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THE HELLENISTIC MYSTERY RELIGION AND THE OLD TESTAMENT¹

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THE study of the relation of the mystery religions to the New Testament and early Christianity has been carried on for a number of years with most valuable results. But hitherto nobody had brought the Old Testament into direct connection with them. This has now been done by Kittel in an extremely interesting and thought provoking little book on *Die hellenistische Mysterienreligion und das Alte Testament* (1924) in which he attempts to show that Judaism influenced the hellenistic mystery religion decisively in Alexandria and contributed to its development.

He thinks that there were four sets of ideas which the Jews brought with them to Alexandria:

- 1) the idea of a divine child, born by a virgin, raised in the manner of a son of god, who was also to bring in the new age;
- 2) the idea that God is eternity, *aion*, and eternity is God;
- 3) the idea of union, identification of God and man, in the prophet, who is possessed by God and out of whom God speaks, and in the king, who by his anointment becomes a son of God, is filled with God's spirit and power, and is himself like a God or an angel of God;
- 4) the idea that every deeply religious worshipper may experience immediately the presence of God, enjoy union with

¹ Presidential Address given before the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, December 28, 1925.

Him, and attain to the vision of God,—in the cult or even independently of the cult,—either by special rites or by profound meditation upon God and by immersion in God. With this belongs the firm confidence in immortality.

The Jews had therefore all that is essential in the mystery religion when they came to Alexandria. In their active missionary propaganda there could be nothing more effective than the injection of their ideas into the mystery cults.

The question is whether the Jews actually did have these ideas before they came in contact with hellenistic religion in Alexandria.

I. The idea of the virgin born divine child, the bringer of the new age, Kittel finds in the Immanuel prophecy in Isa. 7, which he connects with the prophecies of the ideal king in Isa. 9 and 11, so that Immanuel is the same person as the king, the bringer of the new age. He maintains that the idea was so familiar that there was even a well established style in which the expectation of the savior was expressed at, and even considerably before, the time of Isaiah. Since the child was to be fed with "milk and honey," the food of the gods, he must be a heavenly wonder child, a son of God, as becomes the bringer of the new era of the world. To this wonderful child the LXX by its translation of העלמה by ἡ παρθένος, "the virgin," adds the wonderful mother. This was not part of the original hope, but it was a firmly established idea at the time of the translator ca. 200 B. C. and may be carried back, in all probability, to the latter part of the Babylonian exile.

The myth of the birth of the divine child who was the bringer of the new age played an important part in the hellenistic mystery religion. Kittel uses here the results of the recent investigations of Karl Holl² and Ed. Norden³. After showing that the festival of the winter sun, on December 25,

² *Der Ursprung des Epiphaniensfestes in Sitzungsbericht der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1917, pp. 402—438, and his edition of Epiphanius, 2nd volume, 1922, in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*.

³ *Die Geburt des Kindes*, 1924.

was observed in Palestine in Maccabean times (*Hanukkah*), in Alexandria in the third century B. C. (*Kikellia*) and earlier as "the birthday of the sun," Kittel illustrates how it was celebrated by quoting, in the absence of early sources, from Macrobius (fifth century A. D. in *Saturn.* I 18), who says that "the Egyptians at the time of the winter solstice (Dec. 25) brought the image of a little boy from the Holy of Holies" (*ex adyto*). The little boy is here the new-born sun, Helios. A scholion (8th century) in Gregory Nazianzen says that the Greeks have celebrated the day from ancient times and concludes: "When they come out they call"—[evidently at the sight of the new daylight (Kittel)]—"the virgin has born, the light increases."⁴ The festival was also celebrated in Syria and Arabia. Parallel with Helios is the god Aion, of whose birth Hippolytus tells. When the officiating priest at Eleusis performs the inexpressible mysteries, he breaks forth into the cry,⁵ "a holy boy the mistress has born, *Brimo Brimon, i. e. the strong one a strong one.*" Hippolytus proceeds, "This is the virgin who is pregnant and has conceived and is bearing a son."⁶ This refers to the birth of Aion.⁷ Epiphanius describes the celebration of the birth of Aion in the Koreion at Alexandria in the night of Epiphany, Jan. 5—6, thus, "They spend the whole night with songs, which they sing to the image of the god, accompanied by flutes. After they have thus completed the nocturnal celebration, they proceed after the first crow of the cock with torches in their hands to a subterranean sacred chamber and carry about on a barrow a wooden naked idol which has on its forehead a seal of a golden cross, also on both of its hands two other such seals, also two others on both knees, altogether five seals made of gold. This wooden image they carry as they go about the innermost temple seven times with flutes and drums, then they bring it back to its place in a bacchantic procession. If one ask them, what does this mystery mean? they reply and say, *At this time to-day the*

