

LECTURE III. *The Dissemination in the West*

We have seen the "Pan-Babylonist" mist, which obscured the historical horizon, vanish before the breath of criticism. It is not the fact that thousands of years before our era the Chaldeans constructed a learned and profound cosmology, which established its authority over all surrounding peoples. But their share in the intellectual and religious development of antiquity remains none the less most considerable. They are the creators of chronology and astronomy. They contrived to enlarge their theology progressively in order to keep it in harmony with their new conception of the world, and their astrology was regarded as the method of divination *par excellence*. Their conquests in the realm of science won such prestige for their beliefs that they spread from the Far East to the Far West, and even now their sway has not been wholly overthrown. In mysterious ways they penetrated as far as India, China, and Indo-China, where divination by means of the stars is still practised at the present day, and reached perhaps even the primitive centres of American civilisation. In the opposite direction they spread to Syria, to Egypt, and over the whole Roman world, where their influence was to prevail up to the fall of paganism and lasted through the Middle Ages up to the dawn of modern times. It is this dissemination throughout the West that we shall rapidly describe in this lecture.



The exchange of religious ideas between the two rival empires of the valleys of the Euphrates and the Nile undoubtedly goes back, like their political relations, to a very remote antiquity. In the fifteenth century before our era, at the moment when—as the Tell-el-Amarna tablets show—Babylonian was the diplomatic language of the whole East, and

Egypt extended its empire or its suzerainty over the principalities of Canaan and Syria, we find Amenophis IV ordaining the exclusive worship of the Sun as lord of heaven and earth, protector of his person and of his subjects of every nationality. It is possible that this theological Pharaoh was led by the influence of Semitic star-worship to impose his attempt at reform upon the Egyptian clergy. Many other proofs might be advanced to show that the beliefs and even the cults of the Syrians found their way into the state of the Pharaohs. But the religious ideas with which we are particularly concerned here were late in being introduced. Astrology was *unknown* in ancient Egypt: it was not until the Persian period, about the sixth century, that it began to be cultivated there. The ascendancy which it then acquired, succeeded in breaking down the haughty reserve of the proudest and most exclusive people in the world, and a conservative clergy was compelled to admit to its ranks calculators of hours and makers of horoscopes (*ὠρολόγοι, ὠροσκόποι*) devoted to the study of Chaldean science. The history of this dissemination confirms what we said both about the late date of this religious development in Babylonia and about the irresistible prestige which the brilliant discoveries of astronomy conferred upon it from the Assyrian period onwards. This foreign religion was gradually naturalised in Egypt: the huge zodiacs, which decorated the walls of the temples, show how sacerdotal teaching succeeded in grafting the learned doctrines of the Chaldeans on native beliefs and in giving them an original development. National pride even ended by convincing itself that all this religious erudition was purely indigenous. About the year 150 B.C. there were composed in Greek—undoubtedly at Alexandria—the mystic treatises attributed to the fabulous king Nechepso and his confidant, the priest Petosiris, which became as it were the sacred books of the growing faith in the power of the stars. These apocryphal works of a mythical antiquity were to acquire incredible authority in the Roman world.

The god Tôt (Thoth), the Hermes Trismegistus of the Greeks, became in Egypt the revealer of the wisdom of horoscopists, as of all other kinds of wisdom. But it was a difficult task to

reconcile astrology with national beliefs, as Hermetism sought to do. For, astrology was not only a method of divination: it implied, as we have said, a religious conception of the world, and it was inseparably combined with Greek philosophy. Thus the Hermetic books comprise not merely treatises on learned superstition: it is a complete theology that the gods teach to the faithful in a series of what may be called apocalypses. This recondite literature, often contradictory, was apparently developed between 50 B.C. and A.D. 150. It has a considerable importance in relation to the diffusion throughout the Roman Empire of certain doctrines of sidereal religion moulded to suit Egyptian ideas. But it had only a secondary influence. It is not at Alexandria that this form of paganism was either produced or chiefly developed, but among the neighbouring Semitic peoples.

Syria, lying as it does nearer than Egypt to Babylon and Nineveh, was more vividly illumined by the radiance of those great centres of culture. The ascendancy of an erudite clergy who ruled there, was extended at an early date over all surrounding countries, eastwards over Persia, northwards over Cappadocia. But nowhere was it so readily accepted as among the Syrians, who were united with the Oriental Semites by community of language and blood.

