ST. PAUL AND PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA ¹

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THOSE among my audience who knew Dr. Manson so well will be the first to realize that to be invited to give a Memorial Lecture is not only a great honour but a formidable assignment. To all of us who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship he was a prince of erudition, possessed of great learning which he wore very lightly and combined with a puckish and often highly sophisticated humour. He had a well developed sense of the absurd. And with all these qualities he had also a charismatic gift of simplicity and a directness which cut through to the central point every time. Perhaps because of this combination of characteristics he was one of the greatest masters of that difficult art, book-reviewing. I cannot hope, therefore, to submit to you a discourse worthy of the occasion, and can only plead that at least the subject of this lecture is one that he would have regarded as important.

In much modern study of emergent Christianity there has been a strong tendency to stress the Jewish background of the early Christian world. Learned books are written on the Rabbinic affinities of St. Paul, and scholars toy with the possibility that John the Baptist, or Jesus himself, or the Fourth Evangelist, may conceivably have had direct contact with the community at Qumran. Such possibilities are attractive subjects for speculation during the long winter evenings. And the discernment of Aramaic idiom continues to fascinate those who long to penetrate behind the sometimes almost diaphanous veil of the Greek text of the Gospels to a stage nearer to the *ipsissima verba Domini*. If I venture to invite your attention to the world of Greek Judaism, this is not because I do not think that the Rabbinic documents or the recently found texts from the Dead Sea have much light to throw on the New Testament (though in

¹ The Manson Memorial Lecture delivered in the University of Manchester on the 8th of November 1965.
the case of the Qumran texts the affinities are more in "atmosphere" than in particular details). It is rather that new discoveries are seldom seen in true perspective until the mind has become adjusted to assessing their value in relation to all the previously known evidence, and that I believe the theology of the hellenistic synagogue, as recorded in long printed and familiar texts of Greek-speaking Judaism, still throws more light on the world of St. Paul, St. John, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, than any other single non-Christian source. There is nothing surprising in this conclusion. We cannot take too seriously the basic fact that the New Testament is entirely in Greek. It is orientated toward the non-Palestinian world. It would be very strange if its principal theologians did not disclose substantial parallels with the writings of Philo, Josephus, and the author of the Wisdom of Solomon. Furthermore, it is to the Christians that we owe the preservation of what we have of the literature of the hellenistic synagogue. Both Philo and Josephus owe their survival exclusively to the Church. Philo remained unknown to the medieval Jewish philosophers, to be rediscovered by them in the sixteenth century. We may think perhaps that in the twentieth century Jewish scholars like Freudenthal, Lewy, Marcus, and Wolfson (to mention only a few among many) have made a more than honourable amende for any earlier neglect. The extent to which Philo was felt to belong entirely to the Church in antiquity and the middle ages may be seen not only in the Byzantine catenae and anthologies which cite excerpts from him under the lemma "Of Philo the bishop", but also in the fact that if Philo is mentioned at all in the Rabbinic texts (as Finkelstein thought possible),¹ then the references to him are uniformly hostile.

The importance of Philo as a clue to the prologue of St. John's Gospel is familiar to the first-year student of theology. By his second year the same student has learnt that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews shows unmistakable signs of having read Philo, and perhaps, as Father Spicq suggests in his great commentary, he had actually met Philo personally and could

have heard his lectures (if Philo gave any lectures).\textsuperscript{1} The rich footnotes of Wilfred Knox's \textit{St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles} (1939), or, from an entirely opposed point of view, the central theses of E. R. Goodenough's successive monographs on Greek Judaism, point consistently to Philo as a none too distant cousin of St. Paul.

To me, at least, it seems clear that of all the non-Christian writers of the first century A.D. Philo is the one from whom the historian of emergent Christianity has most to learn, and in this discourse I want simply to catalogue the more important passages where Philo provides analogies to the New Testament writings.

In two places, for example, Philo provides startling parallels to the vocabulary of St. Luke's Pentecost narrative in Acts ii.\textsuperscript{2} There is even a substantial number of dominical sayings for which Philo offers close resemblances, e.g. the teaching on oaths in Matthew v. 33 f. is recalled by Philo's saying that an affirmation without oath is the highest and best for a good man, and that to reinforce it with swearing is to weaken its credibility.\textsuperscript{3} The contrast of the broad and narrow ways is a Jewish commonplace, so that there is nothing noteworthy in the presence of the idea in Philo.\textsuperscript{4} But there is some interest in Philo's insistence on the "automatic" character of a seed growing under God's providential care, as an operation to which human attention is unnecessary.\textsuperscript{5} There is none of the eschatological passion of the parable of the seed growing secretly, but some of the essential ingredients of the parable evidently belong to the common stock of synagogue tradition. More remarkable is a passage in the tract on the Cherubim, where Philo observes that an action right in itself may be wrong in the actual doing\textsuperscript{6}; the context is reminiscent of the Corban dispute in Mark vii. Likewise, the saying "if thine eye be simple" has a close analogy in Philo,


\textsuperscript{2} Decal. 33 ; Ebr. 145 ff.

\textsuperscript{3} Decal. 84.

\textsuperscript{4} Leg. Alleg. ii. 98.

\textsuperscript{5} Fuga 171 f. ; cf. Mut. Nom. 259.