⁴ Ἡ παρθένος τέτοκεν· αὔξει φῶς.

⁵ Ἴερὸν ἔτεκε πότνια κοῦρον, Βριμὴ Βριμόν, τουτέστιν ἰσχυρὰ ἰσχυρόν.

⁶ Τουτέστιν ἡ παρθένος ἡ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα καὶ συλλαμβάνουσα καὶ τίκτουσα υἷόν.

⁷ Αἰῶνα αἰώνων.

young woman, that is the virgin, has born Aion."⁸ As the sun god is the son of the great mother of the gods who is also almost everywhere a virgin, for only a virgin was worthy to perform the wonder of all wonders, the birth of the divine child, so the mother of Aion must also be a divine virgin. The roots of the Aion idea are very old in Iran and India, and in the Egyptian mysteries of Osiris. But the blending of near-Asiatic, ultimately Iranian and Indian, and Egyptian with Greek elements does not explain entirely the hellenistic mystery religion, according to Kittel. A decisive Jewish influence must be taken into account.

He maintains that the myth of the birth of the divine savior-child was known in Israel in the eighth century and that Isaiah used quite unconsciously but also quite inevitably, the phraseology of the myth, for he could find no more appropriate form when he wanted to predict the coming of the savior, the miraculous birth and raising of the divine child by a divine mother. Later, probably as early as the latter part of the exile, the Jews regarded the divine mother as a virgin, like the Accadian Ishtar. And in this form, as the LXX suggests, they brought the idea with them to Alexandria.

The very first claim, that Immanuel of Isa. 7 is the same as the ideal king in Isa. 9 and 11, is untenable⁹. Since Kittel

⁸ Ταύτη τῆ ὥρα σήμερον ἡ κόρη (τούτέστιν ἡ παρθένος) ἐγέννησε τὸν Αἰῶνα.

⁹ The child in chap. 7 "shall be called Immanuel", the child in chap. 9 "Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Why is it called by a different name? Are these merely epithets in addition to his real name "Immanuel"? Why is this not indicated? From the Immanuel passage itself we certainly cannot conclude that Immanuel is a saving child, or one destined to be a savior. Isaiah does not say that *Immanuel* will make the land of the enemies desolate. Immanuel does nothing, either in this chapter or elsewhere to merit the title of savior. God himself is the savior. The idea of Immanuel's saviorhood is imported into this chapter by connecting it with chap. 9 and 11. Kittel adduces, of course, the usual argument that in Isaiah 8 Immanuel is addressed, in the prediction that the Assyrian shall pour like a mighty flood also into Judah, "and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." But עִמָּנוּ אֵל belongs to the following and is not a proper name, but a phrase, which must be translated here

relies on the LXX as his star witness for the prevalence of the myth among the Jews, it is important to note that the LXX, although it read ארצך עמנו אל, did not interpret it as "thy land, O Immanuel," but translated "and his camp shall be [so as to fill] the breadth of thy land. With us is God!" This shows that about 200 B. C. Isa. 8 8 was not understood as meaning that Immanuel was the destined ruler of the land. LXX did not connect 8 8 with 7 14. The messianic interpretation of Isa. 7 14 was thus not beyond question at this time.