The very names Σύριοι, "Syrian," and Ἀσσύριοι, "Assyrian," are originally identical, and for a long time the Greeks made no distinction between them. The plains of Mesopotamia and Coele-Syria, inhabited by kindred races, extended across frontiers which are not marked out by nature, and, despite all political vicissitudes, relations between the great temples situated east and west of the Euphrates continued without interruption.

It is difficult to fix the date at which the influence of the "Chaldeans" began to be felt in Syria, but it is certainly not later than the period when the dominion of the Sargonides was extended as far as the Mediterranean, that is to say, the eighth century B.C.; and without admitting, with the Pan-Babylonists, that the stories of Genesis are merely astral myths, we may regard it as indisputable that before the Exile (597 B.C.) Israel

received from Babylon, along with some astronomical knowledge, certain beliefs connected with star-worship and astrology. We know that idolatry was repeatedly introduced into Zion. Thus king Manasseh caused the chariot of Shamash, the Sun-god, to be accepted there; he dared to set the "Queen of the Heavens" by the side of Iahweh. After the Exile, spiritual relations were continuous between Judaism and the great religious metropolis which had subjugated it. As late as the first century B.C., the author of the Book of Enoch, in his pretended revelations, is obviously inspired by Babylonian cosmology and legends.

If Israel, which repulsed all forms of polytheism with such inflexible determination, nevertheless yielded temporarily to the prestige of star-worship, how much more effectively must this cult have established its sway over Semitic tribes which had remained pagan? Under its influence they are seen to adopt new divinities: Bel of Babylon was worshipped all over northern Syria. The ancient divinities also were grouped anew: At Hierapolis, as at Heliopolis and Emesa, a new member was added to the original pair, Baal and Baalat, husband and wife, in order to form one of those triads of which Chaldean theology was fond. But this theology profoundly modified, above all, the conception of the higher powers revered by these pastoral or agricultural tribes. Side by side with their proper nature, it gave to these gods a second personality, which became none the less prominent because it was borrowed, and sidereal myths came to be interlined, as it were, with agrarian myths and soon obliterated them. From being lords of a clan and a narrow district, the Baals were promoted to the dignity of universal gods. The old spirit of storm and thunder, Baal Shammin, who dwelt in the sky, becomes the Most High ("Υψιστος"), the eternal regulator of cosmic movements.¹ The naturalistic and primitive worship which these peoples paid to the Sun, the Moon, and certain stars such as Venus, was systematised by a doctrine which constituted the Sun—identified with the Baals, conceived as supreme gods—the

¹ See my *Oriental Religions*, p. 127 ss.

almighty Lord of the world, thus paving the way in the East for the future transformation of Roman paganism.¹

There can be no doubt that Babylonian doctrines exercised decisive influence on this gradual metamorphosis and this latest phase of Semitic religion. The Seleucid princes of Antioch showed as great deference to the science of the Babylonian clergy as the Persian Achæmenids had done before them. We find Seleucus Nicator consulting these official soothsayers about the propitious hour for founding Seleucia on the Tigris; and, if we may believe Diodorus,² these diviners made to Alexander, Antigonus, and numerous other monarchs predictions which were fulfilled to the letter. Antiochus, king of Commagene, who died in 34 B.C., built on a spur of Mount Taurus, commanding a distant view of the Euphrates valley, a sepulchral monument on which, side by side with the images of his ancestral gods, he set the scheme of his nativity figured on a large bas-relief,³ because his life had realised all the promises of this horoscope. The cities of Syria often stamp on their coins certain signs of the zodiac to mark the fact that they stood under their patronage. If princes and cities thus acknowledged the authority of astrology, we may imagine what was the power of this scientific theology in the temples. We may say that in the Alexandrine age it permeated the whole of Semitic paganism.



But in the empire of the Seleucids alongside of this "Chaldaism," if I may venture to use the term, Hellenism had established itself in a commanding position. Above the old native beliefs the doctrines of Stoicism in particular exercised dominion over men's minds. It has often been observed that the masters of the Stoic school are for the most part Orientals. Zeno himself was born at Kition in the island of Cyprus. Among his successors Chrysippus and others belonged to Tarsus in Cilicia. Diogenes of Babylon, Posidonius of Apamea, Antipater of Tyre—to mention only the leading representatives

¹ See below, Lecture IV, p. 69 sqq.

² Diodorus Sic., ii, 31.