\textsuperscript{6} Cher. 14.
and he also states explicitly the principle that one must die to live.\footnote{1}{Migr. 153; Fuga 59.} He has, however, no version of the golden rule.\footnote{2}{For the pre-Christian history of the Golden Rule see A. Dihle, \textit{Die goldene Regel} (Göttingen, 1962), and thereon A. E. Harvey in \textit{J.T.S.}, n.s. xv (1964), 384-8.}

Paradoxically, Philo has many more demonstrable similarities with early Christian texts than with the later Rabbinic texts, so far as the present state of research goes. This last qualification is necessary, since who can say what parallels may yet be discovered in the vast and too little read corpus of Rabbinic writings? At least it may safely be said that the evidence hitherto unearthed goes to suggest that the affinities between Philo and the Palestinian Rabbis are thin and tenuous, limited to occasional points of exegesis.\footnote{3}{See S. Sandmel, \textit{Philo's Place in Judaism} (1956). His negative conclusions are little modified by the minor contacts between Philo and Rabbinic traditions noted by J. G. Kahn in his introduction to the recent French edition of \textit{de Confusione Linguarum} (Paris, 1963). In \textit{Tarbiz}, xxxiv (1965), 337-45, Kahn has argued that Philo drew his interpretations of Hebrew names from traditional lexica, not from any personal knowledge of Hebrew. Similarly I. Opelt, art. "Etymologie" in \textit{Reallex. f. Ant. u. Chr.} (1965), p. 822. (For a Christian lexicon of this type see a Heidelberg papyrus of the third or fourth century in A. Deissmann, \textit{Light from the Ancient East}, pp. 415 f.) The thesis of S. Belkin that Philo's affinities with the medieval Zohar demand the hypothesis of a direct relation is annihilated by R. J. Werblowsky in \textit{Journal of Jewish Studies}, x (1959), 25-44 and 113-35. Now, however, P. Borgen (op. cit.) has pointed out that both Philo and certain Rabbinic texts comment on the manna that, just as water may come from the earth if God wills, so also bread may come down from heaven, in a reversal of the usual roles.} Paul the Christian is closer to the Rabbis than Philo the Jew. The fact that hellenized Judaism was disowned by the Rabbis, and that even the Septuagint itself was denounced as like the sin of the golden calf,\footnote{4}{H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, \textit{Kommentar z. N.T. aus Talmud und Midrasch}, 4 (1928), 414.} may bring out the point that Rabbinic Judaism distrusted Greek Judaism because of its close similarity to early Christianity.

It is in relation to St. Paul that the question of relationship is most interesting and also most difficult. In the Epistle to the Hebrews and in St. John's Gospel the kinship is obvious. When we discover that Philo's Logos is the life, light, shepherd, manna, way, high priest and paraclete, it is impossible to believe that
there is no indirect relationship with St. John.\(^1\) We can assume that such ideas were known in the synagogue at Ephesus. Similarly in the case of Hebrews, the analogies are so near as to make a relationship of direct dependence much the simplest and most probable hypothesis. But with St. Paul the hypothesis of direct or even indirect independence is unlikely, and for this reason the correspondences between Philo and St. Paul are the more interesting. Both writers draw on a common stock of hellenistic Jewish tradition. The principal interest lies in the different ways in which they made use of it.

To say this is at once to imply a view of the personality and individuality of Philo, and, paradoxical as it may at first sight appear, almost any positive affirmation about Philo's individuality is controversial. What manner of man was he? Bousset treated him as a lonely, isolated figure who was to be regarded as in no sense typical of Diaspora Judaism and wrote for a small esoteric circle of like-minded friends.\(^2\) Wilfred Knox regarded him as an almost faceless compiler, whose all too voluminous works were no more than a vast ragbag of material incorporated from any sources that happened to be at hand—a man whose unique individuality could almost be said to consist in the fact that he had none whatever.\(^3\)

It is certain, of course, that Philo used the works of his predecessors, for he explicitly mentions them on about thirty occasions, though never by name.\(^4\) We cannot therefore tell whether, for example, he had read anything of the writings of

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\(^1\) See, for example, the evidence set out by W. L. Knox, *Some Hellenistic Elements in Primitive Christianity* (1944), pp. 55-90, and C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (1953), pp. 54-73. I do not think the relationship between St. John and Philo is likely to have been one of direct dependence.

\(^2\) For Bousset’s estimate see the concluding paragraphs of the distinguished chapter on Philo in *Die Religion des Judentums*\(^3\) (Tübingen, 1926), pp. 438-55.

\(^3\) Knox, op. cit. pp. 47-54. His presentation of the case bears the marks of over-statement and is incorrect in some details.

\(^4\) I know of no complete list or study of these passages. The most important texts are cited by Bousset, *Jüdisch-christlicher Schulbetrieb in Alexandria und Rom* (Göttingen, 1915), pp. 8-14. Special interest attaches to the expression in *Som. i. 73*, "the rules of allegory", since it shows that procedures were already systematized. According to *V. Contempl. 29* the Therapeutae possessed allegorical commentaries which were already established models for imitation.
the Jewish apologist Aristobulus from whom Clement of Alex­
andria and Eusebius of Caesarea give some quotations,1 though
this is probable. It is also demonstrable that at times Philo
drew upon the exegetical traditions of his predecessors even
when he does not mention the fact of his indebtedness, since in
some passages we find him advancing without acknowledgements
an exegesis for which the credit is elsewhere ascribed to some
anonymous predecessor.2 Therefore there was certainly a
substantial tradition to which Philo belonged. Moreover, the
degree to which he may be rightly regarded as withdrawn and
isolated in the Alexandrian Jewish community must surely be
profoundly qualified by the public role which he played in the
stormy political life of the community, as attested in the Embassy
to Caligula,3 and by the lively interest which he shows, especially
in the Life of Joseph, in the problem of political responsibility for
a loyal Jew under the Empire.4 The notion that Philo was an
esoteric and withdrawn figure seems to be quite indefensible.
All that can be justified is the conclusion that he did not intend
all his works to be read by a promiscuous audience. The idea
that within hellenized Judaism he stood more or less alone is an
optical illusion caused by the accidental fact that few other
comparable monuments of hellenistic Judaism, apart from Jose­
phus, have come down to us. No doubt he was the most in­
fluential and intelligent representative of the tradition in which
he stood, but he was surely not the sole contemporary specimen.

Accordingly, it seems reasonable to see in Philo a man who
incorporated much earlier material, even if there is no sufficient
ground for concluding that he was no more than an expert with
scissors and paste. He had an individuality of his own, but also
stood in an established tradition of hellenized Judaism. The

1 See N. Walter, Der Thoraausleger Aristobulos = T.U. 86 (Berlin, 1964),
who has given the final coup de grâce to the mistaken thesis of Elter and Wendland
that “Aristobulus” depends on Philo. Walter gives a detailed examination of
the points of contact (and of difference) between them.