The second argument is the use of a definite style in which the expectation of the coming savior had come to be expressed habitually. Now it is true, if the characteristic style of the myth can be seen in every story which tells of the birth of a savior under extraordinary circumstances, the presumption is that the myth was prevalent for quite a long time. Was this the case in Israel at and before the time of Isaiah? Because a son was promised to Hagar (Gen. 16 11); to Samson's mother (Judg. 13 3); and to the young woman in Isa. 7 14 in nearly the same words,¹⁰

Behold, thou hast conceived, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael;

Behold now, thou art barren and bearest not, but thou shalt conceive and bear a son;¹¹

Behold, a young woman shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Kittel thinks we have here a definite style, and more particularly the style in which the expectation of the savior, who was to be born in an extraordinary manner, was expressed in Israel and elsewhere. Of Samson it was said "he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judg. 15 5 b). For Immanuel Kittel gets the savior from the other passages with which he connects Isa. 7 14. For Ishmael he is compelled to import this element by suggesting that we have here an Ishmaelite tale and

just as at the conclusion of verse 10 by "God is with us." ארצך was originally ארצה or כי.

¹⁰ הנך הרה וילדת בן ונקראת שמו ישמעאל Gen. 16 11
הפיהניא את-עקרה ולא גלדת וקרית וילדת בן Judg. 13 3
הנה העלמה הרה וילדת בן ונקראת שמו עמנו אל Isa. 7 14

¹¹ Judg. 13 5 is a better parallel, הנה הרה וילדת בן, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

that to the Ishmaelites their ancestor was the ideal of a hero. The passage itself says nothing of Ishmael's saviorhood, nor of his miraculous birth. The angel simply states that Hagar is with child [present, not future] and will bear a son, and that she shall call his name Ishmael, because Jahweh had heard her affliction.¹² Samson's case is different, his mother had been barren and the angel told her that she would conceive [here it is the future, not the present] and bear a son. Here is indeed a miracle according to the narrator, but no miraculous conception is hinted at, as though she had been impregnated by the word of the angel.—If there really was a definite style for such stories, why was it not used in the more extraordinary case of Isaac, where Jahweh himself announced to the aged, barren Sarah

birth of a son who was not of less importance to the Israelites than Ishmael was to the Ishmaelites?¹³ And why was Samuel's story not told in it? His mother also was barren, she also received the divine promise through the priest Eli, and Samuel certainly was more of a savior according to 1 Sam. 7 than Samson. But there is not a trace of the style.

The third argument for the prevalence of the myth of the divine savior child is his food of "milk and honey." Kittel, following Usener,¹⁴ sees in them the food of the gods, with which the heavenly child is fed quite appropriately. Usener's demonstration is confined to the Greek world and even there for the early times it is not unchallenged.¹⁵ But what was true of the Greek world was not necessarily true of the Semitic world. Neither in Babylonia nor in Israel were milk and honey regarded as the exclusive and characteristic food of the gods. Both are

¹² There is nothing in the Hebrew term יָלַד to forbid taking it in the sense of "a child," but since the angel speaks we may grant that he knew that it would be "a son."

¹³ The analogy of Isaac is especially important because it is not impossible to argue from his name יִצְחָק "he laughs" that the original story told of the birth of a divine child, for only such a one would laugh at his birth (cf. Norden, *l. c.*, p. 59 ff.) and thereby prove his divinity. But why was the transformed myth not told in the well established style?

¹⁴ *Das Weihnachtsfest*, 1913.

¹⁵ Cf. Karl Wyss, *Die Milch im Kultus der Griechen und Römer*, 1914, pp. 39 ff.

used in Babylonian sacrifices but not in Jewish. The late references to them as the food of the righteous in the golden age in the Slavonic Enoch (8 5 ff.) and the Sibylline oracles (3 744 ff.) are not due to ancient *Jewish* tradition. And while it is true that the phrase which describes Canaan as a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3 8. 17 etc.) expresses overflowing divine blessing, it is significant that in this chapter (Isa. 7) milk and honey are explicitly defined as the food of "everyone that is left in the midst of the land," for it will be so utterly devastated that there will be nothing else to eat but the food of nomads (Isa. 7 21 f.). Kittel knows this, but he thinks that in connection with Immanuel the eating of milk and honey expressed the idea that he was fed with the food of the gods as the heavenly wonder child.

