris* XIV, PG 43, cols. 260-261. Epiphanius informs that the small ecclesia of Christians hold their meetings in coenaculum at Sion.

¹¹² HE VI:39-42, VII:11, VIII:2

Some baptismal places have been found in Palestine from before and during the Constantinian period. In Nazareth, Bethlehem and Eleona on the Mount of Olives there were basins for administering baptism in grottos, which now lie under the large ecclesiastical buildings.¹¹³ Most baptistries, however, date from the fifth century or later.

Baptistries in Palestine were rectangular in shape and they were mostly incorporated into ecclesiastical buildings. The themes of the decoration reveal that the teachings of St. Cyril on baptism as the death and resurrection of the neophyte were well accepted.¹¹⁴

The square form of font was mostly used by the Judaeo-Christians during the first centuries. The earliest baptistries of the third and fourth centuries were square or rectangular with or without an apse at one end. This was the outcome of three factors: it had the shape of an ordinary room, like at Dura-Europos. Secondly, the *frigidarium* of the Roman baths had its influence, and thirdly the quadrilateral shape and its developments were associated with graves in terms of a death and resurrection with Christ.¹¹⁵ But very early on there were also round baptistries resembling the shape of the womb - signifying rebirth in baptism.¹¹⁶ Church fathers consequently regard the font as the womb of Mother Church, the oriental Fathers most often saw the font as a mother, a kind of twin sister of the Church, but occasionally as a womb.¹¹⁷ Ephraem the Syrian writes: "O womb which daily and without pain gives birth to the children of the Kingdom of Heaven."¹¹⁸ The earliest fonts that have been found are, however, not round, which does not prove that there were no fonts of this shape. In Syro-Palestine we do not have sufficient evidence from the earliest times to enable us to reach conclusions as to their relation to baptismal theology.

¹¹³ B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine* (1971), 303-311, and *The Church from the Circumcision* (1984), 242-246.

¹¹⁴ de Bruyne, 'La décoration des baptistères paléochrétiens' (1957). Bagatti, *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine* (1971), 309-310.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, and Davies, 'Baptistry' (1986), 82.

¹¹⁶ Davies, *The architectural Setting of Baptism* (1962), 14.

¹¹⁷ Bedard, *The symbolism of the Baptismal Font in Early Christian Thought* (1951), 48f.

¹¹⁸ *HVurg.* 7:7.

The cruciform font, on the other hand, centres in the idea of death with Christ. "Baptism is a cross. What the cross was to Christ and what His burial was, that baptism was to us", writes St. John Chrysostom¹¹⁹.

The baptismal setting in the early Church does not provide enough material to support the theory of the close intertwining of the notions of the Incarnation of Christ and the baptism of man.

5.7. Conclusions

Though it is not possible to trace the Christian Epiphany Feast in the time of the Martyrs, it is very possible that the feast was on the way to taking concrete form. All its main components were seen in early literary and pictorial sources: the Incarnation of the Son of God, his sacrifice of reconciliation, baptism as a human response to this benefit and commitment to the Kingdom of God - even if it involved a martyr's death. The Odes of Solomon especially point to the importance of baptism for a person to gain the Kingdom and its benefits. The Odes might well have their primary source in the commemoration day of baptism, which seems most appropriate for the early Epiphany Feast.

The earliest Christian Iconography presents the idea of Redemption as a group of pictures derived from Biblical stories. The baptism of Christ there holds a central position, as do the themes of the Fall and the Good Shepherd. Incarnation is present in the adoration of the Magi.

The miracle at the wedding at Cana became connected with the themes of the Redemption because it testifies to the appearance of God's *doxa* in Christ. Performing a miracle before the eyes of his mother and the disciples Jesus gave them a sign of his Divine power: God's *doxa* or *shekhinah* had truly descended upon the earth. This was a sign for the Jews, who were accustomed to see the descent commemorated at the Feast of Tabernacles in the Jerusalem Temple.

The sanctified waters, connected with the Feast of Epiphany by St. Epiphanius and St. John Chrysostom, have their origin in the baptism of Christ, who sancti-

¹¹⁹ "σταυρός γάρ ἐστι τὸ βάπτισμα. Ὅπερ οὖν ὁ σταυρὸς τῷ χριστῷ καὶ ὁ τάφος, τοῦτο ἡμῖν τὸ βάπτισμα γέγονεν, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτῶν" *Comm. epist. ad Rom.* 10,4. PG 60, col 479.

fied the waters by descending into them. The miraculous waters were formerly considered to be caused by different deities, but now Christ had taken their place as the supreme Majesty. Those pagan customs that were christianized were adopted by the Christians themselves. The authorization for this is seen in John 5:1-9, the episode at the pool of Bethesda.

The early Church embedded its doctrine in its liturgical practice. If the Incarnation, reconciliation, baptism and abiding in the promise of Eternal life in the Kingdom of God were of central importance for a believer, they had to be expressed liturgically, they needed a *Sitz im Leben*. I think that from these concepts arise the celebration of a Christian Epiphany Feast. Due to a lack of reliable sources this view has to remain a hypothesis. The heresy of Arius brought about the final need to establish this feast oecumenically, but even then it was not created *ex nihilo*, but out of the existing local practices. The *ekklesia* had buildings where it was possible to maintain liturgical life, derived from Jewish practices.

6. MOVING TOWARDS UNITY

6.1. Constantine the Great and Palestine

After the Milan Edict of 313 the Church could begin freely to develop its liturgical life, with the aim of expressing in theory and practice the Apostolic and Catholic faith, which was seen to continue in changed circumstances. Eusebius and his contemporaries and successors had to convince themselves that nothing had essentially changed and that their Church was still the Church of the martyrs. No radical break could be allowed to divide the triumphant Church of the fourth century from its persecuted predecessors. It was necessary to keep the past alive in the Church's mind, and not only alive but renewed in the new circumstances in which it found itself.¹

In Palestine at the beginning of the Constantinian era we find a living tradition of the holy places, which was what enabled the Catholic Church to build churches there. The mystic grottoes were associated with their doctrine of the 'descent' and 'ascent' of Christ and his initiated ones. For them the Bethlehem grotto became a symbol of the passage of the soul from darkness to light.² It seems that there were many local celebrations which commemorated Christ's appearance to the people and some of them were connected with pagan festivals.³ When Constantine the Great began his great building programme in the Holy Land it was intended to demonstrate his glory as a ruler, and Eusebius admired his donations, which enhanced his reputation in the Church. But there were practical reasons, too. The growing Church needed buildings in which the faithful could meet, celebrate the liturgy and develop explanations of the holy faith. This was the Christian reception of the ancient *heron* or temple-memorial raised over the tomb of a martyr or saint, or at the place of his theophany. On the other hand, there existed the basilica, the place for public assembly and the state cult. Both forms gradually merged, but uppermost was the understanding of the Church as the place of residence of

¹ R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (1990), 90.

² Cornfeld-Freedman, *Archaeology of the Bible: Book by Book* (1976), 279.

³ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims* (1977), 34.

the sacred.⁴ The Constantinian buildings on the sites of the three holy caves - the Holy Sepulchre, the cave of the Nativity and the cave on the Mount of Olives - were built so that the holy places could be seen as they were, and adjacent to them were the meeting-places.⁵ The three basilicas beneath and over the sacred caves were the most famous churches erected at that time, about 325-335. Eusebius explains them following:

Accordingly, on the very spot which witnessed the Saviour's sufferings, a new Jerusalem was constructed, over against the one so celebrated of old, which, since the foul stain of guilt brought on it by the murder of the Lord, had experienced the last extremity of desolation, the effect of Divine judgement on its impious people. It was opposite this city that the emperor now began to raise a monument to the Saviour's victory over death, with rich and lavish magnificence.—First of all, then, he adorned the sacred cave itself⁶, as the chief part of the whole work, and the hallowed monument at which the angel radiant with light had once declared to all that regeneration which was first manifested in the Saviour's person.⁷

In the same country he discovered other places, venerable as being the localities of two sacred caves: and these also he adorned with lavish magnificence. In the one case, he rendered due honour to that which had been the scene of the first manifestation of our Saviour's divine presence, when he submitted to be born in mortal flesh (τῷ μὲν τῆς πρώτης τοῦ σωτῆρος θεοφανεΐας ἄνθρω, ἐνθα δὴ καὶ τὰ τῆς ἐνσάρκου γενέσεως ὑπέστη,) while in the case of the second cavern he hallowed the remembrance of his ascension to heaven from the mountain top.⁸

For without delay she dedicated two churches to the God whom she adored, one at the grotto which had been the scene of the Saviour's birth, the other on the mount of his ascension. (Αὐτίκα δ' οὖν τῷ προσκυνηθέντι θεῷ δύο νεῶς ἀφιέρου, τὸν μὲν πρὸς τῷ τῆς γεννήσεως ἄνθρω, τὸν δ' ἐπὶ τοῦ τῆς ἀναλήψεως ὄρους.) —And further, the mother of the emperor raised a stately structure on the Mount of Olives also, in memory of his ascent to heaven.— Thus did Helena Augusta, the pious mother of a pious emperor, erect over the two mystic caverns these two noble and beautiful monuments of devotion, worthy of everlasting remembrance, to the honour of God her Saviour, and as proofs of her holy zeal, receiving from her son the aid of his imperial

⁴ A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (1966), 90.

⁵ Vincent-Abel, *The Church of Bethlehem* (1914); Bagatti, *The Church from the Gentiles* (1971), 157-190.

⁶ τὸ ἱερόν ἄντρον, meaning the tomb.

⁷ *De vita Constantini*, Book III, ch. 33. Transl. by E.C. Richardson. NPNF vol.1.

⁸ *Idem*, Book III, ch. 41.

power.⁹

He judged the festival of his Tricennalia¹⁰ to be a fit occasion for thanksgiving — at the same time believing that the dedication of the church (he had erected at Jerusalem) might advantageously be performed.¹¹

Constantine built also other churches in Palestine and Syria. One of these is the church which was erected near the oak of Mambre, the scene of the "theophaneia" to Abraham. One wonders if there is any special reason why a large basilica was also built. According to Eusebius, there had been a much frequented market and an altar where pagans offered libations and sacrifices of cows, sheep, goats and cocks. The mother-in-law of Constantine, Eutropia, went to this feast and was scandalized that it was permitted to profane the holy place. She requested the intervention of Constantine, who included it in his building programme. This place had a special significance for the Jews as embodying the promise of posterity. This was now transferred to the Christian Church.¹² Yet the theophany does not seem to be the first reason for venerating this place.

Because great churches were built on the sites of Christ's birth and death and Resurrection, one might expect that a Church would also be built on the site of his baptism at the River Jordan. But Eusebius does not give information about such matters in his descriptions of Constantine's buildings. We know that only in the early sixth century did the emperor Anastasius have a Church built at Bethabara, dedicated to St. John the Baptist.¹³ One reason for its neglect could also be the Arian controversy: the Arians taught that it was at his baptism that Jesus was adopted into sonship.

The major churches soon became centres of liturgical development in connection

⁹ *Idem*, Book III, ch. 43,1.

¹⁰ In the year 335.

¹¹ *De vita Constantini*, Book IV, ch. 40, Transl. by E.C. Richardson. NPNF vol. 1.

¹² *Idem*, Book III, ch. 28-43. Sozomenos, *Hist. Eccl.* PG 67, cols 941-944. Bagatti, *The Church from the Gentiles* (1971), 67-68.

¹³ G. Ristow, *Baptism of Christ* (1967), 49.

with the events that had taken place there. Eusebius testifies:

"A statute was also passed, enjoining the due observance of the Lord's day (τὴν κυριακὴν ἡμέραν), and transmitted to the governors of every province, who undertook, at the emperor's command, to respect the days commemorative of martyrs, and duly to honour the festal seasons in the churches (μαρτύρων ἡμέρας ἐπίμων καιρούς θ' ἐορτῶν ἐκκλησίαις ἐδόξαζον)."¹⁴

This edict of the emperor was disseminated to every province. The Lord's Day is mentioned to promote the coincidence of the day of the sun with the Christian Lord's Day. In particular, it was requested that the Church's common festivals be observed, but they are not mentioned separately, perhaps on purpose, for the festal calendar of the Church had not yet become standardized everywhere, nor did the emperor wish to interfere by exercising his authority. Since the edict is mentioned in connection with Constantine's extensive church building programme, it is probable that the edict was connected with the messages proclaimed by the three great churches of Palestine - those of Passover, Pentecost¹⁵ and Epiphany. Passover and Pentecost were certainly a legacy from Judaism, but Epiphany and its date of January 6 is known before this only from the tradition of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, which reaches back to the time of the martyrs. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem had from the very beginning celebrated the feast of the Incarnation on January 6th, as we may conclude from Egeria. We may raise the question why Constantine did not command that the *dies solis invicti* should be the day of the Incarnation in Bethlehem? The only answer would be that the Eastern Church had its tradition of Epiphany and the Emperor wished to honour the existing traditions of the Church. State policy could well tolerate other practices than those promoted by the Emperor. Raising Jesus' place of birth to the rank of one of the most important Christian holy places gives the impression that the Church wished to attach the idea of the Incarnation to a certain physical place and eliminate the notion that it was no more than an idea. This brought into prominence the concept of historical celebrations relating to Christ's Nativity, baptism, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension.

¹⁴ *De vita Constantini*, Book IV, ch. 23. Transl. by E.C. Richardson. NPNF vol. 1.