³ Humann and Puchstein, *Reise in Nord Syrien und Klein Asien*, Berlin, 1890, pl. XL.

of these doctrines—were all Syrians. In a certain sense it may be said that Stoicism was a Semitic philosophy. Given the fact that it was always the first care of this school to reconcile itself with established cults, it is *a priori* certain that Oriental star-worship did not remain foreign to its system. Had we a more precise knowledge of Asiatic civilisation during the Hellenistic period, we should be able to estimate more exactly what Zeno and, above all, his disciples owed to Chaldean theology and what it owed to them. We have already touched upon this point.¹ As it is, we cannot follow the development of this movement of ideas, which was definitively to introduce astrology together with star-worship into the philosophy of the Stoa. The thinker who is almost the sole representative we have of these syncretic tendencies, despite the fact that they must certainly have shown themselves long before him and abundantly around him, is Posidonius of Apamea.

Of the man himself we know almost nothing. Born at Apamea in the valley of the Orontes about 135 B.C., after long travels in pursuit of his studies, which took him as far as Gades (Cadiz), he settled in the island of Rhodes, whither his teaching attracted large numbers of Greeks and Romans, and he died at the age of eighty-four after an active career which filled the whole of the first half of the first century. Was he a pure Syrian, like Porphyry and Iamblichus in later times, or a descendant of the Macedonian conquerors? Was his mother-tongue Greek or Aramaic? We should like to know, but we are in total ignorance about the surroundings amid which this great man grew up; we know nothing of his society, nothing even of his education, except that he was the pupil of the Stoic Panætius.

But it is clear that this master, who in his time exercised a real intellectual sovereignty, owed it above all to the extent of his knowledge and the largeness of his comprehension. A native of the very heart of Syria, but naturalised as a Rhodian, Posidonius represented in all its fulness the alliance of Semitic tradition with Greek thought. He was the great intermediary and mediator not only between Romans and Hellenes, but

¹ See above, Lecture II, p. 40.

between East and West. Brought up on Plato and Aristotle, he was equally versed in Asiatic astrology and demonology. If he is Greek in the constructive power of his speculative genius, in the harmonious flow of his copious and highly-coloured style, his genius remained Oriental in the singular combination of the most exact science with a fervent mysticism. More of a theologian than a philosopher, in mind more learned than critical, he made all human knowledge conspire to the building up of a great system, the coping of which was enthusiastic adoration of the God who permeates the universal organism. In this vast syncretism all superstitions, popular or sacerdotal, soothsaying, divination, magic, find their place and their justification; but above all it was due to him that astrology entered into a coherent explanation of the world, acceptable to the most enlightened intellects, and that it was solidly based on a general theory of nature, from which it was to remain henceforth inseparable.



The almost total loss of the works of Posidonius prevents us from appreciating, save in an imperfect manner, the persuasive force of his teaching. But the echo of his words resounded far through the Roman dominion, where his authority balanced that of Epicurus. In his school at Rhodes he had long been the master of the masters of the world,—Pompey listened to him, Cicero attended his lectures,—and his influence on the development of later theology was immense in several directions. His pupil, Cicero, has frequent reminiscences of his teaching and translates his ideas into Latin. The symbolism of Philo the Jew is often inspired by his picturesque eloquence. Still later his ideas pass into and spread throughout the Stoic school—we see them, for instance, in the works of Seneca,—and they are echoed in the treatises of the astrologers of the imperial age.

The most striking of the literary productions which he inspired is the *Astronomics* of the so-called Manilius, a writer of whom we know absolutely nothing, not even his name, which is corrupt in the manuscripts, but who was in his own way a genuine poet: A work of remarkable inspiration, where the

brilliance of the descriptions blooms in the wilderness of a dry "mathematic," where a passionate enthusiasm for the marvels of science makes us forget that this science is false, where lofty intellectual ambitions and an unbounded confidence in the power of reason are combined with a blind and puerile credulity which accepts all predictions derived from the stars,—this work reveals to us better than any other the grandeur of such a system of the world as that conceived by Posidonius and the attraction which was exercised by this learned cosmology, sustained by a mystic faith in astrology, the revealer of the future.