There remains the fourth and most important point, the question of the virgin, the *παρθένος* of the LXX. Kittel concludes from this rendering that the idea that the mother of the savior was a virgin was prevalent at the time of the translator *ca.* 200 B. C. at Alexandria, for it was to him a matter of course to translate *העלמה* by *ἡ παρθένος*, and not by *ἡ νεάνις*. But the translator did not understand that the boy was to be born miraculously by a virgin or that he was the divine redeemer king. For though he translated *παρθένος*, the virgin is not according to his understanding pregnant at the time of the prediction, but she will conceive, in the future, *λήμψεται* B, *ἔξει* S A Q. Nothing is said to indicate that this will be done in a miraculous fashion. She will bear a son and Ahaz will give to him the name Immanuel (LXX pointed *יְמָנְוֵאל קָרָאָה* *καλέσεις*). Since according to Hebrew usage the father names the child, Ahaz will be his father. This is also the interpretation which we know from Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho c. 67. 71 as the Jewish interpretation of his day, according to which the child was Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz. The LXX translator rendered *παρθένος* because he believed that the young woman was Ahaz's queen, and he understood *הַרְהָרָה* as future (*λήμψεται*); she was still a virgin at this time.¹⁶

¹⁶ This was quite as natural for him as it had been for the translator of Gen. 24 43 in Eliezer's prayer, "let it come to pass that *ἡ παρθένος*

Of course, this interpretation is wrong, but the important point here is that this is the LXX's interpretation. For it shows that the LXX of Isa. 7 14 cannot be used to prove that the idea of the virgin birth of the Messiah was a current Jewish conception at the time of the translator. He thought as little of "the wellknown divine virgin" as Isaiah himself had done. Indeed he did not interpret Immanuel as the Messiah either, for, as we saw, he did not regard **עִמָּנוּ אֵל** in Isa. 8 8 as a proper name but translated it and did not connect Isa. 7 with Isa. 9 and 11. Moreover, he avoided in his translation of Isa. 9 even the suggestion of a mythical element, for he translates as follows, (i. e. the oldest translator whose work we have in cod. B): *μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος ἄξω γὰρ εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας* = "Angel of great counsel, for I will bring peace to the princes." Then comes a variant translation of **שָׁלוֹם** followed by the succeeding **לֵם** = **לְמוֹ** *καὶ ὑγείαν αὐτῷ* = "and health to him." That this is manifestly an inferior text is not of so great moment here as that there is nothing in it that might be used for mythical speculations. The LXX avoided a direct translation of **אֵל גְּבוּר**, and read apparently a different Hebrew original for **אָבִי עַד**. It gives as the boy's name "Angel of great counsel" and then says "I [Jahweh] will bring peace to the princes." The oldest translator (represented by cod. B) translated **אָבִי עַד שָׂר** or rather **אָבִיא עַל שָׂר**, as he read the Hebrew original. Did he do this, because he knew the myths of Osiris and of Aion, which he wished to avoid? If so, he did not seize the opportunity offered to him to bring out the mythical elements in his religious thinking which were akin to the mysteries so that he might thereby inject these Jewish ideas into the hellenistic mystery cults.

Kittel thinks that he did not dare to translate it, but why should he have balked at it? If he could paraphrase **אֵל גְּבוּר**, he could do the same with **אָבִי עַד** if necessary, but he read **עַל אָבִיא** instead (**עַל** = **אֵל**). Kittel adopts Wutz's suggestion

(העלמה) that comes forth to draw . . . , let the same be the woman whom Jahweh has appointed for my master's son." But that the young woman would still be a virgin when she became the mother of Immanuel, he nowhere indicates.

that ἄξω γὰρ εἰρήνην goes back to *αβειε σαρ σαλωμ*, a transcription of שָׁלוֹם שֵׁר אַבִּיָא, but clearly the LXX text had עַל for עַד, as ἐπί proves, and that is just the crucial point. But he was not the only Greek translator. Others corrected his rendering, and wrote *θανμαστῆς σύμβουλος θεὸς ἰσχυρὸς ἐξουσιαστῆς ἄρχων εἰρήνης πατὴρ τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος*, which is now inserted in cod. \aleph ^{c. a} A in the older rendering. Here אֱלֹהֵי נְבוֹר is translated literally by *θεὸς ἰσχυρὸς*, "a mighty God" and אַבִּי עַד by *πατὴρ τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος*, "father of the age to come." This translator interpreted the text in accordance with the later messianic idea of the age to come. But do we have even here the same idea as that at the basis of the mystery religion?