¹⁵ The Christian Feast of Pentecost originally celebrated in the beginning both the Ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit.

6.2. The Travels of Egeria and the Catecheses of St. Cyril of Jerusalem

From the evidence of the pilgrim Egeria in the 380s we know that the *ecclesia* of Jerusalem went to Bethlehem on the eve of January 6 to celebrate the memorial of Christ's birth, as was the situation in the days of Constantine: "the first manifestation of our Saviour's divine presence when he submitted to be born in mortal flesh."¹⁶ Other memorials could not have been celebrated in this Church: it was the very place of the Incarnation of Christ. At daybreak the people came back to Jerusalem where the usual services were held. The octavia of the feast is also connected with the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

"But in Bethlehem they go on for eight days continuously...but the bishop must celebrate the festival in Jerusalem. So at night everyone goes back with him to Jerusalem; but all the Bethlehem monks keep vigil in the Church at Bethlehem, and sing hymns and antiphons till it is day."¹⁷

Egeria does not mention the commemoration of Christ's baptism in connection with this feast or any other feast. A page of her story concerning just the eve of Epiphany is missing, so that we do not know of a possible mass baptism on the eve of Epiphany. B. Botte has concluded that the missing fragment describes some ceremony at the Jordan.¹⁸ According to Egeria, mass baptism was performed at Easter.¹⁹ Nothing of this nature is mentioned in connection with the Feast of Pentecost,²⁰ so it is not probable that there would have been mass baptism in connection with Epiphany either, for the long period of teaching for baptismal candidates, which Egeria carefully describes, was probably held only once a year, before Easter. Baptism in Jerusalem is mentioned by the pilgrim from Bordeaux in the year 333, although she does not mention the day of baptism.²¹ When telling of

¹⁶ Eusebius, *De vita Constantini*, Book III, ch. 41. Transl. by E.C. Richardson. NPNF Vol. 1.

¹⁷ *Itin. Egeriae* 25:7-12. Transl. by J. Wilkinson. *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 126-128.

¹⁸ B. Botte, *Les origines de la Noël et de l'Épiphanie* (1932), 14. McArthur agrees: *The Evolution of the Christian Year* (1953), 52.

¹⁹ Egeria and St. Cyril of Jerusalem testify to this. *Itin. Egeriae* 38.1; 47.1-2. *Myst. kat.* 153-180.

²⁰ *Itin. Egeriae* 29-40. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 131-143.

²¹ "By order of the Emperor Constantine there has now been built there 'a basilica' - I mean a 'place for the Lord' - which has beside it cisterns of remarkable beauty, and beside them a bath (*balneus*) where children are baptized." (*Itidem modo iussu Constantini imperatoris basilica facta est, id est domnicum, mirae pulchritudinis habens ad latus exceptoria, unde aqua levatur, et balneum a tergo, ubi infantes lauantur.*) *Itin. Burdig.* 594, 2-4. Transl. by J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 158.

Bethlehem the pilgrim mentions the church built by Constantine, but nothing of the place of baptism.²² From archaeological excavations we know that in Bethlehem, in the church built by Constantine, there really was a baptistry.²³

Egeria tells in detail of the Jerusalem Paschal baptism, mentioning that it took place during the Paschal vigil. She refers to the bishop, but does not name him. If the dating of Egeria's travels - from 381 to 384 - is correct, the bishop was St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who died in 386. At least by the year 348 St. Cyril was already giving catechetical lectures to catechumens. Opinions differ as to in dating his appointment to the see of Jerusalem: Wilkinson puts the date at 351²⁴ and Altaner-Stuiber 348²⁵. As a result of the Arian controversy he was banished three times, but he held the cathedra until his death. The mystagogical catecheses ascribed to him were held in connection with the preparation of catechumens for baptism at Easter. Their authorship is still debated. There is also good reason to ascribe them to Cyril's successor, Bishop John.²⁶

The mystagogical catecheses explain the significance of celebrating the Pascha with mass baptism. Christ's death and Resurrection are interpreted in connection with our baptism.²⁷ Their author fully accepted the Pauline approach of Romans 6, and for him it seemed very appropriate to perform mass baptism in Jerusalem, the city where Christ suffered, was buried and rose again.²⁸ This provides us with the

²² "Two miles further on, on the left, is Bethlehem, where the Lord Jesus Christ was born, and where a basilica has been built by command of Constantine." *Itin. Burdig.* 598. Transl. by J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 162.

²³ W. Harvey -W.R. Lethaby, a.o. *The Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem* (1910), 5, 11, fig 11. L.H. Vincent & F.M. Abel, *Bethlehem, Le sanctuaire de la nativité* (1914), 35, 92-94, 99, 198, pl2 et 10, fig. 36-37. A. Khachatryan, *Les baptistères paléochrétiens* (1962), 3, 68.

²⁴ J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 9.

²⁵ *Patrologie* (1978), 312.

²⁶ Quasten proposes that Cyril might have prepared them and delivered them first, but later his successor John revised them. J. Quasten, *Patrology III* (1960), 365. Altaner-Stuiber, *Patrologie* (1978), 312.

²⁷ St. Cyril, *Mystag.* FC, vol. 64, 153-180.

²⁸ G. Kretschmar, 'Festkalender und Memorialstätten' (1987), 79. "Easter is not about the empty tomb in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago, but about the reawakening here and now of my baptismal death and resurrection in Christ." R. Taft, 'The Liturgical Year: Studies, Prospects, Reflections' (1981).

knowledge that the theology of the Church developed from the ancient Jewish-based thinking into a full acceptance of Christ's redemptive death and resurrection, with which Christians are mystically united in baptism.²⁹ This view led to the introduction of Paschal baptism, and from Jerusalem this liturgically fixed rite spread all over the *oikoumene*.

Egeria's comment that the festival of the fortieth day after Easter was held in Bethlehem is deserving of attention. Egeria does not tell the theme of the day, but the Armenian lectionary³⁰ calls it the Ascension of Christ. Why did they go to Bethlehem instead of to the Mount of Olives? The church erected by Constantine on the mountainside, called Eleona, commemorated, according to Eusebius, Christ's Ascension, but according to an earlier tradition, it was the place where Christ had taught. The Church of the Ascension itself was not constructed until some time between 370-378 C.E. The older tradition was to go to Bethlehem, to the place of the Incarnation, because the Ascension has to do with the taking up into heaven of the humanity assumed by the Son. Incarnation and Ascension are the *alpha* and *omega* of the divine economy: the latter consummates the work of redemption initiated by the former.³¹ It is very logical to think that at the same place where he came to the world his departure from it should also be venerated.³²

Egeria's descriptions of the liturgical festivities in Jerusalem reveal, however, that in the Jerusalem Church the whole cycle of historical commemorations was fully developed. In the catechetical lectures there is no word of reference to any such observances.³³ The change took place under St. Cyril, and this justifies us in attributing the reforms to him. The central figure in all of the changes that took place in the liturgy and festival calendar of the Jerusalem Church was the liturgi-

²⁹ See ch. 24.

³⁰ From the beginning of the fifth century. See closer ch. 6.3.

³¹ I.G. Davies, 'The Peregrinatio Egeriae and the Ascension' (1954), 93-100.

³² In his *HNat.* 9 Ephraem links the Messianic Psalm 110, traditionally connected with the Nativity of Christ, with Psalms 2, 54 and 68, which provide the scriptural basis for the earliest Christian claims concerning the Ascension of Christ. K. McVey, *Ephraem the Syrian, Hymns* (1989), 124.

³³ R.M. Payne, *Christian Worship in Jerusalem* (1981), 76-77.

cally-minded bishop Cyril.³⁴

6.3. Old Lectionaries

We possess some old lectionaries which can help us to define the themes and symbols which belonged to certain feasts. In them we find also the Bible-reading system which was used in the Church. The earliest surviving list of pericopes read in divine services throughout the year is the old Armenian lectionary of Jerusalem, Cod. Arm. Jer. 121. It dates from the beginning of the 5th century³⁵, but is commonly considered to correspond to the situation in Jerusalem in the time of Egeria.³⁶ The Armenian Church celebrated the Incarnation on the 6th of January and still observes this custom, having refused to accept Christmas on the 25th of December.

The other old lectionary, British Museum Add. 14528, comes from Syria and it is thought to be at least as old.³⁷ The manuscript has not yet been edited, but it is available on microfilm. It was published in translation in 1923. The editor and translator of the manuscript, F.C. Burkitt, finds that it is written between 474 and 498, but might reflect earlier usage.³⁸ The reviewer of his work, A. Baumstark, shows, however, convincingly that it is earlier and the *terminus ante quem* of its usage would be the Council of Ephesus in 431 C.E.³⁹ It contains almost the same pericopes as the Armenian lectionary, but there are also deviations.

The old Armenian lectionary gives the lessons for Epiphany as follows:

Jan 5 Assembly at the place of the shepherds:

Ps 23 (The Lord is my shepherd)⁴⁰

Ps 80 ("Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel...")

Luke 2:8-19 (the *angelophania* to the shepherds)

³⁴ G. Dix, *The Shape of Liturgy* (1945), 306, 334. R. M. Payne, *idem*, 272.

³⁵ F.C. Conybeare, *Rituale Armenorum*. A. Renoux, *Le codex Arménien Jérusalem 121*. PO 35.1. 163,168. The lectionary consists of two manuscripts which supplement each other: MS. Arm. 44 and Cod. Jer. Arm. 121.

³⁶ E. Wemer, *The Sacred Bridge* (1959), 63. J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's travels* (1971), 253-277.

³⁷ A. Baumstark, 'Neuerschlossene Urkunden' (1927), 14-15.

³⁸ 'The Early Syriac Lectionary System' (1921), 301-305, 324.

³⁹ 'Neuerschlossene Urkunden' (1927), 15.

⁴⁰ The explanations of passages are my own.

Matt 1:18-25a (the announcement to Joseph) is read in the cave of the Nativity.

The Vigil in the Church in Bethlehem:

Gen 1:29-3:20 (the creation and fall of man)
 Isa 7:10-18 (the sign of the Lord: the virgin birth)
 Ex 14:24-15:12 (crossing the Red Sea)
 Mic 5:2-7 (Bethlehem Ephrathah)
 Prov 1:1-9 ("The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge")
 Isa 9:5b-7 ("For to us a child is born")
 Isa 11:1-9 ("There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse")
 Isa 35:4-8 ("For waters shall break forth in the wilderness")
 Isa 40:10-17 ("He will feed his flock like a shepherd ... Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket...")
 Isa 42:1-8a ("Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one...")
 Dan 3:1-34 (The three men in the furnace) and the song of the three children in the fire.
 Ps 2 ("You are my son, today I have begotten you")⁴¹
 Titus 2:11-15 ("The grace of God has appeared")
 Ps 110:1 ("The Lord says to my lord: Sit at my right hand...").

The Epiphany synaxis in the Martyrium in Jerusalem⁴²:

Ps 2
 Tit 2:11-15
 Matt 2:1-12 (Magi from the East come and worship Jesus)

The second day at the Martyrium of St. Stephen⁴³:

Ps 5 (God is my help)
 Ps 21:1 (The King rejoices)
 Acts 6:8-8:2 (The story of St. Stephen)
 Tit 2:11-15
 Jn 12:24-26 (If a grain of wheat dies, it bears much fruit.)

Sunday in Martyrium:

Ps 2
 Ps 110:1
 Heb 1:1-12 (reference to prophecies in the Old Testament)
 Matt 2:13-23 (the flight to Egypt, the massacre in Bethlehem)

⁴¹ A parallel manuscript, the Jerusalem MS, Arm. 5, speaks of Ps 132 (1) as the psalm for the Epiphany vigil.

⁴² The basilica built by Constantine besides Golgotha.

⁴³ This martyrium, dedicated in 439, was inside the colonnade of the Imbomon, the near-by-Eleona-hillock. J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 49; 185, note 1.

The fourth day on Holy Mt. Zion⁴⁴:

Ps 110

Ps 132:1 ("Remember, O Lord, in David's favour all the hardships he endured")

Luke 1:26-38 (the Annunciation)

The fifth day on Eleona⁴⁵:

Ps 99 ("The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble...")

Ps 15:1 ("Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?")

Heb 12:18-27 ("You have come to Mount Zion ...to innumerable angels in festal gathering and to the assembly of the first born...")

Lk 1:39-56 (the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth)

The sixth day in Lazarium⁴⁶:

Ps 30 ("Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol")

Ps 40:1 (The Lord heard my cry)

1 Thess 4:13-18 (exhortation to believers)

Jn 11:1-46 (Lazarus raised from death)

The seventh day at Golgotha⁴⁷:

Ps 96 (Declare God's glory!)

Ps 72:1 ("Give the king your justice, O God!")

Rom 1:1-7 (The address of the letter)

Luke 2:1-7 (Jesus is born in Bethlehem)

The eighth day, circumcision, at Anastasis:

Ps 98 ("Sing to the Lord a new song")

Ps 85:1 ("You restored the fortunes of Jacob")

Col 2:8-15 ("...you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands")

Lk 2:21 (Jesus' circumcision)

The assembly at the place of shepherds is a local choice, but it has also theological dimensions. The image of the Good Shepherd is a common symbol of the author of

⁴⁴ Only one of the seven synagogues of Zion was left at the time of Hadrian. It was the gathering place of Jerusalem Christians before the construction of Constantine's buildings, and was called the upper room or upper synagogue. Epiphanius, *De mensuris*, PG 43, 259-262, Bagatti, *The Church from Circumcision* (1984), 116-122. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 38-39.