The poem is dedicated to Tiberius, who perhaps suggested its composition, and some have proposed to see in it "the expression of the official religion of the age."¹ Obviously the first Cæsars, even more than the old republican aristocracy, among whom Posidonius counted so many disciples, would be inclined to adopt the ideas of one who broke with the old national particularism, in order to include the worships of all races in one vast synthesis, and appeared to give to the united Empire the formula of the theology of the future. Characteristically enough, Augustus as well as Tiberius had already been converted to astrology, and we shall see how the later princes granted an official protection to sidereal religion.

With the same movement of ideas, which was initiated or represented by Posidonius, was connected the revival of a strange sect, that of the Neo-Pythagoreans, which re-appeared in the East during the first half of the first century before our era. Although by its ideal of religious life it professed to connect itself with the old Pythagorean mysticism, its doctrine owes more to the theories developed by Posidonius, especially in his commentary on the *Timæus*, and it borrowed much, either through the medium of the great Syrian or even directly, from Oriental religions. A marked dualism, which contrasts the soul with the body, and, as a consequence, a moral asceticism, a doctrine of the eternity of the universe and of the influence of the stars on the constant changes of the sublunary world, a belief in airy demons who defile and torment mankind, but above all—and this is the central point and the core of its

¹ Gardthausen, *Augustus und seine Zeit*, p. 1131.

dogmatic system—a symbolism of numbers, to which is attributed an active force and a mystic power, all these essential features indicate a singularly close connection between Neo-Pythagorism and “Chaldean” theology. It is characteristic that the man who first revived at Rome the old South-Italian philosophy, Nigidius Figulus, the friend of Cicero, displays a curious interest in magic and in occult lore, and an ardent devotion to astrology, and that he was the first to expound in Latin the significance of the “barbaric sphere,” that is to say, a series of constellations not recognised by the Greek astronomers but adopted in Oriental uranography.¹

But these groups of cultured theosophists addressed themselves only to limited circles of “intellectuals.” In a general way the new sidereal religion was from the first welcomed by the upper classes: it was cultivated by the aristocracy both of blood and of intellect. If it had continued to be preached only by polytheistic theorists, it would have remained, as in Greece, the exclusive preserve of a few speculative minds. Even the inspiration of a semi-official poet like Manilius would hardly have won for it the favour of the imperial court. And yet it achieved a widespread popularity. Its influence over the masses it did not owe to a literary diffusion, whatever may have been the success of certain romances which were inspired by it, such as the life of Apollonius by Philostratus and, still more, the *Ethiopics* of Heliodorus. It had in its service other missionaries, whose active propagandism spread it through the mixed populace of the towns as well as among the hosts of slaves who tilled the country estates. These popular propagandists were the clergy and the devotees of Oriental cults.



Towards the commencement of our era, when the peace and unity of the ancient world was assured by the foundation of the Empire, began the development of this great religious movement which little by little was to orientalise Roman paganism. The gods of the nations of the Levant imposed themselves, one after another, on the West. Cybele and Attis were transported

¹ See F. Boll, *Sphaera*, Leipsic, 1903.

from Phrygia, Isis and Serapis travelled thither from Alexandria. Merchants, soldiers, and slaves brought the Baals of Syria and Mithra, an immigrant from the heart of Persia. We have attempted in another volume to show in what respects each of these foreign cults enriched the creeds of Rome.¹ The point which I desire to emphasise here, is that all of them, no matter what their origin, were influenced in different degrees by astrology and star-worship. These doctrines, as we have seen, grew up among the temples of Syria and Egypt, and transformed the theology of these countries more and more. Originally the mysteries of Isis and Serapis, established under the first Ptolemy, allowed them only a limited place, but in the time of Nero his teacher Chæremon, a priest of Alexandria and a Stoic philosopher, re-discovered in the religion of Egypt the worship of the powers of nature and, in particular, of the stars, and found again in prayer a means of rescuing men from the fatality which the influence of the heavenly bodies imposed upon them. Even in Asia Minor, where the sidereal cult is adventitious and recent, a member of a considerable family of Phrygian prelates is found celebrating in verse the sidereal divination which enabled him to publish far and wide infallible predictions. Attis, the Anatolian deity of vegetation, ended by becoming a solar god, just like Serapis, the Baals, and Mithra. In very early times, even in Mesopotamia, star-worship was imposed upon Persian Mazdaism, which was still a collection of traditions and rites rather than a body of doctrines, and a set of abstruse dogmas came to be superimposed on the naturalistic myths of the Iranians. The mysteries of Mithra imported into Europe this composite theology, offspring of the intercourse between Magi and Chaldeans; and the signs of the zodiac, the symbols of the planets, the emblems of the elements, appear time after time on the bas-reliefs, mosaics, and paintings of their subterranean temples. We find one of the members of their clergy proclaimed in his epitaph at Milan *studiosus astrologiae*.² The priests of the Persian god and

¹ *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, Chicago (Open Court Publishing Company), 1911.