II. This leads us over to the second set of ideas which the Jews brought to Alexandria, according to Kittel, and with which they influenced the hellenistic mystery religion. Isaiah predicted a new age with the coming of the ideal king, whose reign is to be *מַעֲתָה וְעַד עוֹלָם*. When he called him אַבִּי עַד he did not use the term, as the later Greek translator did, as meaning *πατὴρ τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος*, "father of the age to come;" not even the earlier translator had done that. And yet Kittel believes that this idea is quite old in Palestine. He connects אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם Gen. 22 33 (J) "God of old" or better "God of eternity," *θεὸς αἰῶνιος*, with the Aion idea, comparing also the Phenician deity *Χρόνος ἀγήρατος* = "Ageless time," and maintains that it implies that time itself or time and eternity are thought of as God (as *Aion* was in Alexandria), and thinks that the interpretation אֱהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֱהִיָּה (Ex. 3 13) of the name יְהוָה means the one who remains permanently the same, the Eternal,¹⁷ as expressing Jahweh's essential being. Deity and eternity are the same: Jahweh is eternity, is the Aion. In the mystery religion Aion is a special God, in Israel Jahweh is Aion.

Of course, Jahweh appropriated the names of *El 'olām* and *El 'elyōn* in the process of assimilation, but it is unlikely that

¹⁷ This is of course not the original meaning of יְהוָה but the one attached to him later.

the abstract reasoning, which Kittel assumes, was familiar to the Jews in early times. Jahweh is eternal, but not Jahweh is eternity nor eternity is Jahweh. The Messiah is even according to the later Greek translator the father of the age to come, i. e. the bringer or the ruler of the age to come but not Aion himself. Thus here, too, the characteristic Aion idea of the mystery cults is absent.

III. About the third or fourth sets of ideas not much need be said. As regards the third, the idea of union or identification with God in king and prophet, it is quite uncertain, however interesting and ingenious the theory as worked out by Volz and Mowinckel may be, that the psalms that celebrate Jahweh as having become King (e. g. Psalm 47, 93, 95—100) refer to the cultic festival of Jahweh's enthronement on New Year's day rather than to the time of the future when Jahweh shall actually reign as King over the whole world. In other words, the eschatological interpretation of these psalms has not yet been proved to be wrong. Moreover, we do not know that Israel's idea in celebrating New Year's day as the day of Jahweh's enthronement was that the human king also celebrated his own enthronement, and that Jahweh and the king were one in ascending the throne, so that in the mimic representation of Jahweh's enthronement the king experienced in reality a mystic union with God, whose experience is his own. If this was the case, it cannot be proved and it is unlikely. This in spite of the fact that there was an extremely close connection between the deity and the king, as is manifest from the phrase in Ps. 2, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee;" from the address of the king as "Elohim" in Ps. 45; from the comparison of David with the angel of God in 2 Sam. 14 17; and from the sacred character of the Anointed of Jahweh, which made an offence against him as serious as one against God himself. There was such a strong, determined opposition to the deification of the king in Israel that we need much stronger proofs. What Kittel says of the union of God with the prophet (*nabî*?) is true, the prophet is possessed by God and the earlier *nebi'im* aimed at union with God in the ecstatic state. But the great prophets are never conscious of mystical

identification with God; on the contrary they differentiate between Jahweh's and their own speech more and more.

IV. In the fourth set of ideas it should not be overlooked that while the intimate communion of some of the Psalmists (e. g. 16, 17, 27, 63, 36, 49, 73) with God has a certain mystical character, yet it is not of the kind that we have in the mysteries. Only one passage can be adduced in which the psalmist may be suspected of speaking of "the mysteries of God" 73 17 **מִקְדָּשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים**. But it seems quite clear that the use of special mystery rites for the attainment of the divine light and life is antecedently unlikely in this connection; if they should however be referred to, we should have to assume an influence on their part on the psalmist, not *vice versa*, as Kittel must agree. The firm confidence in immortality which Kittel, with others, finds in Ps. 73 and 17 is not so manifestly present that interpreters are agreed on it. It is true, whether it is directly expressed or not, the psalmists (73 and 16, 17) are quite close to it in their strong conviction that nothing can interrupt the communion with God which is to them the highest good in the world. And Kittel is right when he points out how different the active mysticism of the Jews with its ethical oneness with God, the union of the will with God's will, was from the passive mysticism of the mystery religions and that immortality by itself, apart from communion with God, is valueless.