⁴⁵ Eleona was the Church built by Constantine on the Mount of Olives to commemorate the Lord's Ascension. Wilkinson, *idem*, 49.

⁴⁶ At Lazarus' tomb there was only a vault or crypt during the time of Eusebius, but Jerome reports that "the Church now (c. 390) built there shows the place of his tomb." Eusebius Werke III, *Das Onomasticon der biblischen Ortsnamen*: 'Bethania'. It is this Church that is referred to in the lectionary.

⁴⁷ At Golgotha there was a complex of buildings, of which the largest were Martyrium and Anastasis, the place of Jesus' tomb. The site as a whole was designated by the name Golgotha.

salvation in the early Church.⁴⁸ Here specially the allusion to shepherds is prominent because of the actual night of their *angelophania*. All the other Old Testament readings are regarded as messianic in early Christian tradition. The passage about the three men in the fiery furnace does not occur in the Jewish lectionary system because the book of Daniel is quite late. Yet in 1 Macc. the three men are praised because they maintained their faith and thus were saved.⁴⁹ The festival is celebrated at different places in Jerusalem throughout the festal week. The theme of the holy place is the first commemoration and the festal theme the second one.

The earliest Syriac lectionary contains a few *lacunae*. The first three pages are missing and the lectionary begins with three pericopes: Heb 1:1-2:4 or Gal 4:1-5:10, Hallelujah, Ps 110, Lk 2:1-20. Before the last pericope stands the number 17, which means that the Gospel passage is the 17th pericope of the feast. We may conclude that these passages are connected with Christmas. "The Epiphany of our Lord on January 6" is next in order, and here the vigil includes only one reading from the Old Testament, as well as one Epistle reading and one Gospel reading. This reveals that sufficient time is left over for other activities than reading a great number of vigil lessons. This custom is known in connection with other festivals. The numerous vigil lessons of the Armenian lectionary are here found for the first time on the day of Epiphany.

The vigil lessons:

Ps 23, resp. ver. 1⁵⁰ ("The Lord is my shepherd...")
 Ex 3:1-15 (God speaks from the burning bush)
 1 Peter 5:1-14 (*presbyteroi* - the shepherds of the Church)
 Hallelujah, Ps 80 ("Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel...")
 Luke 2:8-15 (*angelophania*)

As we have already seen, the themes of these passages point to the Good Shepherd and to the shepherds and their experiences at Bethlehem. 1 Peter 5 makes allusions to the shepherds of the Church and their witness to salvation. The burning

⁴⁸ J. Quasten, 'The Painting of the Good Shepherd at Dura-Europos' (1947). Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 19.84. Cl. ch. 53.

⁴⁹ 1 Macc 2:49-51, 59.

⁵⁰ The translator of the MS., F.C. Burkitt, uses the abbreviation resp. v., which stands for *responsorium versus* "i.e., repeated response", in Syriac *'onaya*, *'onita*. While the reader reads the psalm, the people repeat the *'onaya* after every verse and thus the psalm is emphasized with the *'onaya* verse.

bush is a type of the virgin birth.

At midnight:

Ps 29, resp. ver. 3a ("The voice of the Lord is upon the waters")
 Isa 10:33-12:6 ("There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse...God is my salvation...with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation")
 Matt 3:1-17 (the baptism of Jesus)

Instead of the usual pericope-reading these passages refer to baptism, which seems to have been performed on Epiphany night.⁵¹ We shall return to this question in chapter 6.5.

On the morning after the morning service:

Jn 1:1-34

Day lessons of Epiphany:

There are eighteen lessons, which are almost the same as in the Armenian lectionary for the vigil.

Prov 1:1-9 ("The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge")

Job 4:1-5:27 (Eliphaz answers: 'Can mortal man be pure before his Maker?')

Dan 3:23- (three men in the fiery furnace) or 7:7-27 (the vision; the Ancient of Days)

Zech 6:1-15 (vision of chariots; "Behold, the man whose name is denha..."⁵²) or Mic 5:2-6:8 ("Bethlehem... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel")

Josh 3:1-4:14 (Israel passes over the Jordan and the waters are cut off)

Judg 6:34-7:7a (The dew descends on the fleece; the men who lap the water are chosen)

1 Sam 16:1a,c-13a (Samuel anoints David to be king)

1 Kgs 1:32-48 (Solomon is anointed king)

Jer 33:10-22 ("Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel...")

Ezek 1:1-28a (the vision of the cherubic chariot)

Isa 7:10-9:7 (the virgin birth)

Gen 1:1-2:24 (the creation and Fall) or 21:1-13 (Isaac is born, Hagar is cast out with her son)

Ex 15:1-26 (Moses and Israel praise God for deliverance)

Num 24:2-18 (the oracle of Balaam: "a star shall come forth out of Jacob...")

Ps 2, resp. ver 7b ("You are my son, today I have begotten you")

1 Jn 4:7-5:15 ("He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins...This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ...")

Tit 2:11-3:8 ("The grace of God has appeared...") or Heb 1:1-2:4 ("...in

⁵¹ A. Baumstark finds that the peculiar midnight service could allude to the nightly consecration of water. 'Neuerschlossene Urkunden' (1927). 20-22. The consecration of water was, however, first established by the Edessene bishop Petros in 498 according the *Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum*. Textus: 258:16-17, Versio: 191.

⁵² In the Syriac Bible *denha* (rising, shining forth, manifestation of the Lord in the flesh), in Greek 'ΑΥΤΟΛΗ (a rising, the East) and in Hebrew *semach* (branch).

these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, whom he has appointed the heir of all things...)

Hallelujah, Ps 110

Matt 1:18-2:23 (Jesus' birth, Magi from the East) or Lk 3:1-18 (John the Baptist preaches repentance) or Jn 1:1-28 ("The Word became flesh and dwelt among us")

The Syriac lectionary contains more Old Testament pericopes for Epiphany than does the Armenian one. The Old Testament pericopes which are common to both lectionaries are Gen 1, Ex 15, Isa 7 and 11, Mic 5 and Dan 3 with the song of the Three Children. Alternatives are given in the Syriac lectionary for three passages, and they are not found in the Armenian one.

The pericopes of this Syrian lectionary point clearly to God's universal plan for salvation through the coming Messiah as well as through baptism. Job 4-5 contains the belief of man's guilt before righteous God. Daniel 3 refers to the endurance of faith in troubles and to the baptism of fire, mentioned, for example, in Luke 3:16. Joshua 3-4 reminds us of the miracle performed by God at the River Jordan, which is parallel to that at the Red Sea. Judges 6-7 present a type of baptism: the men who lapped the water, i.e. the baptized are ready for victorious battle against the enemy. 1 Samuel and 1 Kings offer a type of the baptismal anointing, which was an essential part of Syrian baptism.⁵³ Jeremiah 33 prophesies of the coming days of redemption. Ezekiel 1 offers the vision of God's universal being "as it were of a human form". Isaiah 7-9 prophesies of the virgin birth and of the people who walked in darkness and have seen a great light. Genesis 1-2 declares God's might over the universe and the Fall of man who needs restoration. Exodus 15 praises God for his salvation in crossing the Red Sea. Numbers 24 declares the coming "star" from the house of Jacob. Thus the passages reveal the way the first Christian generations used their Scriptures when explaining the redemption brought by God in his Son and to be received in baptism.

A. Baumstark finds it difficult to explain why three Gospel passages - Matt 1:18-2:23, Lk 3:1-18 and Jn 1:1-28 - are set as alternative readings for Epiphany

⁵³ This anointing was performed before baptism and it is derived from the anointing of kings following the descent of the Spirit upon the king. G. Winkler, 'The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing' (1978)

Day.⁵⁴ He finds also other peculiarities in this lectionary, and finally comes to the conclusion that it is "a single creation of an individual who forged material from different systems of reading into the formal framework of a quite original pattern designed by himself", and it has not been in parish use.⁵⁵ I hope to return to this question in the future, but now, in the framework of this study I have not found it necessary to handle all the arguments Baumstark gives to support his statement. I cannot, however, agree with his arguments concerning the artificial construction of the lessons for Epiphany. The lessons are in their correct place according to my theory of the origins of the Feast of Epiphany. The only logical explanation for the many Gospel readings would be that the original theme of Epiphany was a broad concept of redemption through God's descent to earth, man's repentance and restoration by baptism to the glory he had before the fall. The set passages refer to different aspects of this salvation history and thus offer alternative readings.

The Armenian lectionary has the same festal system in principle as the Syriac lectionary. They both have the 40 days' fast before Pascha, the Great Week which in the Syriac lectionary is also called the Week of Unleavened Bread, and every day in the Great Week is mentioned, though not named, separately: in accordance with the Gospel passage, Thursday's theme is the Last Supper. Friday's theme is the trial, crucifixion and burial of Jesus. On Saturday there is the reading about the guards stationed at the sepulchre. Saturday evening deviates further in the lectionaries: in the Syriac lectionary is mentioned the ablution (*sh^eyaghta*), "when it dawns to Sunday", while the passage of John 13 about washing the disciples' feet is read.⁵⁶ The Syriac word *sh^eyaghta* means merely "washing, ablution and rinsing", and it is never used in connection with baptism. Of baptism is used the word *ma'muditha*.⁵⁷

In the Armenian lectionary there is the mass baptism performed on Saturday night.

⁵⁴ 'Neuerschlossene Urkunden', 4, 13.

⁵⁵ *Idem*, 5-12.

⁵⁶ In later Syriac lectionaries it occurs on Thursday in Great Week.

⁵⁷ From the verb *'amad*, "to sink, to dive". J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (1903), 574, 289.

The story of the washing of the disciples' feet is not read, not even on Thursday⁵⁸, nor is there any mention of a special rite for it. The Syriac service continues after the ablution with the lessons on the Resurrection. This practice confirms the observance that the Last Supper and all associated events was a central theme on the early Syrian Paschal night⁵⁹, and a remnant of it is still to be found in the form of ablution in the Syriac lectionary. In addition, the Syriac tradition has preserved the washing of feet as a symbol of baptism, according to Aphrahat's Paschal demonstration.⁶⁰

We know that in liturgical matters the example set by Jerusalem was followed by other churches. This is shown, for example, by the fact that the vision of the cross in the sky which occurred in Jerusalem in 351 C.E., is commemorated on the seventh of May in the Armenian lectionary, but it is also in the Syriac lectionary in question. Why did the Syriac lectionary adopt it while revealing no sign of the Jerusalem practice of paschal baptism? Before we can answer this question we need to study the hymns of St. Ephraem, the great Syrian poet.

6.4. St. Ephraem and his Epiphany Hymns

Ephraem the Syrian (306-373) was the great theologian-poet of the early Church, whose influence on all early ecclesiastical hymnody is widely recognized in our days.⁶¹ He was an ardent defender of the Nicene faith. He promoted the catholicity of the Church, but as a Syrian his thoughts were expressed with the imagery familiar from Jewish-based thinking.

Ephraem was born in Nisibis, where he spent the major part of his life.⁶² Bishop

⁵⁸ which is called *Thursday in the Old Passover*, of which Jesus said to his disciples, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you'. Cod. Arm. Jer. 121 translated by J. Wilkinson in *Egeria's Travels* (1971), 266.

⁵⁹ Roswborst, *Les hymnes pascales d'Ephrem de Nisibe*. 229. P. Bruns, 'Einleitung für die Unterweisung Über das Pascha', in: Aphrahat, *Unterweisungen*, II. 297-299.

⁶⁰ Aphrahat, *Unterweisungen II*, 308-310.

⁶¹ S. Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca* (1974). R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (1975), 29-32. J. Manikainen, *Das Böse und der Teufel* (1978), 10-11. J. Meyendorff, 'Foreword' in: *Ephraem the Syrian, Hymns* (1989).

⁶² The different Syriac recensions of the *Vita* of Ephraem are in manuscript form traceable back to between the 10th and the 19th centuries and scholars do not consider their information to be fully reliable. A. Vööbus, *Literary, Critical and Historical Studies*, (1958), 50. T. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1-11* (1978), 23-24. It is

Jacob, who was famous for his piety (bishop 308–338), was Ephraem's teacher. In Nisibis he founded a Christian school, which gained a great reputation both in Orient and in Occident.⁶³ Jewish schools, - there was one in Nisibis - were probably his models, and we can even find among the rules of the schools similarities with the Community Rule from Qumran.⁶⁴

Ephraem may have attended the Council of Nicea in 325 with his bishop Jacob⁶⁵ and witnessed there the Declaration of Christ's origins. In any case he obtained exact knowledge through his bishop of the burning doctrinal issues of the day. Bishop Jacob appointed Ephraem Bible Interpreter or *mephasseqana*⁶⁶ at his school. This was the most senior position in the school. Another person besides Jacob to whom Ephraem looked up to for an example was Bishop Valagash (Vologeses, bishop 346-361), who "radiated among the preachers and was learned among the readers".⁶⁷ In Nisibis Ephraem was ordained to the diaconate.⁶⁸

When Nisibis was compelled to surrender to the Persians, Ephraem fled with others to Edessa, the traditional centre of the Syriac Church. There he spent his last ten years as a deacon, refusing to receive the priesthood or episcopate, which would have been the natural continuation, because at that time Ephraem was already a distinguished writer.⁶⁹ His choice may well have something to do with his poetic talent. As a deacon he was responsible for liturgical chant. Obviously he was not a liturgical innovator, but a contemplative person who produced poetry for the

possible to obtain more precise information about Ephraem's own writings and some early Christian sources, such as Sozomenos, *Hist. Eccl.* (written 439–450), and Theodoret of Chyrtos (d. ca. 466), *Hist. Eccl.*

⁶³ Barhadbeshabba, *Cause de la fondation des écoles*, 377. (Barhadbeshabba was a Nestorian bishop at the beginning of the 7th century.)

