

Flowering of Faith



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Some “bright” lights in the “dark ages”

- Christianity replaces classicism
 - New life and eternal life
- This shift culturally changed the world

Flowering of Faith

The Christianity had three major sources from which it sprung:

1. Greco-Roman Influence
2. Near Eastern Influence
3. Hebraic Influence

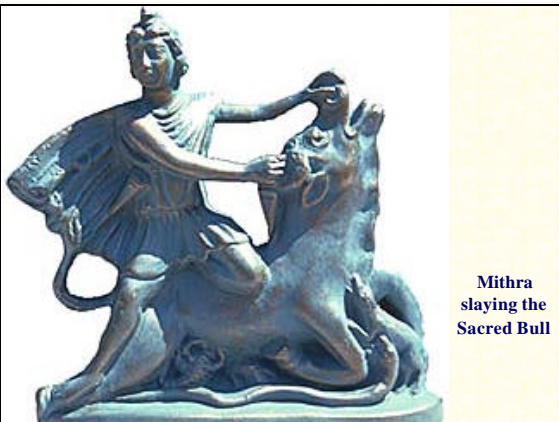
Greco-Roman Influence

- This tradition had strong interest in oracles—recall the Delphic Oracle
- Eclectic tendencies to mix various traditions
- Moment of Zen...when you invade a region, you bring your culture with you and you pick up that region's culture also. This cross-pollination took place with the Romans.

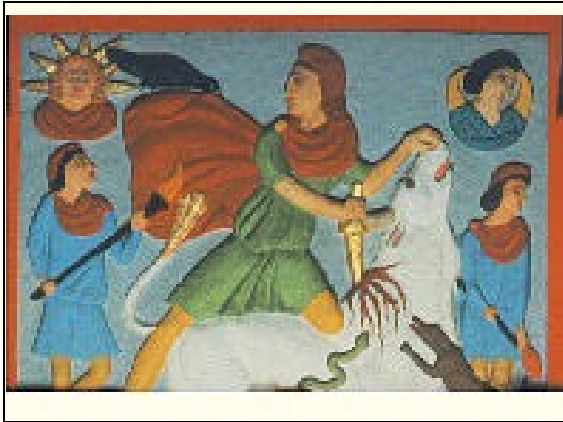


Near Eastern Influence

- Mystery religions or cults
- Mithra and other agricultural gods
- All these groups had similar practices: baptism, communal meals, etc.



Mithra
slaying the
Sacred Bull



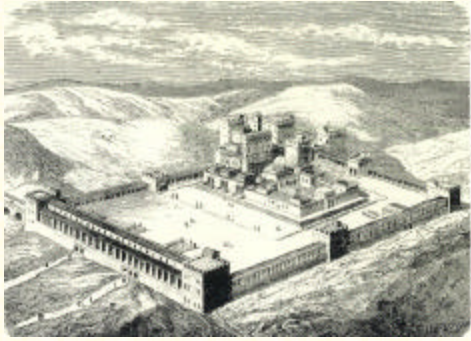
Mithra, Persian Sun God

- Mithra predated Christianity by centuries
- The Roman soldiers followed Mithraism
- Mithra was born on December 25th
- He was a teacher with twelve disciples, performed miracles, Lord's Supper, buried in a tomb, resurrected after three days
- His resurrection was celebrated every springtime
- Mithra was called the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth and the Light, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Messiah
- He was identified with both the lion and the lam
- Sunday was Mithra's sacred day or the Lord's Day

Roman Religious Laissez Faire

- The Romans were fairly tolerant of other religions — provided they didn't preach against their religious/political cults
- The Jews got into trouble with Roman and this caused the NT writer, Luke, to distance Christianity from Judaism
- Read Luke and Acts. Luke attempts always to put the Romans in a good light

Jewish Influence



Solomon's Temple ca. 1000 BCE

Jewish Influence

- Covenant People
- Ethics/morality
- Monotheism—caused conflicts with Rome

Four groups within Judaism:

1. Sadducees—aristocratic leaders
2. Pharisees—teachers with a messianic idea
3. Essenes—ascetics and writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls
4. Zealots—revolutionaries (just what the Romans didn't want)



Masada,
the fortress where the Zealots
held off the Romans
...then committed mass suicide



Qumran, site of the Dead Sea Scrolls

Beginnings of Christianity

- Jesus born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth
- Quest for the historical Jesus
- Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke
- Jesus complained about
 - Missed the meaning while obeying the letter of the Law
 - Concerned with cast outs of society
 - Religious hypocrisy
- Differences in the message between Luke and Matthew's Sermon on the Mount

Paul' Spin on Christianity

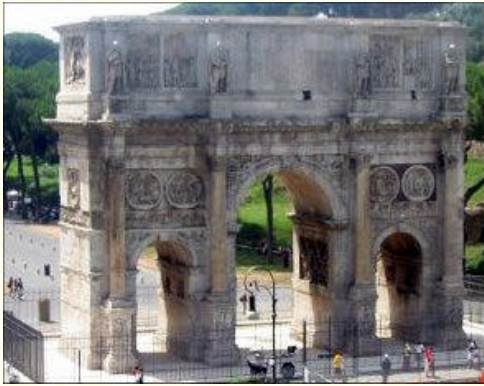
- Paul moved Christianity from an Eastern to Western religion
- Paul straddled split between Eastern and Western thought
- Concern about universalizing the message and systematizing it
- Had it not been for the Roman roads, Europe and therefore America wouldn't be predominately Christian today
- Constantine and Edict of Milan (313)—legalized Christianity
- Later, it became the official religion of the Empire



Constantine engaged Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in Rome on October 28, 312 CE.

In a dream, he saw a sign....
"In hoc signes vinces."

Because of this single battle, the world changed.



The Constantine Arch in Rome

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For an interesting world timeline:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hm/04/hm04.htm>