The conclusion is that it does not seem likely that the Jews had the essential ideas of the mystery religion when they came to Alexandria. It is not that they had not assimilated ancient myths and transformed them—that is too firmly established to admit of any doubt. That the Jews knew the Tammuz and Adonis myths at least as early as Ezekiel (8 14), yea even as Isaiah (17 10), and practised their cults, is certain. But that they had the particular myth of the divine virgin born child, who should bring in the new age, together with the Aion myth, has not been demonstrated, at least not yet. There is no proof that this belief was entertained at the time of Isaiah, or in the Babylonian exile, or at the time of the LXX translator in Alexandria, by genuine Jews. Again, the mystic union in the sense of identification with the deity on the part of the king

in Israel and Judah, if it was entertained under the monarchy, had given way to a strong opposition to the deification of the kings. As to the union of the prophets with God, the great prophets especially had more and more distinguished between Jahweh's and their own words so that the prophets are never thought of as God himself, even when they speak in His name; they are only his messengers or servants. And the characteristic element of the mystery religions, that the worshipper must pass through the same experiences, especially of dying and rising, as the deity and gain in mystic union with God deification and immortality, is absent from the Old Testament. There is a difference between myths and mysteries. Even if Israel had those myths of the virgin born divine child and savior and of Aion, that would not necessarily imply that they also had mystery cults connected with them.

But assuming that the Jews had actually brought these ideas with them to Alexandria, what did they contribute to the hellenistic mystery religion and how did they influence it? Kittel does not tell us anything about this, although this should be an important part of his demonstration. Are there traces in the hellenistic mystery cults that we must explain as due to Jewish influence? Is it enough to show that the Jews had all the important elements of the mystery religion in higher forms when they came to Alexandria and to assert that in their propaganda among the Hellenists they must undoubtedly have used them and influenced the mystery cults with their own spirit, without stating just how their influence can be detected and just what particular new element they imparted? Take those myths of the virgin born divine savior child and of Aion. Just what did the Jewish belief add to the hellenistic cults? Can we point out a single idea or usage that is characteristically Jewish in them? If the Jewish festivals of the winter solstice (Hanukkah) or of the Spring equinox were celebrated with ancient mystery rites, which is very improbable, we know nothing of them and it would be vain to suggest that they were similar to the hellenistic mysteries. If the LXX in its translation of ἡ παρθένος actually did show the unconscious evidence of the mythical divine virgin, it would be easier to

believe that the mysteries influenced the LXX than vice versa, because the translator was opposed to the mythical and did not intend to influence the mystery religion by his translation. The distinctive contribution of the Jews in their missionary activity was their insistence on monotheism and morality, but it would be difficult to *prove* that they influenced thereby the hellenistic mystery cults.

And yet the Old Testament in Greek was destined to play an important part in the history of the mysteries, not however in the Jewish propaganda in Alexandria, but in the Christian church. The Christians connected with the Greek "Behold *the virgin* shall conceive and have a son" the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Mat. 1 23). They made, later on, the connection between the birth of Jesus and the birth of Helios and Aion. It seemed to them that the heathen had instituted the festival of their birth as an involuntary tribute to the truth, in order that they might not lose all their adherents. The church adopted later in its cult of Christ all the important features of the cult of *Sol invictus*. And the Mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary, became the Mother of God and the Queen of heaven in cult and in theology. Here the Old Testament in the Greek rendering of *ἡ παρθένος* made indeed a contribution to the mystery cults in the Christian church. It facilitated the fusion of the Christian religion with the mysteries, its adaptation of them, and its victory over them. But that is entirely different from Kittel's theory.