⁶⁴ R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (1975), 17, 24. A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis* (1965), 96–115.

⁶⁵ See note 54 in page 75.

⁶⁶ Barhadbeshabba, *Cause de la fondation des écoles*, 377.

⁶⁷ *CNis* 15:8. See also *CNis* 17:11, 19:16, 21:2. Kronholm thinks that Bishop Valagash as "a scholar" was a weightier example for Ephraem to follow than Bishop Jakob, who was a strict ascetic. *Motifs from Genesis I–II* (1978), 23–24.

⁶⁸ A. Vööbus, *Literary, Critical and Historical Studies* (1958), 50.

⁶⁹ Some of his writings were already translated into Greek during his lifetime. Jerome, *Liber de viris illustribus*. J.B. Segal, *Edessa* (1970), 87.

edification of the Church. This was necessary because heretics composed poems advocating their religious views and recited them publicly, thus gathering adherents. As was the case in Alexandria, in Syria too there were prominent Gnostic teachers, such as Bardaisan, Mani and Marcion, as well as Arians. The Nicean ecclesia had to compete with other groups. St. Ephraem was the central figure who strengthened his Church against the heresies.⁷⁰ Some of his hymns - such as the Nativity hymns - were clearly composed for believers, encouraging them gently towards endurance and spiritual growth. One is tempted to envisage these *madrashé* in use in festal liturgies, but we do not possess any firm evidence of this.

Ephraem's hymns deal with every aspect of church life, even feasts, though not so clearly as we should like. He speaks clearly about three feasts and he gives Epiphany - which he calls *Denḥa* - the status of the first of all feasts.

"All of the feastdays derive their beauty and are adorned from the treasures of this feastday.

Greater is this day than every day, for on it the Compassionate One came out to sinners.

The firstborn feastday is this day that is first to conquer all the feastdays.

Our Lord, increase peace for us that we may celebrate the three feasts of the Deity.⁷¹

Ephraem the Syrian considers the date of Epiphany certain and finds only allegorical explanations connected with it⁷², which tells us that he inherited the date of the feast, not devised it himself. For our theme the most important hymns are *madrashé d-beth yalda* (hymns for the Nativity) and *madrashé d-beth denḥa* (hymns for the Epiphany). The hymns have been transmitted to us divided into these two categories, but they obviously belong together, because Ephraem knew only one feast which included both aspects. E. Beck thinks that the deviation was made later when *Denḥa* was divided into two feasts: December 25th and January 6th.⁷³ For Ephraem the main theme of the feast is the Nativity of Christ, his incarnation. HNat 25 especially links the liturgical festivals of the Church to the mystery of the

⁷⁰ The Roman Catholic Church has given him in 1920 the rare title *Doctor Ecclesiae*.

⁷¹ HNat. 4:20,23,28,59. Translated by Kathleen McVey. Verses 31,32 and 58 speak of the Epiphany in Kanun, Pascha in Nisan and of Ascension Day "with the new bread". HNat. 5:13 and 22:6,8 refer to January 6 as the birthday of the Lord. The verses that express the idea of the Lord's birthday are 4:12,59-61.

⁷² See p. 17

⁷³ Vorwort for the edition of the hymns, CSCO 186. SS 82. V.

Incarnation. The first ten strophes, addressed to the Church, celebrate the blessings bestowed on it. The festivals and Scriptures of Judaism were transferred to Christianity.⁷⁴ But he also linked baptism with the themes of the feast.⁷⁵ More passages about baptism are to be found in all the later separate Epiphany hymns. The baptism of the faithful associated with the baptism of Christ is mentioned, too. A good example is the fourth hymn:

- 1." Descend my sealed brothers, put on our Lord,
and be rejoined to his lineage, for he is son of a great lineage,
as he has said in his Word.
2. From on high is his nature, and from beneath his raiment.
Each that leaves his (own) raiment, is going to have the raiment united
with his everlasting raiment.
9. He who enriches all came down and put on poverty,
that to the poor he might divide, the hidden stores
out of the treasure-house of the water.
12. He who is great became small, so that the small one may become
in him great.
He is like the greatest of all, but he became smallest of all.
He became small and raised to honour all men.⁷⁶

The miracle at the wedding at Cana is also among the many themes of the verses, but it is not lifted into a special place. Its symbolism serves only the basic theme.

"He made water into wine as Maker,
but, on the other hand, he drank some of it as a poor man.
From his own he mixed it at the wedding feast.
His (own) wine he mixed and gave (it) to drink where he was invited."⁷⁷

"Out of water he made wine. He gave (it) for drink to the people in their
marriage feast.
For you who are keeping the fast, the unction is better than drink.
By his wine the betrothed are wedded, by his oil the wedded are sancti-
fied.
By his wine is union, by his oil sanctification."⁷⁸

⁷⁴ K. McVey, *Ephraem the Syrian, Hymns* (1990), 199.

⁷⁵ "O Great One who became a babe, by your birth again you begot me.
O Pure One who was baptized, let your washing wash us of impurity.
O Living One who was embalmed, let us obtain life by your death."
HNat. 23:14. Transl. Kathleen McVey. See also 3:19, 4:210-211, 6:19-22, 16:9-11

⁷⁶ Liter. "made great all men". *HEpiph.* 4:1-2, 9, 12. My translation.

⁷⁷ *HNat.* 4:206-207. Transl. by K. McVey.

⁷⁸ *HEpiph.* 3:22. My translation.

HVirg 5 meditates on Christ's role as the light of the world.⁷⁹ The Menorah with the Tabernacle represents the lights of the cosmos - the sun, moon and planets; yet all point mysteriously to Christ the Light:

"Again, oil served as a beam in the temporal Tabernacle since in a seven-branched candlestick its flow served seven flames in a symbol of our Lord from whom seven lights of seven spirits shone."⁸⁰

John the Baptist, the virgins who await the bridegroom in the New Testament parable, and the prophet Isaiah all provide meditations on Christ the Light.⁸¹ The light functions here mainly as a symbol in the battle against the heretics, but it is also connected with Christ as the true light of the world. G. Winkler draws attention to the verse: "The Holy One was baptized and he arose and his light shone over the world" (Sog. V, 48). According to Winkler, the voice from heaven and the appearance of light are the central components of the Jordan event of the early Church. They demonstrate that Jesus was the Son of God. The light does not, however, occur in any of the Gospel passages referring to Jesus' baptism. Yet it is seen in Tatian's Diatessaron as well as in other early Christian sources.⁸²

The origin of the notion of light in this connection might reflect the appearances of Old Testament covenants. We are told that a great brightness, a light or a fire occurred demonstrating the presence of God. In the covenant of Abraham "a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces (of the sacrifice), and on that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram" (Gen 15:7-21). In the Sinai covenant Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel went up to the mountain "and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. The *kabod* of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai... Now the appearance of the *kabod* of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel" (Ex 24:9-10, 15-17). When the tent of meeting was consecrated, "Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting; and when they came out, they blessed the people, and the *kabod* of the Lord appeared to all the people. And fire came forth from before the Lord

⁷⁹ John 8:12

⁸⁰ HVirg. 5:3. Transl. K. McVey. Beck and McVey refer to Justin Martyr who interprets the sevenfold spirit of Isa 11:2 as descending through seven Jewish prophets to Christ. Just. Dial. 87.

⁸¹ HVirg. 5:9, 10, 12. K. McVey, *Ephraem the Syrian, Hymns* (1990), 281. John 1:4-5, Matt. 25:1-13, Isa. 9:2.

⁸² G. Winkler, 'Die Licht-Erscheinung bei der Taufe Jesu' (1994), 177-217.

and consumed the burnt offering... and all the people fell on their faces" (Lev 9:23-24). The fire from heaven show the people that God had accepted their sacrifices and that He keeps the covenant. When Solomon's temple was consecrated, something similar occurred (1Kgs 8), and the tradition was still a living one in the time of the Maccabees, as we have seen. The fire and brightness descending from heaven continue to be the symbol of God's presence in New Testament times too. In this same tradition lies the feast of τὰ φῶτα, also celebrated as the feast of Christ's manifestation in the flesh and of the redemption of the people, that is, the Epiphany.

E. Beck noted in 1958 that the earliest *Denha*-feast presents different aspects of salvation.⁶³ The Old Testament passages which occur in the early Syriac lectionary are all used in Ephraem's hymns to point to fulfilled prophecies, and obviously they also reveal that Ephraem's Church had the same festal lessons at Epiphany as had the Syriac lectionary studied above. The enclosed Table II, which shows the results of my previous study, demonstrates this.⁶⁴

Another prominent teacher of the early Syrian Church, Aphrahat, who possibly lived in Adiabene and died sometime after 345, uses the same symbolism as Ephraem. Yet he does not speak of the feast of Epiphany in any of his twenty-four demonstrations. His Pascha is quite peculiar; it is not celebrated on the fourteenth of Nisan, but on Friday after the fifteenth of Nisan.⁶⁵ He does not mention even Pentecost or *Sullaqa*, the feast of Christ's Ascension.

Thus the conclusion is that the early feast of Epiphany, as deep down as we can explore, was intended to proclaim the redemption that God has given through the incarnation of his Son and baptism, which links man to this benefit.⁶⁶

⁶³ "Aus den Hymnen de Nativitate 1-28 sollen die Ereignisse der Heilsgeschichte herausgestellt werden, die wahrscheinlich den Inhalt des noch ungeteilten Nativitas-Epiphaniestes gebildet haben. Im Mittelpunkt steht das göttliche Kind und seine Mutter. Daneben werden oft auch die Magier, ihr Stern und ihre Geschenke erwähnt,— Johannes der Täufer, die Taufe im Jordan und auch schon die christliche Taufe. Das Wunder von Kana wird einmal nebenbei erwähnt in 4:206-. Zum äusseren Verlauf des Festens seien die Vigilien dreimal hervorgehoben." Beck, *HNat.* Übers. Vorwort, s.XII.

⁶⁴ Cf. my unpublished thesis 'Denha ja sullaqa juhlien vanhatestamentilliset aiheet Efraimilla ja Afrabanilla sahteesta vanhimpään syyrialaiseen lektionaarioon', (The Old Testament themes of Epiphany and Pentecost in Ephraem and Aphrahat in relation to the oldest Syriac Lectionary) Helsinki University, Hist.-Philol. dept. 1988.

⁶⁵ Dem. 12 of Pascha. *Unterweisungen*. Band II. 297-299. G. Rouwborst, *Les hymnes pascales d'Ephrem* (1989). 272.

⁶⁶ "These feasts (Nativity-Epiphany) were introduced in the fourth century for apologetic reasons, and not because of any 'historicising' impulse to celebrate the anniversary of Jesus' birth and baptism. A scrutiny of the sources on the origins and meaning of both feasts shows that they were both celebrations of the same thing, the mystery of the appearance of God in Jesus, and not of historic events." R. Taft, *Historicism Revisited* (1981).

Table II

The Table demonstrating the connection between the Old Testament themes used by Ephraem for the Denḥa feast and the lessons from the Old Testament in MS. 14528 of the British Museum and Cod. Arm. Jer. 121.

<u>Ephraem</u>	<u>MS. 14528</u>	<u>Arm. Jer. 121</u>
Nativity themes		
The Creation and Fall	x	x
The Blessing of Judah	-	-
The Burning Bush	x	-
Aaron's Sprouting Rod	-	-
"A star shall come forth out of Jacob"	x	-
The prophecies of Isa. 7, 9, 11	x	x
Mic. 5 ("Bethlehem Ephrathah")	x	x
Zech. 6 ("the man whose name is <i>Denḥa</i> ")	x	-
Baptismal themes		
The Creation and Fall	x	x
Crossing the Red Sea, the song of Moses	x	x
The water miracle at Marah	x	-
Moses strikes water from a rock	-	-
The fleece of Gideon and the men lapping the water	x	-
Elisha cleanses the water at Jericho	-	-
Elisha cures Naaman in the water	-	-
Elisha changes the nature of water	-	-
The anointing of Saul	-	-
The anointing of David	x	-
The anointing of Solomon	x	-
Prov. 8 (Wisdom calls at the gates)	x	-
The children in the fiery furnace and their song	x	x
Isa. 40 concerning the coming redemption	-	x

6.5. Epiphany Baptism or Paschal Baptism?

The earliest Jewish-Christian Pascha was typologically connected with the slaughtering of the lamb and the Paschal meal of the Old Testament. The new paschal lamb was Christ, whose passion and death occurred during the Jewish Pascha. The new Paschal meal was the Eucharist, the office of thanksgiving, and the washing of feet was a preparatory rite for it⁸⁷. The resurrection had no place in the Jewish Pascha and thus it was not central in these celebrations. It was Sunday where it occupied a prominent place. The crossing of the Red Sea was a type of the redemption the people gained by God's divine intervention.⁸⁸ "The original Easter was...simply the Jewish Passover feast christianized. It was the feast of Christian redemption, just as the Jewish Passover fêted Jewish redemption. It celebrated a mystery rather than an event."⁸⁹ I doubt the information of Eusebius that from the second century the churches of Osrhoene, for instance, celebrated the Pascha in the same way as it was celebrated in Rome.⁹⁰ The differences are quite obvious. Yet there was no theologically established liturgical baptism in the framework of this early Paschal celebration.⁹¹

Baptisms were surely performed during the festivals. The writings of some early Fathers confirm that the feasts were appropriate days for solemnities, such as

⁸⁷ F.C. Burkitt, 'The Early Syriac Lectionary System' (1923), 320. It is also to be seen in East Syriac dialect where Pescha means Maundy Thursday. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Lectionary* (1903), 454.