2 See, for example, Spec. Leg. iii. 178 (cf. i. 4-8), where acknowledgement is
made for an exegesis that appears as Philo’s own in Som. ii. 68 f.

3 See E. M. Smallwood’s well annotated edition (Leiden, 1962), and for the
in Flaccum the commentary of H. S. Box (Oxford, 1939).

numerous analogies in detail with St. Paul’s letters show the extent to which both men fished in the same pool.

The catalogue of close Philonic parallels extends throughout all the Pauline epistles, except for the Pastorals where the paucity of similarities is no doubt capable of more than one explanation. It may be of use to recall the extent of the common ground by a brief and summary list of the more important instances.

First, the central arguments of Romans i–ii are to be found in scattered passages in Philo. Philo frequently argues that God may be known in some degree from the contemplation of the world he has made, from its beauty and its order; that what may be known is indeed limited—we can know that God is, but not what God is—yet the fact that there is order and rationality in a world of so many diverse and incompatible elements is a signpost to the Creator who has called into being things that are not. According to Philo, it is the insight of the religious

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1 For the Pauline Pastorals, it may be worth noting minor correspondences as follows: 1 Tim. ii. 14 (Eve deceived), Leg. Alleg. iii. 61; Qu. Gen. i. 33; 1 Tim. vi. 7 (we brought nothing into this world), Spec. Leg. i. 295 (as also Seneca, ep. 102. 25); 2 Tim. iii. 4 (lovers of pleasure rather than of God), Agric. 88; 2 Tim. iii. 7 (ever learning), Decal. 67. A number of casual similarities in vocabulary and turn of phrase are collected in the (still valuable) book of C. F. Loesner, Observationes ad Novum Testamentum e Philone Alexandrino (Leipzig, 1777), pp. 391-430.

2 The list that follows is far from exhaustive. For a good introductory catalogue of parallels see H. St. J. Thackeray, The Relation of St. Paul to contemporary Jewish thought (1900), 233-40. There is also a mine of erudition on this subject in the instructive footnotes of W. L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (1939).

3 Leg. Alleg. iii. 97 f.; Som. i. 203 f.; Spec. Leg. i. 32-35; Praem. 40 ff.; V. Mos. i. 212; Qu. Gen. ii. 34; Prov. i. 32 f.

4 Leg. Alleg. iii. 206; Post. C. 168; Immut. 62; Q. Det. Pot. 89.

5 Cher. 109; Heres 133 ff.; Qu. Gen. i. 64; ii. 55; Som. i. 203-7.

6 In most passages Philo regards creation as the ordering of formless matter (Qu. Gen. i. 64; Plant. 3; Som. i. 241; Opif. 22). Whether God’s responsibility for matter is implied by Som. i. 76 (cf. Leg. Alleg. i. 18) is doubtful, but at least this idea appears in a Greek fragment from de Providentia in Eus. Pr. Ev. vii. 21. The Armenian version of this work shows occasional marks of Christian revision, so that no confidence can be placed in Prov. i. 7. On the other side there are several texts that imply transmigration (Som. i. 138 ff.; Gig. 8 ff.; Plant. 14), and the tract “On the Eternity of the World”, the interpretation of which is disputed.
man that this world is transient.\(^1\) Moral mutability is the mark of created being.\(^2\) It is the experience of transitoriness and contingency that makes man look beyond this world to recognize its dependence on the divine will which keeps it in being.\(^3\) The hallmark of paganism is the deification of the creaturely order. Idolatry is the worship of the creature in place of the creator.\(^4\) The nadir of human religion is the Egyptian cult of animals. Apis is for Philo the golden calf of Exodus xxiii.\(^5\) A slightly higher form of paganism is the veneration of the heavenly bodies.\(^6\) But it is the revelation of God to Moses that he is the one who is, timeless being, beyond this world, transcendent, immutable, impassible, not in any place.\(^7\)

The consequence of idolatry as the deification of the creaturely, Philo continues, is a sexual derangement of which the affluent Sodomites are the pre-eminent example. They threw off from their necks the law of nature and gave themselves to strong drink and elaborate food and forbidden forms of sexual intercourse . . . .\(^8\) Philo enumerates the long tale of human vices. Like St. Paul and other ancient writers Philo likes amassing lists of virtues and vices, and in one prodigious passage manages to piece together a catena of 144 Greek words describing vices\(^9\)—

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\(^1\) *Fuga* 97; *Abr. 78; Ebr. 107 f.

\(^2\) *Leg. Alleg. ii. 83, 89; Ebr. 111; Opif. 151.

\(^3\) *Opif. 46; Som. i. 192; Spec. Leg. i. 263 ff., 293.

\(^4\) *Ebr. 109; Som. ii. 70; Decal. 53; Spec. Leg. ii. 164-7; Qu. Gen. iii. 1.

\(^5\) *Ebr. 95; V. Mos. ii. 161 f.

\(^6\) *Decal. 66; Congr. Erud. 51.* Philo regarded the stars as "divine" souls (as in the Platonic *Epinomis*): cf. *Gig. 8; Opif. 73; Som. i. 135; Spec. Leg. i. 19; Qu. Gen. i. 42; iv. 188 (angelic); *Prov.* in *Eus. Pr. Ev.* viii. 14. 50. (But according to *Immut. 78 and Cher. 26* the sun is a created mass of aether.) That the stars cause earthly events is denied in *Opif. 45* and affirmed in *Qu. Ex. ii. 78 and Sp. Leg. i. 13 ff.* *Cher. 88* denies their possession of free will, cf. *Jos. 145.* Philo often attacks astrology: *Migr. 178 ff.; Heres 96 ff.; Congr. Erud. 49; Som. i. 161; Mut. Nom. 16,* etc. The study of the stars is "queen of the sciences" (*Congr. Erud. 50*) and is nobly pursued by the Persian Magi who "investigate nature in awed silence and are hierophants of revelation about God's virtues" (*Prob. 74*), but magic and sorcery are a perversion of this noble activity (*Spec. Leg. iii. 100 f.*).