² *Corp. Inscr. Lat.*, v, 5893.

those of the so-called "Jupiters" of Syria contributed largely to the triumph of this pseudo-science, which towards the age of the Severi acquired an almost undisputed supremacy even in the Latin world.

Here it no longer presents itself as a learned theory taught by mathematicians, but as a sacred doctrine revealed to the adepts of exotic cults, which have all assumed the form of mysteries. The doctrine which is thus communicated to the initiated in the dim light of temples, undoubtedly remained more sacerdotal than, for instance, the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy, a dry didactic treatise which could never have fostered any devotion. Here more room was left for mythology, mysticism, ethics, and superstition. This theology, however, had not escaped the prevailing ascendancy of Greek philosophy, any more than had the ideas of the most learned casters of nativities,—this is a fact which research has succeeded in proving. In reality these mysteries, which professed to be the depositaries of an ancient tradition imported from the Far East, constantly modified their teaching, in order to adapt it to altered times and environments; and if the wisdom which they revealed was always regarded as divine, it nevertheless varied remarkably in the course of ages and admitted ideas entirely foreign to its original content. This was a necessary consequence of the close union of learning and belief which, as we have said, characterises Oriental religions. They were always the expression of a given conception of the world, which determined the relations of heaven and earth and the duties of the faithful towards the gods. Hence they were bound to change in conformity with the evolution of physical or metaphysical ideas. If Greek thought could receive certain impulses or suggestions from the temples of Syria and Egypt, it invaded them in turn as a conqueror: and Stoicism in particular certainly gave to them more than it received from them. The great intellectual movement of which Posidonius was not so much the initiator as the most illustrious representative, undoubtedly combined devotion and philosophy, but it also introduced philosophy into devotion. The learned and mystic system of doctrine, which Manilius and others preached under Tiberius, imposed itself

on all Western paganism in the course of the following centuries; and we may say, making allowance for certain modifications, that this half-scientific, half-religious system, which was established in the Alexandrine period, continued to be the theology of the mysteries up to the time of their disappearance, even after the advent of Neo-Platonism.

As a characteristic production of this medley of ideas may be quoted those *Chaldean Oracles*,¹ whose origin is still a mystery, but which appear to have been compiled in the second century of our era. In these works of fantastic mysticism, in which the whole Neo-Platonic school saw the revelation of supreme wisdom, ancient beliefs of Semitic star-worship are combined with Hellenic theories. They are to Babylon what the Hermetic literature is to Egypt.



Thus the triumph of Oriental religions was simultaneously the triumph of astral religion, but to secure recognition by all pagan peoples, it needed an official sanction. The influence which it had acquired among the populace, was finally assured when the emperors lent it an interested support. That apotheosis by which from the beginning of the principate deceased princes were raised to the stars, is inspired both in form and spirit by Asiatic doctrines. We have seen that already Augustus and especially Tiberius allowed themselves to be converted to the ideas of the disciples of Posidonius. But they remained hostile to the popular forms of foreign worships, at least in their capital. Their ideal, which was entirely political, is the restoration of the old Roman faith and respect for the purely practical cult of the city. But in proportion as Cæsarism became more and more transformed into absolute monarchy, it tended more and more to lean for support on the Oriental clergy. These priests, loyal to the traditions of the Achæmenids and the Pharaohs, preached doctrines which tended to elevate sovereigns above mankind, and they supplied the emperors with a dogmatic justification of their despotism. For the old

¹ Λόγια Χαλδαϊκά.

principle of the sovereignty of the people, the original form of Cæsarism, was substituted a reasoned belief in supernatural influences. The emperor is the image of the Sun on earth, like him invincible and eternal (*invictus, æternus*), as his official title declares. Already in the eyes of the Babylonians the Sun was the royal planet, and it is he that in Rome continues to give to his chosen ones the virtues of sovereignty, and destines them for the throne from the time of their appearance on earth. He remains in close communion with them, he is their companion (*comes*) and their congener, for they are united by community of nature. It may be said that they are consubstantial; and in the third century the monarch was worshipped as "god and master by right of birth" (*deus et dominus natus*), who had descended from heaven by grace of the Sun, and by his grace will reascend thither again after death. The idea that the monarch's soul, at the moment when destiny caused it to descend to this world, received from the Star of the day its sovereign power, led to the inference that he participated in the might of this divinity, and was its representative on earth. Thus it is noticeable that the princes who proclaimed most loudly their autocratic pretensions, a Domitian or a Commodus, were also those who most openly favoured Oriental cults.