⁸⁸ This is quite clear in Aphrahat's demonstration 12:10: "Israel wurde nämlich getauft inmitten des Meeres, in jener Paschanacht, am Tage der Erlösung." *Unterweisungen* II. 308. (Transl. P. Bruns) Aphrahat's Pascha is studied in G.M.A. Rouwhorst, *Les hymnes pascales d'Ephrem* (1989), 232-276, but mainly this study concentrates on Ephraem's Paschal concepts. Ephraem does not see the crossing of the Red Sea as a typological reflection of baptism. 118-231.

⁸⁹ R. Taft, 'Historicism Revisited' (1981), 99.

⁹⁰ *Hist. Eccl.* V.23.4. Rouwhorst also doubts it in his book *Les hymnes pascales d'Ephrem* (1989), 344.

⁹¹ Cantalamessa, *Ostern in der alten Kirche* (1981), 79. Rouwhorst concludes that without doubt baptism too was connected with Ephraem's Paschal Eucharist. As evidence he adduces *HRes.* 3:15:

"Es rief der Prophet: Ich werde weit machen deinen Schoss, o Unfruchtbare, dass er deinen Kindern genüge (Is 54:1). Denn Jerusalem tötete die Unbeschnittenen, die Kirche schenkt (auch) den Beschnittenen das Leben. Sie überredet die Körperlichen, geistig (wieder)geboren zu werden. Über die fleischliche Geburt freuen sie sich, auf die Milch der Kinder sind sie stolz; auf das Erbe des Landes warten sie. Gepriesen sei, der die Verheissung den Völkern gab!" (Beck's translation, *Des heiligen Ephraem der Syrers Paschahymnen*, SS 109)

I do not see how this passage could especially point to Paschal baptism. Rouwhorst, however, in spite of his former conclusion finds it astonishing that Paschal baptism has such a secondary place in the Paschal hymns of Ephrem. *Les hymnes pascales d'Ephrem* (1989), 204, 229, 356.

baptisms.⁹² To perform a baptism during a festival time must, however, not necessarily be seen as a part of the message of the feast. The *Didascalía Apostolorum* does not mention Paschal baptism nor any other festal baptism. The first evidence for liturgically established festal baptism is to be found in St. Cyril's catecheses, and the Jerusalem catechumenate during the forty days of the fast culminated in Paschal baptism. St. Ephraem has a verse in his HVirg which points clearly to Paschal baptism:

"Tishri revives the weary from the dust and dirt of summer;
its rain bathes and its dew anoints even the trees and their fruits.
Nisan revives fasters, anoints, dips and whitens;⁹³
it scours the dirt of sin from our souls.
Tishri tramples the oil for us; Nisan increases mercy for us.
In Tishri fruits are harvested; in Nisan debts are forgiven."⁹⁴

In the 11th of the Epiphany hymns there is also a passage which might be interpreted as Paschal baptism:

"Moses stretched out the temporal tabernacle.
First, the priests were purified in water,
and they went in and ministered.
Yet they were smitten and burnt by fire,
because their heart inside was not cleansed.
Blessed are you (Church), for in the Pescha of the great passion the
priests cleanse the souls in the midst of you by the odour of their
offerings."⁹⁵

This hymn as a totality is an eulogy of the Church whose baptism is compared with

⁹² Cf. Tertullian (North Africa), *De bapt.* ch. XIX: "The passover affords a more than usually solemn day for baptism." Hippolytus (Rome), *Com. in Daniele* 1.16.1-3.

⁹³ "nisan d-mah zym' / mash ma 'md w-mahwr".

⁹⁴ HVirg. 7:2. Transl. K. McVey.

⁹⁵ HEpiph. 11:3. My translation. The last verse is obscure. I have followed the translation of NPNF, vol. 13, ("the priests by the savour of their oblations are cleansing souls..."), but *saga'* is according to Payne-Smith, *Dictionary* only 'sackcloth, bag, wallet', not 'oblation or offering'.

some biblical passages; they do not, however, bestow such a great grace as does baptism. *Pescha* in midst of this scene seems really to point to Paschal baptism. E. Beck, the eminent scholar and translator of Ephraem's works, seems to have influenced the trend of research, pointing out that in Ephraem's Church there could hardly have been mass baptism at Epiphany, because of this evidence of Paschal baptism.⁹⁶

Ephraem's *Pescha* in Nisibis was, so far as we can conclude, much like Aphrahat's *Pescha*, but his Paschal hymns reveal that baptism was not a part of it, though it is possible to conclude that Aphrahat observed Paschal baptism.⁹⁷ Rouwhorst has shown in his dissertation that baptism plays a very secondary role in Ephraem's Paschal theology.⁹⁸ For Epiphany, on the contrary, it seems to be a central theme. As I have pointed out earlier, in his Nativity and Epiphany hymns Ephraem links the baptism of the believers to the mystery of the Incarnation, and urges believers to descend into the baptismal water. This occurs so often that we are justified in concluding that Ephraem had organized mass baptism in connection with the *Denha*-feast.⁹⁹ Baptism could have taken place at night. The hymns refer continually to the night-time vigil¹⁰⁰ and one verse connects the night with grace thus

⁹⁶ "—Bei der Sammlung der Hymnen de Epiphania ist aber dabei noch eine allgemeine Schwierigkeit anzuführen. Sie besteht nämlich zum grössten Teil aus Taufhymnen. Mit anderen Worten: Für diese liturgische Sammlung ist das Epiphaniiefest vor allem das Fest der feierlichen Taufe der Katechumenen. Das war aber kaum schon in der Zeit Ephräms der Fall. Denn für Ephräm war die Zeit der feierlichen Taufe der Katechumenen Ostern, wie klar aus dem siebten Hymnus der sicher echten Hymnen de Virginitate hervorgeht. Auch für Aphraat ist die Tauffeier mit Ostern verbunden (Dem. 12:13). Doch selbst diese Feststellung ist noch kein Beweis der Unechtheit der Hymnen de Epiphania. Denn man könnte ja auch für die auf Epiphania verlegte oder ausgedehnte Tauffeier nachträglich Hymnen von Ephräm verwendet haben."

E. Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*, Text, Vorwort, p. VII.

Ref. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991), 126-127. K. McVey, *Ephraem the Syrian, Hymns* (1990), 30.

⁹⁷ "Aber für uns ist es Pflicht, das Fest zur rechten Zeit von Zeitpunkt zu Zeitpunkt zu begehen. Fasten in Reinheit, Gebet ohne Unterlass, eifriger Lobpreis und Psalmengesang in gezielter Weise, die Bezeichnung (mit dem Kreuz) und die Taufe zu spenden in rechter Weise, die heiligen Segnungen zu ihrer Zeit und alle überlieferten Handlungen zu vollziehen." Dem. 12:13. *Unterweisungen II*. German translation by Peter Bruns.

⁹⁸ *Les hymnes pascales d'Ephrem de Nisibe* (1989), 230, 356.

⁹⁹ See my note 96: "Für diese liturgische Sammlung ist das Epiphaniiefest vor allem das Fest der feierlichen Taufe der Katechumenen." E. Beck.

¹⁰⁰ 61. "Today the Watchers (i.e., angels) were rejoicing that the Awakener came to awaken us, who will go to sleep on this night on which all creation is awake?"

73. Keep vigil as bright ones on this bright night, for even if its colour is black, still it is splendid in its power.

82. Serene is the night on which shines forth the Serene One who came to give us serenity. Do not allow

making the assumption of nocturnal baptism possible:

13. "Today your sins are stricken out and your names written down.
The priest strikes out (the sins) in water, Christ writes (the names) in
heaven.

Because of the striking and writing our joy is doubled.

14. See, today mercy has dawned and it stretches from bound to
bound.

The sun has sunk and mercy has dawned. ---¹⁰¹

Is it thus possible to conclude that Ephraem's Church had two festal baptisms: one at *Pescha* and one at *Denha*? How do we solve the problem of these two festal baptisms?

In the same way as Cyril introduces Paschal baptism into the Jerusalem liturgy together with the undergirding theology developed by him, so Ephraem too writes in his Nisibis hymns of incarnation and baptism. Thus he gives form to the theology of this complex of ideas, which was present but without being providing with a literal form, so far as we know. *Denha* had been the feast of the mystery of the Incarnation from ancient times. Its contents and themes were coloured by the redemption gained through God's descent to earth and man's salvation achieved thereby. Baptism was present in the theology of this ancient feast of *Denha*. According to this theology, it was natural to perform baptisms on that day. Whether or not Ephraem's hymns served as liturgical hymns at Epiphany baptism, seems to remain an *a priori* matter, due to lack of sources.¹⁰² He was without doubt "the Cyril of Syria" and a distinctive theologian of the Feast of Epiphany.

anything that might disturb it to enter upon our watch.

92. On that day on which God came into the presence of sinners, let not the just man exalt himself in his mind over the sinner.

99. Today the Deity imprinted itself on humanity, so that humanity might also be cut into the seal of Deity.
HNat. J

"Let us not count our vigil as everyday vigils;
it is a feastday whose wage increase a hundredfold.

For it is a feast that attacks sleep with its vigil,
a speaker who attacks sleep with his voice.

Today the angels and even the archangels came down
to sing a new song of praise on earth.

By this mystery they come down and rejoice with vigils."

HNat. 11:2-3. Translations E. McVey.

¹⁰¹ "masal bmda = drash rubne". *HEpiph. 6:13-14*. My translation.

¹⁰² Burkitt concludes that some of Ephraem's hymns were used in the church services, "but a good many of his works had not yet adapted to liturgical purposes." *The Early Syriac Lectionary System* (1923), 321.

But his concept of *Pescha* did not touch upon the redemption, which man receives in baptism in the same way. He was still bound to the Jewish symbolism of the Paschal lamb. The choices of these two theologians were due to the spiritual atmosphere in their areas. Cyril lived "in the middle of" Christ's death and Resurrection and thus created his liturgical theology around them. The Pauline approach to salvation as it is presented in Rom. 6¹⁰³ is alien to the early Syriac and Armenian writers. There baptism is conceived as a birth, and the baptismal font is seen as a womb, never as death or as a sepulchre or grave.¹⁰⁴ Ephraem adopts this Syrian approach seeing baptism more as a rebirth, quoting St. John 3:5: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." This leads him to meditate on the connection between birth and baptism, and this inspired his Nativity and Epiphany hymns.

We have seen in ch. 3.5. how in the *Didascalia* Christian baptism was understood as an imitation of the baptism of Christ. What was done at the Jordan is repeated, *mutatis mutandis* in the water of the font. A man comes out of that water reborn as a 'son' of God. So deeply did the baptism of Jesus impress itself upon Syrian liturgical imagination that in the later liturgical books the font is named 'the Jordan'.¹⁰⁵ From a Syriac peculiarity, that of prebaptismal anointing, G. Winkler has even drawn conclusions concerning the baptism itself. She finds that in the oldest stratum of the tradition Christian baptism is shaped after Christ's baptism in the Jordan. As Jesus had received the anointing through the divine presence in the appearance of a dove, and was invested as the Messiah, so in Christian baptism every candidate is anointed and, in connection with this anointing, the gift of the Spirit is conferred. Therefore the main theme of this prebaptismal anointing is the entry into the eschatological kingship of the Messiah, being in the true sense of the

¹⁰³ "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father..." Rom. 6:4

¹⁰⁴ E.C. Ratcliff, 'The Old Syrian Baptismal Tradition and its Resettlement' (1965), 28. S. Brock, 'Studies in the early History of the Syrian Orthodox Baptismal Liturgy' (1972), 16-64. G. Winkler, 'The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing' (1978), 40. I.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (1978), 194. P. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins* (1992), 167.

Aphrahat makes a passing allusion to Rom. 6:3 as offering Pauline confirmation of Christ's institution of Baptism at the foot-washing. *Dem.* 12:10.

¹⁰⁵ Ratcliff, *idem*, 28.

word assimilated to the Messiah-King through this anointing.¹⁰⁶ Although Winkler's analysis clearly accepts some degree of diversity in early Christian baptismal practice, it still assumes a basically monolinear development within each individual geographical area.¹⁰⁷

My suggestion is that Ephraem's Epiphany baptism was accepted in Nisibis, but after the refugees, among them Ephraem, had settled in the famous city of Edessa, they made the acquaintance of Edessene Paschal baptismal practice, which was adopted from Jerusalem, the mother Church of Edessa from ancient times. The *De Virginitate* hymns were written during Ephraem's Edessa period, during his last years¹⁰⁸, and thus in his fifth hymn he may reflect Edessene practice, while the Nativity and Epiphany hymns can be dated to his Nisibis period, for the reasons set out above.¹⁰⁹

At the same time in Palestine St. Cyril was developing a festal calendar linked to holy places. Because of the trend towards unity Jerusalem practice spread rapidly. In the fourth century Syria the commemoration of the Incarnation -Epiphany- had gained a solid position, which Ephraem's hymns further strengthened. When the need was seen to unify liturgical practices according to theological principles, the Syrian Church also transferred its Epiphany baptisms to Pascha, in line with Jerusalem. Yet the peculiarity of the Syrian Church is still seen centuries later in its liturgical orders.¹¹⁰ G. Rouwhorst has examined the question of Ephraem's Paschal baptism and has come to the following conclusion: Paschal baptism was not known in Edessa and Nisibis before the Council of Nicea. Its adoption took place about the

¹⁰⁶ G. Winkler, *idem*, 36.