\(^7\) *Leg. Alleg. iii. 206; Cher. 19; Qu. Gen. i. 93; Spec. Leg. i. 32; and many passages.

\(^8\) *Abr. 135 f.* On idolatry as the root of fornication, cf. *Wisd. of Sol. xiv.*

\(^9\) *Sacr. Ab. 32.* In a section on the dialogue between vice and virtue, modelled on Xenophon, *Mem. ii. 1.*
a text which makes one see the wisdom of the fourth-century reduction of the number of capital sins to eight.\(^1\)

In passing it may be noticed that in his tract on the drunkenness of Noah Philo has a very near parallel to the final sentence of Romans i which Westcott and Hort marked with an obelus as corrupt on the ground that it is a hopeless anti-climax to say that to approve of someone else’s wickedness is even more reprehensible than to do evil oneself. According to Philo, it is the gravest of charges against the devotee of vice that he not only does wrong himself but actually co-operates with others in doing it.\(^2\) Evidently he would have found no surprises in St. Paul’s scale of judgement.

For the discussion of natural law and the Gentile conscience the analogies in Philo are very general and vague. Philo thought of the conscience as a retrospective judge of past action, and brings the notion of natural law into connection with moral awareness.\(^3\) But this is so generally diffused in the Stoicizing ethic of the hellenistic age that the similarities to St. Paul are unimportant. Philo entirely lacks the passionate interest in responsibility which dominates the apostle’s discussion of the problem.

On the other hand, the striking passage in Romans ii. 19 ff. comes to mind at once when we read in Philo: “Have not some who have avoided robbing temples stolen from a private house, and some who have never struck their father assaulted a stranger?”\(^4\) It is, of course, far from an exact parallel, but the motifs are sufficiently close to suggest that both men are drawing upon a fairly common type of moral exhortation. Likewise Philo

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\(^1\) First, it seems, in Evagrius Ponticus (Migne, *P.G.*, xl. 1272 f.; lxxix. 1200 D f.; *Antirrheticus*, ed. Frankenberg, 472 ff.), followed by Cassian, *Inst.*, v. 1 ff.; *Coll.*, v. 2 ff.; xxiv. 15, a text excellently discussed by L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator* : *The theological anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Uppsala, 1965), 267. Gregory the Great’s influence (*Mor.* 31. 87) reduced the number to seven in the West, but it was long before this was also adopted in the Greek East.

\(^2\) *Ebr.* 25.

\(^3\) The principal Philonic discussions of conscience are *Immut.* 125 ff.; *Fuga* 131, 203 ff.; *Decal.* 87; *Post. C.* 59. For the identification of the Mosaic ethic with the law of nature, cf. *V. Mos.* ii. 52 f.; *Abr.* 6.

\(^4\) *Leg. Alleg.* iii. 124.
writes much in the Pauline manner about the need for a circumcision of the heart. Pure religion, he believes, is wholly inward. God does not dwell in a house made with hands.¹

The other principal Philonic analogies to the material in Romans occur mainly in the exegesis of particular texts. Ὄνκ ἐπιθυμήσεως is interpreted in Romans vii. 8 and in Philo’s exegesis of the Decalogue as a prohibition of desire in general, not merely as forbidding the specific desire for someone else’s property.² That “the mind of the flesh is enmity with God” is a proposition to which Philo would have been the first to agree.³

The exegesis of “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Deut. xxx. 14) in Romans x. 7 f. evidently reproduces a common pattern of synagogue exposition since it occurs no less than four times in Philo.⁴ Philo even provides a parallel to the words “With the heart one believes to righteousness, with the tongue confession is made unto salvation”, where Philo’s context is the admission of the penitent proselyte.⁵

One thinks of Romans xi as a distinctively Pauline interpretation of the purpose of God in history, uniquely called forth by the logic of unexpected events in the situation of Israel’s temporary unbelief. Yet the final pages of Philo’s tract on Rewards looks forward to the day when all Israel scattered throughout the world will be saved and the cities now ruined will be rebuilt.⁶

The comparison and contrast between the two passages is of great interest. It is clear, I think, that the language St. Paul is using reflects a traditional eschatological hope of the Jewish dispersion, now taken up and set in a new context.

The Corinthian correspondence contains equally important analogies in Philo. In fact, it may be reckoned one of the more important clues to the problematic interpretation of the Corinthian situation to which the letters are addressed, that the number

¹ See Sobr. 63; V. Mos. ii. 107 f.; Plant. 107 ff., 126; Immut. 8; Q. Det. Pot. 20 f.; Spec. Leg. i. 305; Qu. Ex. ii. 51; Praem. 123.
² Decal. 142.
³ Leg. Alleg. iii. 252, etc.
⁴ Post. C. 84 f.; Mut. Nom. 236 f.; Virt. 183; Praem. 80.
⁵ Praem. 163.
⁶ Praem. 164. For Rom. xi. 33 cf. Leg. Alleg. iii. 39, “we cannot measure God’s riches”.

of coincidences is here so considerable. It is true that no close analogies occur in Philo for the apostle's sarcastic attack on clever phrase-makers in 1 Corinthians i. Nearer parallels for this occur in the third chapter of Baruch: “Learn (Israel) where wisdom is, where strength is, where understanding is... where are the princes of the heathen?... those that seek wisdom on earth... the searchers out of understanding, none of them has known the way of wisdom... The giants expert in war, those did not the Lord choose, neither gave he the way of knowledge to them...”

It is an attractive speculation (but not, I think, more than a conjecture) that there may have been some prayers of the Greek synagogue which used this kind of language, and that perhaps St. Paul also may have been drawing on them. But Philo was not one to disparage the value of sincere philosophical inquiry. In his writings the only important analogy for 1 Corinthians i known to me is his frequent affirmation that God has brought things into being out of non-being; but he never couples this statement with a polemical thrust to deflate the pride of the gnostic visionary, such as we find in St. Paul.