These cults attained the zenith of their power when the advent of the Severi brought them the support of a half-Syrian Court. For nearly half a century, from A.D. 193 to 235, the Empire was governed by a family of Emesa, an ancient sacerdotal state, where on the edge of the Syrian desert rose the splendid temple of Elagabalus. Intelligent and ambitious princesses, Julia Domna, Sohæmias, Mæsa, and Mammæa, whose intellectual ascendancy was so considerable, became missionaries of their national religion. Officials of all ranks, senators and officers, rivalled each other in devotion to the gods who protected their sovereigns and were protected by them. You all know the bold proclamation of A.D. 218 which set upon the throne a boy of fourteen years, priest of Elagabalus, whose name he bore. The Greeks named him Heliogabalus in order to recall the solar character of this god. To this barbarous divinity, hitherto rather obscure, he sought to give the primacy

over all the others. Ancient authors relate with indignation how this crowned priest desired to elevate the black stone of his god, a rude idol brought from Emesa, to the rank of sovereign divinity of the Empire, subordinating the entire pantheon of antiquity to *Sol Invictus Elagabal*, as he is termed in inscriptions. The attempt of Heliogabalus to establish in heaven a kind of solar monotheism corresponding to the monarchy that ruled on earth, was doubtless too violent, tactless, and premature: it miscarried and provoked the assassination of its author.

But it corresponded to the aspirations of the day and it was renewed half a century later, this time with complete success. In 274, Aurelian was inspired with the same idea, when he created a new cult of the "Invincible Sun." Worshipped in a splendid temple, served by pontiffs who were raised to the level of the ancient pontiffs of Rome, celebrated every fourth year by magnificent games, *Sol Invictus* was definitively promoted to the highest rank in the divine hierarchy and became the official protector of the Sovereigns and of the Empire. The country in which Aurelian discovered the model which he sought to reproduce was Syria, where he had won a decisive victory over the famous queen Zenobia: he placed in his new sanctuary the images of Bel and Helios, which he captured at Palmyra. In establishing this new State cult, Aurelian in reality proclaimed the dethronement of the old Roman idolatry and the accession of Semitic Sun-worship.

With Constantius Chlorus (A.D. 305) there ascended the throne a solar dynasty which, connecting itself with Claudius II Gothicus, a votary of the worship of Apollo, professed to have *Sol Invictus* as its special protector and ancestor. Even the Christian emperors, Constantine and Constantius, did not altogether forget the pretensions which they could derive from so illustrious a descent, and the last pagan who occupied the throne of the Cæsars, Julian the Apostate, has left us a discourse in which, in the style of a subtle theologian and a fervent devotee, he justifies the adoration of the King Star, of whom he considered himself the spiritual son and heaven-sent champion.



If in conclusion we survey at a glance the whole course of the expansion which we have tried to describe, we shall be struck with the power of this sidereal theology, founded on ancient beliefs of Chaldean astrologers, transformed in the Hellenistic age under the twofold influence of astronomic discoveries and Stoic thought, and promoted, after becoming a pantheistic Sun-worship, to the rank of official religion of the Roman Empire. Preached on the one hand by men of letters and by men of science in centres of culture, diffused on the other hand among the bulk of the people by the servitors of Semitic, Persian or Egyptian gods, it is finally patronised by the emperors, who find in it at once a form of worship suitable for all their subjects and a justification of their autocratic pretensions.

In this way the astrological conception of life and of the world permeated the whole of society, and in particular produced a revolution in the beliefs of the Latin world. Despite all the speculations of metaphysicians, the masses had remained on the whole true to the old idolatry of the Republican period. Oriental theology led to the prevalence of a more lofty idea of God. In the declining days of antiquity the common creed of all pagans came to be a scientific pantheism, in which the infinite power of the divinity that pervaded the universe was revealed by all the elements of nature. In the following lectures we shall have to examine more closely this conception of the world, the theology which was bound up with it, and the moral and eschatological ideas which were derived from it.