¹⁰⁷ P. Bradshaw, *idem*, 169.

¹⁰⁸ "Your truth (was) in my youth; your verity (is) in my old age." *HVirg.* 37:10. Beck concludes that this hymn comes from Ephraem's last years. *HVirg. Versio*, p. 118, note 22. T. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis* (1978), 22.

¹⁰⁹ Beck and Kronholm think that the Nativity and Epiphany hymns cannot be precisely dated to any period of Ephraem's life. E. Beck, *HNat. Vorwort zu Versio*. T. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis* (1978), 21.

¹¹⁰ "Während in der griechischen und abendländischen Lektorenreihe (der Ostern) der Taufgedanke mächtig in Vordergrunde steht, erinnert an diesen in der syrischen nur mehr der abschliessende Paulustext (Röm. 6:1-12) und Jubel und Dank für die in der Auferstehung des Herrn vollendete Erlösung, in teilweise merkwürdiger Art zum Ausdruck kommend, beherrschen dieselbe im übrigen." A. Baumstark, *Festbrevier und Kirchenjahr der syrischen Jakobiten* (1910), 249.

same time as the important liturgical innovations. This is to be seen from the only pre-Nicene Paschal text we possess, i. e. the original version of the 21st chapter of the *Didascalia*. It was probably also unknown to Melito.¹¹¹ In Ephraem's *madrasha* De Ieiunio 5:1¹¹² there is a close connection between Paschal baptism and the forty days' fast, which points to the adoption of these practices at about the same time in both Nisibis and Edessa.¹¹³

6.6. The date of the Lectionary Br. M. Add 14528

Now we possess some evidence which gives us an opportunity to re-date the Syriac Lectionary. According to A. Baumstark, the *terminus ante quem* of this MS Br. M. Add 14528 would be the Council of Ephesus of 431. It might be even earlier than he suggested. The main reason which Burkitt had already noted, is the lack of liturgically established Paschal baptism. One could expect to find it in the lectionary, if the lectionary originated from Edessa and from the time when Ephraem wrote his Virginitate hymns, i.e. between 363-373. Its absence is explained only by the assumption that baptism was at that time in Syria still a single rite without any connection with the theme of the feast. It could be performed, but it was not linked to the feast. Factors speaking in favor of the old age of the lectionary are, besides the Paschal washing of feet, the lessons set for the rite involving a man's receiving the tonsure as *Bar Kyama*, 'son of the covenant'¹¹⁴, and the fact that the Sunday before Pascha is not named. In later MSS. this Sunday is called the Feast of Hosannas. Edessa was an important spiritual centre and it strived to imitate Jerusalem as much as possible.¹¹⁵ The commemoration of the vision of the cross is adopted from there. Christmas lessons testify further to the Syriac lectionary having received influences from elsewhere than Jerusalem, since Jerusalem was not among the first cities to adopt Christmas, because it was an imported tradition to

¹¹¹ Méli-ton, *Paschal sermon*.

¹¹² *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Ieiunio*. Ed. & transl. E. Beck.

¹¹³ Rouwborst, *Les hymnes pascales d'Ephrem* (1989), 356-357.

¹¹⁴ A. Vööbus, *A History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient I* (1958), 98ff.

¹¹⁵ An inscription concerning Christian Edessa from the fourth till sixth centuries stresses the centrality of Jerusalem: "—we ought also to accomplish the same things (i.e. as King Abgar and the *mazni*) in order that our parents may escape from everlasting judgement and we may meet with salvation...not abandoning the holy city of the God Christ." *New Documents illustrating early Christianity*, vol. II, 203-206.

the Holy City. Only in the fifth century was Christmas accepted in Jerusalem, and then only for the sake of unity.

The purpose of compiling this lectionary might have been to introduce Christmas and to strengthen Sunday Pascha in Syria by giving the pericopes for the forty-day Lenten fast and by establishing different themes for the preceding week of Pascha according to the new practice of Jerusalem, introduced by St. Cyril. The lectionary revision was a small step towards the unity declared in the Council of Nicea. Paschal baptism was at that time not introduced from Jerusalem, nor did they alter the ancient rite of washing of the feet deriving from the Last Supper. The explanation would be that festal baptism with its theological and liturgical foundation was firmly connected to Epiphany by the hymns of Ephraem, and it was not wise to introduce too many novelties simultaneously. Paschal baptism was still later on introduced into Syria too, as we can see from the old Jacobite and Nestorian lectionaries.¹¹⁶

This justifies me in suggesting a very early date for the Syriac lectionary, and setting a *terminus ante quem* for the lectionary Br.M. Add 14528 in the last decade of the fourth century and a *terminus post quem* in 351, the date of the vision of the cross in Jerusalem. In these four decades St. Cyril, the Bishop of Jerusalem, introduced his liturgical innovations, and his example may also have guided our author in his work. My dating is applied to the time when this lectionary was introduced, since I believe - contrary to A. Baumstark - that it really was in use in the Church of Syria. I do not, however, wish to take a stance on the time when these particular folios were copied.

My conclusion is that both Paschal baptism and Epiphany baptism were theologically established in the middle of the fourth century, the former in Jerusalem and the latter at least in Nisibis, but because of Jerusalem's leading position, Paschal baptism became more common towards the end of the fourth century, later also in Syria.

¹¹⁶ A. Baumstark, *Nichtevangelische Syrische Perikopenordnung* (1921), 46. *Festbrevier und Kirchenjahr der syrischen Jakobiten* (1910), 248-249.

6.7. The Great Church Fathers of Cappadocia and Antioch

The sermons of Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great and John Chrysostom have for years been the main sources for scholars attempting to solve the problem of the theological origins of the Feast of Epiphany.¹ These writings without doubt deserve close attention, and in them we can sense an attempt to introduce the unitive festival order in the Church. Yet we have to remember that the great fathers were of Gentile stock and had received the best pagan education of their time. They were familiar with the Jewish roots of Christianity only from the Old Testament Scriptures. For them the Jews and their customs were primarily a threat to Orthodox Christianity.²

6.7.1. St. Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus) (329-390)

St. Gregory became the chief pastor of the Nicene congregation in Constantinople in 379 C.E. The capital first favoured the Arian creed, but the Emperor Theodosius converted to the Nicene creed and appointed Gregory archbishop of the city. From his short time in Constantinople between 379 and 381, we have sermons on the Nativity, (which he calls by the name Theophany) preached on December 25, 380, and on the feast of Christ's baptism, which he calls The Feast of Lights (τὰ φῶτα), preached on January 6, 381.

St. Gregory uses the two feasts to draw people's attention forcefully to the Nicene Creed.³ His oratio XXXVIII "of the Theophany or birthday of Christ"⁴ is full of references to God's redemptive descent in Christ and the salvation of mankind brought by it.

4. Τοῦτο ἐστὶν ἡμῖν ἡ πανήγυρις, τοῦτο ἐορτάζομεν σήμερον, ἐπιδημίαν

¹ B. Botte, *Les origines de la Noël et de l'Épiphanie* (1932). A. McArthur, *Evolution of the Christian Year* (1953). B. Botte - E. Melia, *Noël, Épiphanie, retour du Christ* (1967). T. Talley, *Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991).

² E.g. St John Chrysostom wrote discourses against Judaizing Christians, where among other things he exhorts Christians to avoid the Jewish feasts and fasts. *Disc. 2.1.1*.

³ "Er hat eine Gemeinde vor sich, die zu einem grossen Teil bis vor kurzem unter arianischem Einfluss stand. Das gibt dem Prediger die Möglichkeit, ganz von vorn anzufangen, ganz von unten her aufzubauen. Es fällt kein tadelndes Wort über bisherige Irrtümer und Irrwege.— Diese Predigt ist auf die kirchenpolitische Gegenwart und auf die Zukunft gerichtet." Heinrich Dörrie, *Die Epiphaniapredigt des Gregor von Nazianz (Hom. 39) und ihre geistesgeschichtliche Bedeutung* (1970), 410.

⁴ τὰ δὲ νῦν θεοφάνια ἡ πανήγυρις, εἶπουν Γενέθλια, Oratio XXXVIII PG 36, col 313 C, NPNF 7.

θεοῦ πρὸς ἄνθρωπος , ἵνα πρὸς θεὸν ἐνδημήσωμεν, ἢ ἐπανέλθωμεν (οὕτω γὰρ εἰπεῖν οἰκειότερον), ἵνα τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀποθέμενοι, τὸν νέον ἐνδυσώμεθα· καὶ ὡσπερ ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ ἀπεθάνομεν, οὕτως ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ζήσωμεν...

"This is our festival, which we are celebrating today, the coming of God to men that we might go forth to God, or rather that we might go back to God,- that putting off the old man, we might put on the New; and that as we died in Adam, so we might live in Christ..."⁵

This oration, although it is mainly concerned with the birth of Jesus and things associated with it, also mentions the baptism:

16. Μικρὸν μὲν οὖν ὕστερον ὄψει καὶ καθαιρόμενον Ἰησοῦν ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ τὴν ἐμὴν κάθαρσιν· μᾶλλον δὲ ἀγνίζοντα τῇ καθάρσει τὰ ὕδατα (οὐ γὰρ δὴ αὐτὸς ἐδεῖτο καθάρσεως, ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου), καὶ σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ συγγενοῦς Πνεύματος μαρτυρόμενον...

A little later you will see Jesus, purified in Jordan for my purification, or rather having sanctified the waters by his purification (for indeed he had no need of purification he who takes away the sin of the world), from whom the Spirit, which is of one nature, witnesses the heavens cleaving asunder.⁶

This might occur as a reminiscence of the former unitive feast of redemption. Not long before this sermon was delivered this feast was officially divided into two parts: Nativity and Epiphany.⁷

St. Gregory's oratio XXXIX was prepared for the feast of January 6, and is entitled "εἰς τὰ ἅγια φῶτα", on the holy lights. He explains:

1. Ἡ γὰρ ἅγια τῶν Φώτων ἡμέρα, εἰς ἣν ἀφίγμεθα, καὶ ἣν ἐορτάζειν ἡξιώμεθα σήμερον, ἀρχὴν μὲν τὸ τοῦ ἐμοῦ Χριστοῦ βάπτισμα λαμβάνει τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ φωτός, τοῦ φωτίζοντος πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον·

"For the holy day of the Lights, to which we have come, and which we hold worth while to celebrate today, has for its origin the baptism of my

⁵ *Idem*, col 316 A. NPNF 7. I am grateful to Mrs. Leena Mari Peltomaa for help in translating more accurately the passages in pages 180-188.

⁶ *Idem*, col 329 B. NPNF 7.

⁷ St. John the Chrysostom testifies also to the division. See ch. 6.6.4.

Christ, the true light that lightens every man that comes into the world.⁸

14. Τῇ μὲν οὖν γεννήσει τὰ εἰκότα προεορτάσαμεν, ἐγὼ τε ὁ τῆς ἐορτῆς ἑξαρχος, καὶ ὑμεῖς... Νυνὶ δὲ πράξις ἄλλη Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἄλλο μυστήριον... Χριστὸς φωτίζεται, συναναστράψωμεν· Χριστὸς βαπτίζεται, συγκατέλθωμεν, ἵνα καὶ συνανέλθωμεν.

"At his birth we duly kept festival, both I, the leader of the feast, and you... Now, we come to another action of Christ and another mystery...

Christ is illuminated, let us shine forth with him. Christ is baptized, let us descend with him⁹ that we may also ascend with him...¹⁰

15. Πλὴν Ἰωάννης βαπτίζει, πρόσεισιν Ἰησοῦς· ἀγιάσων τυχὸν μὲν καὶ τὸν βαπτιστήν· τὸ δὲ πρόδηλον, πάντα τὸν παλαιὸν Ἀδὰμ, ἵν' ἐνθάπη τῷ ὕδατι· πρὸ δὲ τούτων καὶ διὰ τούτους, τὸν Ἰορδάνην· ὡσπερ ἦν πνεῦμα καὶ σὰρξ, οὕτω Πνεύματι τελειῶν καὶ ὕδατι... Ἦδει γὰρ τῷ μαρτυρίῳ βαπτισθησόμενος·

"As John baptized, Jesus came near - perhaps to sanctify the person who is going to baptize (Jesus), and surely to bury the whole of the old Adam in the water, before this and for the sake of this to sanctify Jordan. For as He was Spirit and Flesh, so he consecrated us by Spirit and water... For he (St. John) knew that he would be baptized by martyrdom."¹¹

17. Ἐπεὶ δὲ βαπτίσματος ἢ πανήγυρις, καὶ δεῖ μικρὸν τι προσκακοπαθῆσαι τῷ δι' ἡμᾶς μορφωθέντι, καὶ βαπτισθέντι, καὶ σταυρωθέντι, φέρε, τι περὶ διαφορᾶς βαπτισμάτων φιλοσοφήσωμεν... Οἶδα καὶ τέταρτον βάπτισμα, τὸ διὰ μαρτυρίου καὶ αἵματος, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸς Χριστὸς ἐβαπτίσασατο,

"Now, since our festival is of baptism and we must endure a little hardness with Him who for our sake took form and was baptized and was crucified; let us study about the different kinds of baptism... I know also a fourth baptism - that by martyrdom and blood, which also Christ himself underwent."¹²

The third of his orationes, on Holy baptism, was preached on January 7, 381. The main theme of this sermon is illumination by baptism:

⁸ Oratio XXXIX. PG 36, col 336 A. (The last sentence is John 1:9) NPNF 7.