On the other hand, many later passages in 1 Corinthians are recalled when we meet in Philo the frequent contrast of milk and meat as foods corresponding to different spiritual

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1 Cf. U. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit* (Tübingen, 1959), 139-59, who suggests that the Corinthian gnostics against whom St. Paul writes held opinions about the vision of God akin to those of Philo (*Immut.* 142 ff.; *Qu. Ex.* ii. 39 ff. etc.).

2 There are, however, Philonic texts that express hostility or scorn for sophists masquerading as true philosophers (*Post. C.* 101) or for the failure of philosophy to attain the one truth (*Qu. Ex.* frag. pp. 72 f. Harris = p. 258 Marcus), and the general tone of the *de Vita Contemplativa* is one of astringent censure (e.g. 57 ff. attacking the Platonic attitude to homosexuality).

3 Baruch iii. 14 ff.


5 The central thesis of *de Congressu* affirms the positive value of education and intellectual discipline as a preparation for the knowledge of God. It is certain that Philo did not suppose there could be short cuts to the beatific vision.

6 *Leg. Alleg.* iii. 10; *Fuga* 46; *V. Mos.* ii. 267; *Spec. Leg.* iv. 187.
capacities; the antithesis of psychikos and pneumatikos; The doctrine that we have this world’s goods only on temporary loan and must live here as strangers and pilgrims, not only avoiding covetousness for the property of others but also using our own property without any misuse; the use of the (commonplace) idea that if athletes train hard to win an earthly crown, men of the Spirit must train no less hard for spiritual crowns; the proposition that in the legislation about beasts in Exodus and Leviticus, God does not really care about irrational animals, but is teaching spiritual and moral lessons to man; the warning that the self-confident man may yield to temptation and should be on his guard; the idea that the various parts of the body are mutually complementary—the eye does not walk, nor the foot see—though here again this theme is so widespread a commonplace in many writers of the age that nothing is specially remarkable about the presence of the motif in both Philo and St. Paul, and it must be added that each uses it for a different purpose.

More important is a very interesting passage of Philo’s Questions on Genesis (iv. 69) where he discusses how far one is under an obligation to tell the whole truth about everything. Must one always say all that is in one’s heart? or may some reserve be practised without loss of integrity? Because of the evil in the world, Philo says, the wise man needs much versatility. He must “imitate those hypocrites who say one thing and do another to save whom they can”, though “it is not right for this to occur in all cases”. Unhappily Philo does not satisfy

1 Migr. 29; Congr. Erud. 19; Som. ii. 10; Agric. 9.
2 This antithesis is not set out as a recognized and established usage, but it is implied in Spec. Leg. iv. 122 ff.; Heres 55 ff. According to Som. i. 30 f. the Nous comes to be called Psyche because it cools. (For this distinction of Nous and Psyche cf. Cicero, de Finibus v. 13.36.) In the mystical ascent of Moses, his soul and body were wholly transformed into Nous (V. Mos. ii. 288). Nous is to psyche, as psyche is to body (Qu. Gen. ii. 11).
3 Spec. Leg. i. 295; Cher. 119, etc.
4 Jos. 144: χρω μή παραχρωμένος. For a remoter parallel to 1 Cor. vii. 33 cf. V. Contempl. 60 f.
5 Mut. Nom. 81 f.; Fuga 97; Leg. Alleg. ii. 108; iii. 48.
6 Som. i. 39, 209; Spec. Leg. i. 260; Prob. 2. Cf. “Aristaeas”, Ep. ad Philocratem 144.
7 Leg. Alleg. iii. 164, cf. 1 Cor. x. 12.
8 Conf. Ling. 194 f.
our curiosity by telling us what cases he disapproves. But comparison with 1 Corinthians ix shows that both St. Paul and Philo reflect a continuing discussion in the hellenistic synagogue concerning the serious obligations of a missionary and apologist to be entirely frank and the extent to which he may be allowed to use tact in presenting his case.

Perhaps the most provocative instance consists in the Philonic parallels to the hymn to charity in 1 Corinthians xiii. The differences are at least as striking as the similarities in the following passage from Philo's tract "That the worse is wont to attack the better": "Take the case of a man who submits himself to sprinklings and ceremonial purifications; he makes his body shine with purity, yet is defiled in mind. Or again being very affluent he may found a temple sparing no expense in his provision, or may offer hecatombs and sacrifice bullocks without end, or may adorn the shrine with costly offerings grudging no expense in materials or in skill of that order which is dearer than silver and gold. Yet he is not recorded among the devout... Genuine acts of worship are of the soul which offers truth in simplicity as its only sacrifice. Mere ostentation expressed in lavish externals is pretense."

Philo more than once remarks that we see God as if through a mirror, but does not give the sentiment the urgent passion that appears in the apostle. On the other hand, the Pauline climax "Then shall I know even as I am known", a formula recurrent elsewhere in the epistles, is shown by two passages in Philo to be related to an existing aspiration of Greek Judaism. "The mind draws near to the one by whom it has been drawn." "The vision of God is both a seeing and a being seen."


2 Q. Det. Pot. 20 f. On "though I give my body to be burned", it is worth noting here that self-cremation was a standard hellenistic example of high courage, especially as practised by the Indian gymnosophists and by Calanus, who defied Alexander the Great (see Philo, Prob. 96; Abr. 182; Strabo 717 f.; Plutarch, Alexander 69; Cicero, Divin. i. 23.47; i. 30. 65; Tusc. ii. 22. 52). There is an interesting discussion of this theme by F. J. Dölger in Antike und Christentum, i (1929), 254-270, who thought that the apostle had this background in mind.

3 Decal. 105; Migr. 190.

4 Plant. 64; Som. ii. 226.
These and some other considerably remoter echoes of Pauline language are not sufficiently close to justify the hypothesis that 1 Corinthians xiii was inserted into the discussion of speaking with tongues as a virtually pre-existing block of hellenistic Jewish hymnody or devotion. But they suffice to suggest that some of the materials used to make the section lay ready to hand in the highest devotion and aspiration of the Greek synagogue.