⁹ Meaning descent into water in baptism.

¹⁰ *Idem*, col 349 C-D. NPNF 7.

¹¹ *Idem*, col 352 B-C. NPNF 7.

¹² *Idem*, cols 353, 356. NPNF 7.

1. Χθὲς τῇ λαμπρᾷ τῶν Φώτων ἡμέρα πανηγυρίσαντες καὶ γὰρ ἔπρεπε χαρμόсуνα θέσθαι τῆς σωτηρίας τῆς ἡμετέρας...
2. Τρισσὴν γέννησιν ἡμῖν οἶδεν ὁ Λόγος· τὴν ἐκ σωμάτων, τὴν ἐκ βαπτίσματος, καὶ τὴν ἐξ ἀναστάσεως...
3. ...περὶ δὲ τῆς μέσης, καὶ τῆς νῦν ἡμῖν ἀναγκαίας, ἧς ἐπώνυμος ἡ τῶν φώτων ἡμέρα, φιλοσοφήσωμεν· Τὸ φῶτισμα, λαμπρότης ἐστὶ ψυχῶν, βίου μετὰθεοῖς, ἐπερώτημα τῆς εἰς θεὸν συνειδησεως·

"Yesterday we have had the celebration of the illustrious day of the Lights. For it was fitting that rejoicings should be kept for our salvation..."

The Word recognizes three births for us: the bodily birth, that of baptism and that of the resurrection...

Let us discourse upon the second, which is now necessary for us, and which gives its name to the day of the lights. Illumination is the splendour of souls, the conversion of life, the question put to the good conscience towards God.¹³

In the same oration he refers to the common custom of observing Epiphany, Pascha and Pentecost as significant occasions for baptism¹⁴, although the sermon in its totality shows that the association of baptism with certain festivals only was breaking down.

In addition, St. Gregory the Theologian speaks of Epiphany in his funeral speech for his friend St. Basil, when he describes the visit of the Arian emperor Valens (364-378) on the day of Epiphany to the church where St. Basil's had served: "ἦν δὲ ἡμέρα τῶν Ἐπιφανίων, καὶ ἀθροῖσιμος".¹⁵

In St. Gregory's orationes we can find all the elements of the early feast of Epiphany¹⁶ put together in fine theological order so that they form a meaningful and seamless whole. He strives to teach believers about the content of the feast and

¹³ *Oratio XL: Εἰς τὸ ἅγιον βάπτισμα*. PG 36, cols 360, 361. NPNF 7.

¹⁴ "You rely upon this or that and pretend pretences in sins: I am waiting for Epiphany; I prefer Pascha; I will wait for Pentecost. It is better to be baptized with Christ, to rise with Christ on the day of his resurrection, to honour the manifestation of the Spirit..." (Μενῶ τὰ Φῶτα· τὸ Πάσχα μοι τιμιώτερον· τὴν Πεντηκοστὴν ἐκδέχομαι) Ch. XXIV in the same sermon XL. NPNF 7, 368.

¹⁵ *Oratio XLIII. funebris oratio in laudem Basilii Magni*, LII. PG 36, col 561 C.

¹⁶ Nativity, Incarnation of the Son of God, the visit of the Magi, the light to the Gentiles, the baptism of Christ, believer's baptism, illumination, the baptism of blood or *martyria*, the memorial day of one's baptism, the sanctified waters of the Jordan.

the kind of benefits it bestows. He does not care how the elements of the feast have come together, but they seem to be in their place: nothing needs to be removed or added, insofar as he understands the feasts. This points to the great age of the constituent elements and to their having been attached to the Feast of Epiphany a long time in the past. The theme of the Nativity has been detached from it in order later to be transferred to the 25th of December.

6.7.2. St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394)

Equally clear information on the celebration of Epiphany on the 6th of January and Nativity on the 25th of December we find in two homilies of St. Gregory of Nyssa: *In diem luminum* (ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΗΜΕΡΑΝ ΤΩΝ ΦΩΤΩΝ) and *In diem natalem Christi* (ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΓΕΝΝΗΣΙΝ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ). In the first we read:

Ἦκε τοίνυν ἄγων καὶ περιφέρων ὁ χρόνος μνήμην ἁγίων μυστηρίων, καθαιρόντων τὸν ἄνθρωπον...

Ἐγεννήθη τοίνυν Χριστὸς, ὡς πρὸ ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν...

Βαπτίζεται σήμερον παρὰ Ἰωάννου, ἵνα τὸν ἐρρυπωμένον ἀποκαθάρη, Πνεῦμα δὲ ἄνωθεν ἀγάγη, καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον εἰς οὐρανοῦς ἀνυψώσῃ· ἵνα ὁ πεσὼν διεγερθῆ, καὶ ὁ ρίψας καταισχυθῆ. ...

Ταῦτα ψυχῆς ἀληθῶς ἀναγεννηθείσης τὰ ρήματα· αὐταὶ τοῦ νεοτελοῦς ἀνθρώπου φωναὶ, τοῦ μεμνημένου τῆς οἰκείας ὁμολογίας, ἣν ἐν τῇ παραδόσει τοῦ μυστηρίου πρὸς θεὸν ἐποίησατο, πάσης καὶ τιμωρίας καὶ ἡδονῆς ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπης καταφρονεῖν ὑποσχόμενος.

"The time, then, has come, and bears in its course the remembrance of holy mysteries, purifying man...

Christ, then, was born as it were a few days ago...

He is baptized by John that he might cleanse him who was defiled, that He might bring the Spirit from above and exalt man to heaven, that he who had fallen might be raised up and he who had cast him down might be put to shame. - - -

These are the words of a soul truly regenerated: these are the utterances of the newly-baptized man, who remembers his own confession, which he made to God when the sacrament was administered to him, promising that he would despise for the sake of love towards Him all torment and all pleasure alike".¹⁷

The passages seems to indicate that the theme of the feast now being celebrated is the baptism of Christ and the baptism of the believers. The thema formerly commemorated at the feast - the Incarnation of Christ - is also present, but is pushed into the background. He also expresses ideas which indicate that the feast

¹⁷ *In diem luminum*. PG 46, cols 577 C, 580 B-C, 597 D. NPNF 5.

is the memorial day of baptism as well as that of the martyrs.

St. Gregory accepts the common tradition of celebrating three main feasts, even if he does not say it explicitly, and considers the message of these feasts - Epiphany, Pascha and Pentecost - as the pillars of the Faith:

"Our faith in Him was not increased with the visit (to Holy Land). Before we saw Bethlehem we knew his Incarnation from the virgin (τὴν διὰ τῆς παρθένου ἐνανθρώπησιν), before we saw his tomb we believed also in his Resurrection from the dead (τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐξανάστασιν), apart from seeing the Mount of Olives we confessed that his Ascension into heaven (τὴν εἰς οὐρανοῦς ἀνάβασιν) was real."¹⁸

In his panegyric to his brother Basil St. Gregory reminds his listeners of the cycle of liturgical feasts and of the special place occupied in it by the solemnities of the Theophany of God's only-begotten Son. But he does not say whether this "celebration of celebrations" is observed on December 25 or January 6. Διὰ τῆς ἐκ Παρθένου γεννήσεως, "born of the virgin", might refer to December 25.¹⁹

In his *Homilia in diem natalem* St. Gregory also uses an interesting expression which points to some connection with the Jewish feast of Sukkoth. Jean Daniélou has investigated this subject and I have already made reference to his research.²⁰ St. Gregory finds a relation between the mystery of the Feast of Epiphany and the Jewish Feast of Sukkoth:

καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὁ νόμος ἐν τοῖς τῆς σκιάς τύποις προδιαζωγραφῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἐν τῇ σκηνοπηγίᾳ τὸν ἐκ τῶν σαλπίγγων ἦχον ἐνομοθέτησε. Καὶ ἡ παρούσα τῆς ἐορτῆς ὑπόθεσις τὸ τῆς ἀληθινῆς σκηνοπηγίας ἐπιμυστήριον. Ἐν ταύτῃ γὰρ σκηνοπηγεῖται τὸ ἀνθρώπινον σκηνώμα τῷ δι' ἡμᾶς ἐνδυσσαμένῳ τὸν ἄνθρωπον· ἐν ταύτῃ τὰ διαπεπτωκότα ἡμῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ θανάτου σκηνώματα πάλιν συμπήγνυται ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὸ

¹⁸ *In peregrinationibus ad loca sancta*. PG 46, col 1013. NPNF 5.

¹⁹ Συμβαίνει τοίνυν τῇ ἀποστολικῇ ταύτῃ ἀκολουθίᾳ ἡ τάξις τῶν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ πανηγύρεων. Ἀλλὰ τὴν πρώτην οὐ συναριθμῶ ταῖς ἄλλαις. Ἡ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῇ θεοφανείᾳ τοῦ μονογενοῦς Υἱοῦ χάρις, ἡ διὰ τῆς ἐκ Παρθένου γεννήσεως ἀναδειχθεῖσα τῷ κόσμῳ, οὐχ ἀπλῶς ἐστὶν ἁγία πανήγυρις, ἀλλ' ἁγία ἀγίων, καὶ πανήγυρις πανηγύρεων.

Oratio fidebris in laudem fratris Basilii, col 789. PG 46.

²⁰ J. Daniélou, 'La Fête des Tabernacles dans l'exégèse patristique' (1957), 262-279. See chapters 2.7, and 4.4.

οίκητήριον ἡμῶν οἰκοδομήσαντος.²¹

As the law once depicted the truth with obscure types, it commanded trumpets to be blown in celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. The foundation of this feast is the mystery of the true tabernacle. On this day man's tabernacle will be erected for him who for us put on the human body. On this day our tabernacles, fallen by death, are restored through Him who from the beginning has erected our buildings.

St. Gregory's point is that the Epiphany of God in the Incarnation makes it possible for men's corrupted tabernacles to be restored to their former shape. Here he obviously refers to St. Paul and his 2 Cor. 5:1-10. Origen mentions the same idea in his homily on Numbers. He describes how life in this body is for us the same transit journey as was wandering in the desert and dwelling in tents for the Israelites. We have put on a mortal, corrupt body, a booth, which will be taken down in the Resurrection, when we shall receive a new, better dwelling. The Incarnation of God restores man's corrupt dwelling, the booth, to its former beauty.²² Methodius of Olympos also uses the same picture.²³ The word σκηνή (a tent, booth, a dwelling-place) is used as a type of the human body, not only in the Old and New Testaments²⁴, but also in Hellenistic literature, and therefore it is not a curiosity among the Greek Fathers. St. Gregory uses it here in the same context as it is used in the New Testament. St. Ephraem has the same idea in his hymns.²⁵ The possibility of an inherited connection between *Sukkoth* and Epiphany is here very slight.

6.7.3. St. Basil the Great (of Caesarea) (c. 330-379)

St. Basil's *Homilia in Christi generationem* (ΟΜΙΛΙΑ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΑΓΙΑΝ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΓΕΝΝΗΣΙΝ) could point either to the feast of January 6, or to the feast of December 25. The latter is more probably because he says ὄνομα θώμεθα τῇ ἐορτῇ ἡμῶν

²¹ *In diem natalem*. PG 46, col 1128 A-B.

²² *Hom. in Numeros XXIII*, 11.

²³ *Convivium decem virginum IX*, 1-5. PG 18, cols 176-192. J. Daniélou, *La fête des Tabernacles dans l'exégèse patristique* (1957). 264-267.

²⁴ In New Testament 2.Kor. 5:1,4; Heb.9:11; 2.Peter 1:13-14.

²⁵ "Blessed is he who made our body a Tabernacle for his hiddenness." HNat. 3:7.

"Blessed is the One who dwelt in the womb, and in it he built a temple in which to live..." HNat.3:20.
Transl. K. McVey.

θεοφάνια²⁶, let us call our feast Theophania", and St. Gregory of Nazianzus calls the feast of December 25 by the same name. The homily of St. Basil describes the birth and Incarnation of Jesus and the consequences it has for mankind. He says nothing about baptism in this connection.

St. Basil's homily XIII, *Exhortatoria ad sanctum baptismum*, could have been intended for baptismal solemnities at the great feasts, especially at Pascha, to which the following passage points;

Ὁ δὲ μὴ βαπτισθεὶς οὐ πεφώτισται... Πᾶς μὲν οὖν χρόνος εὐκαιρίαν ἔχει πρὸς τὴν διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος σωτηρίαν· ... Τί δ' ἂν γένοιτο τῆς ἡμέρας τοῦ Πάσχα συγγενέστερον πρὸς τὸ βάπτισμα; Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἡμέρα μνημόσυνόν ἐστὶν ἀναστάσεως· τὸ δὲ βάπτισμα δύναμις ἐστὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀνάστασιν.²⁷

Who is not baptized is not illuminated.---

Therefore every time is suitable for salvation through baptism.---

But what day would be more of the same sort, when we think of baptism, than the day of Pascha? It is the day of the moment of the Resurrection: (one's) baptism is the power for (her) Resurrection.