It is in Romans and 1 Corinthians that the coincidences and sometimes also the contrasts between St. Paul and Philo are most numerous and striking. The allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians has nothing whatever in common with Philo’s interpretation in de Congressu other than the bare fact that the story is being interpreted allegorically. This, however, is not surprising when we recall that Philo’s allegory is not drawn from the pool of Jewish tradition at all, but is an adaption of current Stoic allegorization of the Odyssey, according to which Penelope’s suitors are those who, in aspiring to the highest studies of philosophy, never succeed in graduating beyond the liberal arts of the enkyklia paideia; the disappointed lovers wanted Penelope but were only successful with her maidservants. Philo explains that Hagar stands to Sarah as profane philosophy to sacred theology, an exegesis very different from that of St. Paul. Nevertheless “freedom”, of which the apostle has much to say, was an idea of great importance to Philo. He speaks of the “free speech” of the pure soul before God, of hope, of joy (which Philo carefully distinguishes from natural amusement as a specifically religious disposition), and of faith of which Abraham is the ideal symbol.

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1 See Diogenes Laertius ii. 79; Plutarch, Educ. Puer. 10 (7 D); Stobaeus iii. 4. 109; Gnomologium Vaticanum 166 (ed. Sternbach). Olympiodorus ascribes this interpretation to Aristotle (Cramer, Anecd. Paris. IV. 411).

2 Cf. Immut. 47-48 (the special kinship between God and man consists in freedom from necessity). For the association of freedom and forgiveness cf. Congr. Erud. 108; Conf. Ling. 93 f.; Sacr. Ab. 122, 127; Praem. 124. The service of God is greater than freedom: Spec. Leg. i. 57; Cher. 107; Som. ii. 100.

3 Heres 6 ff.; Abr. 273.

4 Abr. 15-16; Praem. 11 ff., cf. 161; Mut. Nom. 157 ff.; Qu. Gen. i. 79-80.


6 The principal passages are summarized by Thackeray, op. cit., 92 ff.
The psychology of faith is a subject to which Philo gave much attention. He has an almost Kierkegaardian insistance on self-despair as the moment of self-knowledge which leads to the knowledge of God. As the soul toils upward in its search for perfection, he explains, it comes to discover that it must cease from its strivings and acknowledge that every virtue is achieved only by God's gift. ¹ "When Abraham achieved the summit of knowledge then he most despaired of himself, that he might come to an exact knowledge of him who is. And this is how it is. He who has entirely comprehended himself entirely despairs of himself; for he has first discovered the absolute nothingness of created being. It is the man who has despaired of himself who knows him who is."²

A truly Delphic self-knowledge is an awareness of creaturely dependence on God,³ without whose grace none can know him.⁴ Were it otherwise, the strenuous moral striving to suppress the passions would end in complacency and self-congratulation.⁵ Philo speaks much of the demand for the highest mental and moral discipline and for serious training of the character in the hard school of virtue. Yet at the climax of the long ascent there stands a gift of grace which altogether transcends it.

With traditional antitheses of law and gospel in our minds, it is all too easy to lapse into the conventional contrast between Christianity as a religion of grace and love and Judaism as a religion of law and moral rules. Philo's language about grace as transcending nature would satisfy a moderate Augustinian. At the same time Philo tries to find analogies for faith in the natural quest of the human mind for understanding itself and the cosmos.

Faith, he observes, is analogous to the passion to reach out beyond the known; it is like the risk taken by merchants who sail the sea for trade.⁶

A special interest attaches to a group of passages where Philo goes some way towards anticipating the development of

¹ Leg. Alleg. iii. 136; Migr. 27-32.
² Som. i. 60.
³ Spec. Leg. i. 263 ff., 293.
⁴ Abr. 80; Spec. Leg. i. 41 ff.; Praem. 45 f.; Fuga 164.
⁵ On pride see Decal. 3 ff.; Virt. 171 ff.
Christology. The Pauline Christology based on the typology of Adam is partly illuminated by Philo's interpretation of the creation story in Genesis i to refer to the heavenly archetypal man who is also the divine Logos,¹ "God's Man", as Philo calls him,² the *Anatolé* of Zechariah vi. 12.³

The language of Philippians ii. 6-10 is, I submit, also illustrated by Philo's statement that the fall of Adam was caused by the self-love (*philautia*) which imagined the *Nous* to be an equality with God.⁴ Elsewhere Philo remarks that this was the proud delusion of Alexander the Great.⁵ When we remember that the nearest analogies to the terminology of Philippians ii occur in Plutarch's description of Alexander's behaviour in Asia when he refused to loot the cities but treated his campaign as a mission to spread the gospel of hellenism,⁶ we shall be tempted to conclude that the example had become a commonplace theme in moral exhortation.

In a well-known phrase Philo once observed that it would be easier for God to become man than for man to become God.⁷ (He regarded both as impossibilities.) Yet the language that he uses about Moses is incarnational. The Logos by which God made the cosmos is that same Logos by which he draws the perfect man to himself. Accordingly, he sent the Logos to earth in Moses and appointed Moses as God, placing all earthly things in subjection to him. This is the reason why no one knows Moses' grave: he was deified.⁸

Of all statements of Pauline Christology perhaps the most important—certainly the most influential—is that of Colossians i. It is surely of the highest interest that much of this section uses terminology in ways that are reminiscent of Philo. Philo uses

1 *Leg. Alleg.* i. 31 ff.; *Heres* 230 ff.; *Qu. Gen.* i. 4; ii. 62.
2 *Conf. Ling.* 41, 146.
3 *Conf. Ling.* 62.
4 *Leg. Alleg.* i. 49; *Cher.* 63-4.
5 *Cher.* 65.
7 *Legatio ad Gaium* 118.
8 *V. Mos.* ii. 288-291; *Sacr.* 8; cf. *Prob.* 43; *Q. Det. Pot.* 161 f.; *Som.* ii, 189; *Mut. Nom.* 128. (Several of these passages are based on Exod. vii. 1. Moses made "a god to Pharaoh."). For "deification"-language in Philo cf. *Qu. Ex.* frag. p. 72 Harris = p. 258 Marcus: "To see God man must first become God."
πρωτόγονος rather than πρωτότοκος of the divine Logos. But otherwise the role ascribed to the divine Wisdom by St. Paul is identical with the activity of the Logos in Philo, for whom the Logos is the world-soul, the divine immanence, by whose will and power the diverse elements of the cosmos are held from falling apart. The joints and links of the hierarchy of being have their glue in the will of the divine Logos.