This homily could, however, have also been delivered at the Feast of Epiphany in connection with the mass baptism performed then. The reference to Passover could be an exhortation to the listeners to take a decision to receive baptism at the next great feast.

6.7.4. St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom, the great preacher of Antioch, makes several references to our subject. In his first sermon on Pentecost he enumerates three festivals - Theophany, Pascha and Pentecost - and says specifically that the Theophany is the first, on which

Ἐπειδὴ θεὸς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὤφθη, καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συνανέστραφη· ἐπειδὴ ὁ θεὸς ὁ μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς μεθ' ἡμῶν ἦν.²⁸

"God has appeared on the earth and lived with men. Since then God's

²⁶ PG 31, col 1473 A.

²⁷ PG 31, col 424 C-D.

²⁸ *De sancta Pentecoste*, homilia I. PG 50, col 454.

only-begotten Son has been with all us."

In the homily delivered on December 20, 386, he announces the forthcoming celebration of the Nativity of Christ.

4. Ἀπὸ γὰρ ταύτης τὰ θεοφάνια, καὶ τὸ Πάσχα τὸ ἱερόν, καὶ ἡ Ἀνάληψις, καὶ ἡ Πεντηκοστή τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν ἔλαβον. Εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐτέχθη κατὰ σάρκα ὁ Χριστός, οὐκ ἂν ἐβαπτίσθη, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὰ θεοφάνια.²⁹

"The Theophania and the holy Pascha and the Ascension and the Pentecost take their origin and foundation from it, since if Christ had not been born in the flesh, he could not have been baptized, which matter is celebrated at Theophany."

Next homily was preached by Chrysostom on the Feast of the Nativity itself, on December 25, 386:

Καίτοι γε οὐπω δέκατὸν ἐστὶν ἔτος, ἐξ οὗ δήλη καὶ γνώριμος ἡμῖν αὕτη ἡ ἡμέρα γεγένηται. ... οὕτω καὶ αὕτη παρὰ μὲν τοῖς τὴν Ἑσπέραν οἰκοῦσιν ἄνωθεν γνωριζομένη, πρὸς ἡμᾶς δὲ κομισθεῖσα νῦν, καὶ οὐ πρὸ πολλῶν ἐτῶν, ἀθρόον οὕτως ἀνέδπαμε, καὶ τοσοῦτον ἤνεγκε τὸν καρπὸν...³⁰

"And really, this date of Christ's birth had been manifest and known for less than ten years... This, which has been known from of old to the inhabitants of the West and has now been brought to us, not many years ago, is suddenly growing and bringing fruit..."

He probably means that the theme of Christ's birth, which was previously a part of the old Feast of Epiphany on January 6, is now transferred to the new date of December 25, "known from of old" in Antioch as in other parts of the Empire. On Epiphany in the year 387 he makes the point that Christ was not revealed to the majority of people at his Nativity, but at his baptism all people received revelation of his divine identity.³¹

St. John Chrysostom enjoins and supervises the correct and uniform celebration of

²⁹ *De beato Philogonio* VI. PG 48, col 752.

³⁰ *In diem natalem*. PG 49, col 351.

³¹ *In homiliam de baptismo Christi et de Epiphania*. PG 49, col 365,2.

the Christian feasts, but in his writings we find no allusions to the origins of the Feast of Epiphany.

In 386-387 St. John also wrote *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*.³² Here he especially attacks the Jewish feasts, which he saw as an enticement to Christians to celebrate the Jewish feast with great ceremony along with the Jews. The same question has been raised by the Catholic Church in our own time.³³ This means that the Church, from John Chrysostom onwards, has considered the Christian celebrations to be quite independent of the Jewish basis, from which they once sprung.

6.8. Conclusions

The Emperor Constantine's aim was to strengthen the Church by promoting its unity, yet preserving its ties to the bygone time of the martyrs. The building of churches on the sites of Christ's Nativity, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, and on the tombs of the martyrs, shifted the focus of the Christian celebrations from redemptive ideas to the historicity of the redemptive biblical events. The three sacred caves point to the three mystical celebrations.

The pilgrim Egeria and St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, give us a vivid picture of the festal celebrations in Jerusalem and its vicinity in the 380s. Epiphany is a great feast, but the Paschal season with the teaching of catechumens during the Great Lent is the central celebration of the year. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived at the places of Christ's suffering and death found an opportunity to preach on the unity that exists between these events and Christian baptism, in accordance with Romans 6. He was the innovator who produced liturgically established Paschal baptism.

Because Jerusalem was a central place, to which other churches turned in order to copy ideas for developing their liturgical celebrations, this Paschal baptism bound

³² The translator of the *Discourses*, Paul W. Harkins, dates it thus. FC, vol. 68. Introduction, p. lii-lx.

³³ "It is becoming familiar in many parishes and Catholic homes to participate in a Passover Seder during Holy Week. This practice can have educational and spiritual value. It is wrong, however, to 'baptize' the Seder by ending it with New Testament reading about Last Supper or, worse, turn it into a prologue to the Eucharist. Such mergings distort both traditions."

Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy/NCCB. Appendix in the *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy*, ed. E. Fisher. 1954, 1994.

up with the Passion of Jesus spread all over the Christian world.

In the Syrian church, circumstances were different due to the Jewish background and the isolation caused by language, geography and politics. There baptism was conceived as a rebirth, in accordance with John's Gospel chapter 3. The Nativity and Epiphany hymns of St. Ephraem, the greatest theologian-poet of Syria, show convincingly that Epiphany and baptism belonged together. It is obvious that Ephraem's church observed the custom of baptizing on Epiphany night. Old lectionaries from the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries confirm this view: Epiphany was celebrated both in Jerusalem and in Syria on January 6 as a feast of man's total redemption, including God's descent to earth in the Incarnation of Jesus, and man's restoration through repentance and baptism to the former glory which was his before the Fall. The practice of Paschal baptism in Jerusalem is confirmed by the Armenian lectionary from the beginning of the fifth century, while the Syriac lectionary, which seems to be older than the Armenian one, does not know it but provides evidence of Epiphany baptism in Syria.

Liturgically established Paschal baptism was probably transferred to Syria, to Edessa, later than the other Jerusalem novelties, and the reason for it is the firm tradition of Epiphany baptism. The introduction of Paschal baptism took place during the last decade of St. Ephraem the Syrian, the 360s, but probably it did not replace the old custom for a while. There were so many other liturgical innovations at that time that the Syrian Church could not digest them all at once.

The oldest Syriac lectionary, Br. M. Add. 14528, assigns to the night from Saturday to Paschal Sunday washing of the feet and the Last Supper, which themes are analogous to the Jewish Paschal meal, and fête the total redemption of the chosen people. This anachronism points to the very great antiquity of the lectionary. On the other hand, the lectionary obviously knows the Nativity Feast of December 25, which Jerusalem rejected, and the 40-day Lent with the Passion Week before Pascha. My conclusion is that the lectionary is older than has previously been suggested, and originates from the last decades of the fourth century, from the time when Paschal baptism was not yet fully introduced into Syrian liturgical life. When attempting to solve the problem of the origins of the Christian Feast of

Epiphany the great Church Fathers do not provide us with much assistance. They show the stage which the celebration of the festivals had reached in their time. The Feast of the Nativity on December 25 was only recently established in their calendar and it adopted the theme of the Incarnation from the older Feast of Epiphany on January 6, which now concentrated on the baptism of Christ. Yet at Epiphany the Fathers still treat the subject of the Incarnation as well as that of baptism. They well describe the significance of the feasts of Epiphania and Nativity, and they present exactly the same elements as those known from earlier sources, but the sources of the different elements in the feasts, and the manner in which they have been transmitted, do not interest them. Nor are they concerned about the origin of the date of Epiphany. Jewish customs and idioms do not occur openly in their writings, except for a few taken from the Old Testament and repeated in the New Testament. The only trace of the Jewish origin of this feast is the name τὰ φῶτα used by St. Gregory of Nazianzus. Judaism and Christianity have gone entirely separate ways, and the interest of the Fathers is focused on the mystery of redemption which is accomplished for all mankind.

7. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The early Christian Church adopted its concepts from its Jewish heritage, which was its familiar background. Jewish feasts were also celebrated by the first Christians, but the feasts received a new content in their minds. The feasts were eschatological in nature even for the Jews of that time, but particularly for the first Christians who saw the final age to have begun in Jesus. They considered that the feasts were celebrated as the final stage of redemption.

The Feast of Tabernacles, which seems not to have a continuation in the Christian Church, obviously handed over its basic ideas to the Feast of Epiphany - firstly the descent of Yahweh to earth, and secondly the concept of living waters. The meaning of this descent for the individual was a disputed matter until St. Paul's teachings of redemption through faith and baptism - not through circumcision and the Law - gained a solid foothold. The proof of such a connection is the word τὰ φῶτα, which Josephus uses for the Feast of Hanukkah, the derivate from the Feast of Tabernacles, and which also occurs in the writings of St. Gregory of Nazianzus meaning the 'Lights' of Epiphany.

The split between the Synagogue and Church caused the possibility of developing new dates and a continuation for the themes of the old festivals. This is seen in the Paschal and Pentecostal celebrations, and it is possible also to reconstruct them for the Feast of Tabernacles. Jewish Christian ideas and practices receded into the background when the Gentiles assumed leadership both in Jerusalem and Alexandria, which were formerly under prominent Jewish influence. This might have caused the Jewish Tabernacles traditions to die out.

The main concern for the leaders of the Church was Gnosticism. It required great pains to lead fledgling Christianity out of its shadow. On the other hand, traditional Judaism formed a threat, because of the Jews' rejection of Jesus as Messiah. It was felt to be unacceptable to favour Jewish practices, such as their feasts. The deviation in the matter of baptism between Gnostics and "Catholics" brought a need to focus on baptism and the benefits a Christian gains from it. This led to the establishment of the Commemoration Day, when the baptized recalled their baptism so as to be ready for blood baptism, which was a constant threat. It seems probable to me that the early Epiphany - where it was celebrated - was the original commemoration day of baptism.

The baptism of Gnostics was different from that of the "Catholics". Jesus' baptism was not seen as the prototype of the baptism of believers, but a means by which Jesus was transformed into the Christ, a spiritual being, temporarily encased in a body. The 'history of religions' -thesis, which claims that the Gnostic feast of Coreum in Egypt was the origin of the Christian Epiphany must be rejected because the Church could not combine its crucial teachings with that of its worst rival, Gnosticism.

Epiphany traditions, however, were preserved in Egypt, because they come into the light of day in St. Athanasius' canons, but with an obscure system of dating. This leads one to wonder whether the old Tabernacles traditions of the fruit harvest are behind it. One date given by Athanasius is January 1, New Year's Day, which comes close to the date of the small papyrus containing verses for Epiphany, that is, December 31.

The Syrian Church, which had stronger ties with Judaism than with any other Church, provides us with important material concerning the early festal systems of the Christian Church. Ephraem the Syrian was the central figure in liturgical developments. His Epiphany hymns point to Epiphany baptism, unlike the situation in Jerusalem, where at the same period the Church experienced the novelty of liturgically established Paschal baptism. This leads us to conclude that Epiphany was an old feast in Syria, including old traditions of baptism. This is confirmed by the oldest Syriac lectionary, Br. M. Add 14528, which also represents ancient Syrian Paschal traditions. They could not have been preserved long after the Paschal baptism originating in Jerusalem developed into a universal custom. Thus it is possible to date the lectionary to earlier decades than previous studies have concluded: i.e. the last decades of the fourth century.

The obvious reason why in the fourth century the ecclesiastical authorities pushed for universal celebration of the Church the Feast of Epiphany is the case of Arius. He challenged the Divine Incarnation, but met with defeat at the Council of Nicea in 325. The victory of Catholicism was confirmed by the celebration of God's descent to earth and man's redemption accomplished through it.

The origins of Epiphany obviously lie in the idea of Redemption. Christ's carnal birth and his baptism as the prototype of the baptism of every Christian are closely connected, and they were both seen as necessary to reach the goal: Paradise lost. In the minds of the first Christians the Old Testament promises turned into the fulfilment of a new era: God's doxa - his Son - descending to the earth, and in consequence the possibility of restoring human beings to their former glory by means of baptism. These two notions form the primary and basic content of the early Feast of Epiphany.

The new feast of Christ's birth in the flesh - December 25 - introduced by the Emperor Constantine caused the division of Epiphany into two feasts: Nativity and Epiphany. This was done in Antioch in 380s and in Syria probably at the same time, too. It converted the celebrations into commemorations of historical events, the birth and baptism of Christ, and this was possible because the danger of heresy with regard to the interpretation of these events seemed to be overcome.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan.
GCS	Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
FC	The Fathers of the Church. The Catholic University of America Press.
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NPNF	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second series. WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
PG	Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Graeca, edited by J.P. Migne.
PETSE	Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile
PL	Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina, edited by J.P. Migne.
SS	Scriptores Syri



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