The analogies in Colossians raise a deeper question, namely, the extent to which Philo foreshadows gnosticism, and whether he can be said to provide an explanation of the presence of many protognostic terms and themes in the Pauline epistles. Here we are at once in deeper water. There is, after all, no surprise in learning that St. Paul used Jewish traditions. Nothing could in itself be more probable, and elaborate arguments to establish a platitude quickly become boring. But it is a more delicate and complex matter to determine whether anticipations of the gnostic crisis can be detected in Philo's pages.

The term 'gnostic' has come to be used in so many senses that some description or definition is necessary at this point. The primary reference of the word is to the dualistic theosophical sects which appeared as a mushroom growth in the second century and which were treated by the Church Fathers as essentially Christian heresies, dependent upon and deviating from a prior Christianity. In the present century an influential group of students has written of gnosticism in a much more imprecise sense, to describe a syncretistic religiosity diffused in the Near East in the Hellenistic-Roman period, and has worked from the presupposition that early Gentile Christianity, far from being a principal and original contributor to this syncretism, drew upon it. This latter school has done great service in directing attention to the unquestionable fact that many of the ingredients of the gnosticism characteristic of the second-century sects are pre-Christian. But there is no evidence of a cultic myth very closely resembling Christianity in the way in which the systems of Basilides, Valentine and Mani resemble it.

1 E.g. Conf. Ling. 146.
2 Heres 188; Qu. Ex. ii. 89 f., 118; Immut. 35; Conf. Ling. 136, 166; Migr. 181, 220; Fuga 112; Som. i. 158, etc.
In this controversy the evidence of Philo and the problem of his relation to the Pauline material are central to the discussion. Several features of the second-century sects are absent from Philo. He has nothing about the need for special rites and ascetic practices to placate the evil cosmic powers; nothing of direct dualism or pessimism in regard to the world, and no brooding over the problem of evil; no metaphysical or mythological speculations about the fall of a female cosmic power as the root of evil. But there is plenty about the Platonic theme of the soul’s fall into matter and about its redemption by God. The coats of skins which Adam and Eve made symbolize the material body, and the descent of the soul is symbolized by the descent of Israel to bondage in Egypt. A few passages of Philo anticipate most of the essentials of the world-picture of Origen, according to which souls fell because of satiety, and suffered a decline in various degrees—some falling to be imprisoned in bodies, other not falling so far. In one respect Philo stands closer to the second-century sects than Origen, in that he explains the presence of evil in the world by the co-operation of angels in the work of creation; the angels introduce an element of incompetence. The idea is faintly reminiscent of St. Paul’s thesis about the inferior status of the law given by angels, set out in Galatians iii. And in the Questions on Exodus Philo reminds us of the qualified dualism of Romans viii when he says that in every soul good and bad powers compete, and that the same is also true in the universe as a whole, including even the heavenly bodies. The inner

1 E.g. Heres 240; Som. i. 181.
2 Qu. Gen. i. 53; iv. 1; cf. Leg. Alleg. iii. 69.
3 See the references collected by J. W. Earp in his index to the Loeb Philo (x. 303), s.v. “Egypt”.
4 Heres 240; Opif. 168; Post. C. 145; Abr. 134; Qu. Ex. ii. 40.
5 Gig. 12; Som. i. 138 f. For other “origenisms” in Philo, cf. Qu. Ex. ii. 25 on the gradualness of divine medicinal healing (as Origen, Princ. iii. 1.3 and Orat. xxix. 16); Som. i. 232 f. on the principle of divine accommodation to human capacity in revelation, cf. Qu. Gen. i. 55, ii. 54. Mut. Nom. 19 ff. states the essential theme of Origen’s view of dogma that God means different things to different people according to the varieties of their spiritual development and maturity.
6 Conf. Ling. 179; Opif. 75; Abr. 143; Fuga 68 ff. Cf. Qu. Ex. ii. 33.
7 Qu. Ex. i. 23. Philo normally denies the presence of evil among the angels and stars: Qu. Gen. iv. 188; Opif. 168 (evil banished from heaven).
conflict between good and evil in man is projected on to the cosmos. But Philo does not write of the planets as malevolent powers which the soul must learn to outwit or coerce into acquiescence by the proper password. He knows about but does not himself accept the notion found in the book of Enoch that the seven planets are prisons for fallen stars. For him the stars and the planets are together noble and beautiful, and the seven planets are symbolized by the seven-branched candlestick. He finds the signs of the zodiac symbolized on the high priest's robe. It is clear enough that this kind of language provided obvious ammunition for an anti-semitic gnostic sect of the second century, since it would be easy to link the disparagement of the planets with the depreciation of Judaism, once the connection between the two had been made. But Philo does no more than provide the link. The use that he makes of the link is very different.

Otherwise Philo's chief contributions to the material of gnosticism consist in his stress on the incomprehensibility of the transcendent God, his use of mystery-cult language to describe the privileged revelation of Judaism, his numerological exegesis (especially the speculations about the number seven), and his

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1 Som. i. 22; Act. 47. Cf. Enoch 18. 12-16; 21. 1-6. For the influence of Enoch on gnosticism cf. R. M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity (1959), 47 f. Malevolent powers are largely absent from Philo's world; for him, to be discarnate is to be free of evil (cf. Conf. Ling. 176 ff.; Gig. 16). But angels are the ministers of divine punishment, since it is unfitting that the good God should directly punish: Fuga 66 ff; Decal. 177 f.; Abr. 143; Qu. Gen. iv. 42; Qu. Ex. i. 23.

2 Heres 221 f.; V. Mos. ii. 102; Qu. Ex. ii. 75 f.


4 Mut. Nom. 7; Immut. 62: not even comprehensible by Nous (contradicted, however, by Spec. Leg. i. 20 which follows Plato, Phaedrus 247 C). According to Post. C. 15 the greatest good is to know that God is unknowable, which is reminiscent of the Sophia myth in Valentinianism (Irenaeus, adv. Haer. ii. 18. 1).

5 Leg. Alleg. iii. 71; Cher. 42 ff; Sacr. 60; Abr. 122; Fuga 85 ff.; Som. i. 164 f. I do not think these texts and others require or justify the hypothesis of E. R. Goodenough that hellenistic Judaism actually possessed a concrete ritual modelled on the mystery religions. The metaphorical use of mystery language had become a commonplace after Plato's Symposium.

doctrine that ecstatic apprehension and intuition stand higher than reasoned inference. It is highly probable that at least in the case of Valentine Philo exercised a direct influence. Philo anticipates Valentine’s conception of the soul as the bride of the Logos, his theme of the soul’s final “rest” in God, and the basic principle that historical narrative is to be allegorically interpreted of inward psychological processes. In detail, perhaps Valentine developed from Philo his exegesis of the high priest’s entrance to the holy of holies as a picture of the beatific vision. Whether we can meaningfully call Philo a gnostic depends entirely on our initial definition of that Protean word. What is certain is that there is much raw material in his writings which the second-century sects found congenial; and there are certain things in his thought which suggest that St. Paul was not the original creator of gnosticism in the wide sense of a

Classical Philology, xxvi (1931), 345-61, shows that Philo was familiar with an arithmetic expounded soon after his time by Nicomachus.

1 Leg. Alleg. iii. 97-99; Praem. 40-46; Post. C. 167.
2 Cher. 42-53 (a passage reminiscent of Eph. v); cf. Post. C. 12.
3 Immut. 12. The theme is worked out by Philo in relation to the sabbath, as in the epistle to the Hebrews. For discussion cf. L. Troje in R. Reitzenstein, Die Vorgeschichte der christlichen Taufe (1929), pp. 343 ff.; E. Käsemann, Das wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief (1957), pp. 43 f.

5 Some other anticipations of second-century gnosticism in Philo may be briefly noted: the barrier or fence between the spiritual and material world as between light and darkness (Opif. 33; Qu. Gen. iv. 80); the “docetic” discussion of the angels entertained by Abraham to food and drink (Abr. 118; Qu. Gen. iv. 9, cf. Som. i. 232); the division of humanity into three or sometimes two categories (Gig. 60; Heres 45, 57; Qu. Gen. i. 88; ii. 79—on the sons of Noah;—some are assigned by destiny a higher nature: Immut. 61; Mut. Nom. 212 f.; Praem. 64; Leg. Alleg. iii. 85, cf. 75-76); the birth of the world is symbolized by an erotic union between the Father and his Episteme (Ebr. 30); whereas the divine world is free, this world is under iron necessity (Som. ii. 253). Philo evidently knew of Jewish exegetes far more “liberal” and probably more “gnostic” than himself: e.g. Heres 300 mentions exegetes who held that Moses could be reconciled with a rigid doctrine of fate; and it is just possible that Post. C. 38 (cf. Q. Det. Pot. 32 ff.) implies the existence of a Cainite group which justified aggressive and irreligious attitudes by the model of Cain’s victory over Abel. He certainly knew of liberal Jews who believed that an understanding of the symbolic meaning of the Mosaic law dispensed them from any literal observance: Migr. 89-93.
deterministic, radically dualistic pessimism about this dark world, lightened only by an arbitrary and inconceivable act of divine redemption which delivers the elect out of it altogether.

There are great dangers in drawing up a brief summary of the principal points of common ground between these two Greek-speaking Jews. It may obscure how utterly different they are in temperament and attitude. St. Paul writes as a man with a prophet’s call, Philo as a speculative thinker inclined to mysticism. Philo is far more sophisticated and has passed through a very good education in rhetoric and philosophy under Greek tutors. Philosophy, especially Platonism, genuinely mattered to him and he could not have expressed his faith adequately without it. His mind was soaked in the traditions of the rhetorical and philosophical schools, and he wrote in a style that the modern reader is bound to find excessively painful and tiresome. The repetitiousness and the verbosity become exhausting, and the reader is repelled by Philo’s infinite capacity for transforming epic stories from Genesis into a string of colourless humanitarian platitudes. Moreover, Philo cannot be plausibly credited with high philosophical originality. Nevertheless, the barriers to the appreciation of his achievement must not be allowed to obscure both his independent significance as a theologian and student of the psychology of faith, and his immense value to the interpreter of St. Paul. To string together in a single discourse the Philonic parallels to the epistles must not be allowed to create optical illusions: the parallels occur in widely scattered passages, and are much more impressive when put together than when they occur in their separated contexts. They suffice, however, to show the extent to which St. Paul was able to draw upon the highest aspirations of the Greek synagogue.

Eusebius of Caesarea records a “tradition” that on his embassy to Caligula Philo met St. Peter in Rome and was converted to Christianity. By the fifth century Philo was being credited with an imaginary encounter with St. John also.¹ There is food for thought in these apocryphal legends. There are

respects in which Philo stands startlingly close to Pauline and Johannine Christianity. It is still distressing to read Liddon’s phrase, penned a century ago, that Philo was “only a thoughtful, not insincere, but half-heathenized believer in the Revelation of Sinai, groping in a twilight which he has made darker by his hellenic tastes”. It would be juster to end this lecture by quoting a remark of Coleridge in one of his letters: “Philo has not been used half enough.”

1 H. P. Liddon, The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Bampton Lectures 1866), 12th edn. (1888), p. 69.