

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PHILO

The Significance of Professor Harry A. Wolfson's New Study

Few works in the history of human thought are as enigmatic as those of Philo of Alexandria; only with this in mind may one explain the different and even widely divergent interpretations of Philo which have been proposed. Among recent authors who have dealt with him, Prof. Erwin Goodenough has expressed the zestful but controvertible opinion that Philo's purpose was to make of Judaism a mystery religion, "the true mystery."¹ I merely record this hypothesis as one for which there seems to be no justification. Much more to the point is the work of Dr. Walter Völker, who has demonstrated the necessity of discerning in Philo the character of a mystic whose inspiration is the Bible and who is but superficially dabbed with the brush of the prevailing Hellenism.² As a result of this latter study two conclusions may be safely considered as achieved: first, that Philo is a believing Jew, uncontaminated by Hellenistic syncretism; and secondly, that he is a biblical mystic who, before Clement of Alexandria and St. John of the Cross, represents an attempt to outline a distinctively biblical approach to union with God.

Despite their differences, Goodenough and Völker are at least agreed upon this, that we ought primarily see in Philo a system of spirituality and should attach little importance to him as a thinker. Now it is precisely to this point that Professor Harry Austryn Wolfson has recently devoted his own very important study of Philo.³ The work is notable from many points of view. For one thing we find here a masterly exposition of Philo's thought. Prof. Wolfson has a gift for disentangling the most subtle questions, and he moves with perfect ease within the unsystematic framework of Philo's treatises. Henceforth, indeed, we shall have a sure guide to conduct us through the labyrinth of the Alexandrian's writings. In fact, Prof. Wolfson shows that Philo's works have—contrarily to what is often thought—a remarkable quality of coherence (I, 115). But he does not merely expound Philo's thought; rather, by setting this thought over against that of the pagan philosophers who preceded him, and by balancing it against that of the Jewish, Mohammedan, and Christian philosophers who followed him, Prof.

¹ E. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (Yale University Press, 1935).

² W. Völker, *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandria* (Leipzig, 1938).

³ H. A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947).

Wolfson shows the work of Philo to have been completely original. Here again we find the author opposing an oft-repeated opinion according to which Philo is simply an eclectic, unable to do more than reiterate the ideas current in the schools of his age (I, 98). From now on we shall have to consider Philo a great philosopher.

Much more remains to be said, however, for we have yet to consider the matter which, lying as it does at the heart of Prof. Wolfson's work, gives it its greatest import. The work of Philo marks for us a most important date in the history of human thought; for it is with him that philosophical thinking makes its initial contact with biblical revelation. Philo's work, it is true, stems from prior philosophies, particularly from Platonism; yet it is not merely one of the forms assumed by these philosophies, as is that of Plutarch, for example. The philosophy of Philo is Platonism totally recast in the mold of biblical Revelation, and so we are privileged to witness in Philo the appearance of the first biblical philosophy. What Origen, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas will achieve with respect to the whole of Sacred Scripture, this Philo has already accomplished in terms of the Old Testament. It is only right to expect, therefore, that these later authors will lean upon this Jew, who, as Harnack remarked, is the first of theologians. Moreover, an extremely orthodox theologian he is, for he purges away the errors of Platonism and of the other ancient philosophies and in a true sense establishes, as he has ambitioned, the true philosophy. Until the seventeenth century this synthesis will remain in its essentials the philosophy of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam; in fact, it remains to this day the basic thought of a great part of humanity. Philo's place, therefore, in the history of philosophy appears to be of capital importance.⁴ It is Philo, a Jew, who initiates that era of sixteen centuries which another Jew, Spinoza, will by his return to Greek rationalism bring to an end (II, 439 ff.).

The most striking feature of this philosophy is its general conception of the relations which bind philosophy and revelation; for with Philo biblical faith opens its doors to the philosophical thought of antiquity. Now there is need here for great precision. Prof. Wolfson rightly insists on the fact that in Philo there is no *religious* syncretism, and this is a point which cannot be too heavily underscored (I, p. 30). Philo's attitude with regard to pagan polytheism is the rigorous intransigence of Jewish tradition. He is not, as Prof. Goodenough suggests, the proponent of a brand of monotheism which, while retaining a certain flavor of Judaism, may yet be shared with the con-

⁴ *Philo*, II, 456: "The changes thus introduced by our synthetic philosopher into Greek philosophy are as great as those introduced by Plato and greater than those introduced into it by any other philosopher after Plato."

temporary Hellenistic world (I, 173). He permits no compromise on the religious plane between the faith of Israel and pagan religion, even under its more refined forms. Thus it is not correct to assert that Philo made of Judaism a mystery religion fashioned after the model of the pagan mysteries. If he makes use of the jargon of the mysteries, it is because this terminology belongs to the literary vogue of philosophical language at the time, and because he wishes thereby to contrast his Jewish faith with the Hellenistic mysteries (I, 49). Up to this point, therefore, Prof. Wolfson and Dr. Völker are at one in their conviction that Philo, as a religious man, is a true Jew.

Although Philo is so inimical to contemporary pagan religion, he does adopt pagan philosophy (I, 19); it is with Philo that we find a definitive marriage between biblical faith and Greek philosophy. This wedding, as Prof. Wolfson has well demonstrated, is for Philo a matter of profound importance. We are not dealing here with a Jewish mystic who, in order to express himself more effectively, merely usurps the philosophical vocabulary of the contemporary schools, while he himself remains quite unoriginal as a philosopher. Philo must be thought of, not simply as an eminent figure in biblical theology, but also as an important name in the history of philosophy. On this point Prof. Wolfson's verdict is decisive. To Philo he applies his "hypothetico-deductive" method—a method which starts from the principle that every philosopher must reproduce, interpret, or criticize the thought of his predecessors (I, 106). By careful textual analysis (and in this field Prof. Wolfson's great knowledge of ancient philosophy stands him in good stead), he locates Philo within the framework of philosophical tradition. He shows what in Philo is owed to prior philosophies. Philo's thought, for instance, is staunchly opposed to Stoicism; it retains numerous elements of Aristotelianism; but above all it is a revision of Platonism (I, 109). Here perhaps one might have hoped that Prof. Wolfson had even more precisely located Philo in the development of the Platonic school.

We thus see that Philo represents a stage in the development of philosophical thought, while at the same time he introduces into this development an element which is radically new. For to him philosophy is definitely subordinate to revelation. This relationship is expressed primarily by the fact that Sacred Scripture is the source of truth. Here we must be careful to understand Philo's position. He does not accept the existence of two distinct realms of reality, one concerned with the natural elements of human life (the object of philosophical reasoning), the other concerned with man's supernatural end (the exclusive field of theology). Both philosophy and revelation have the same object, but this object, which is expressed only

imperfectly by Greek philosophy, finds its complete enunciation in Sacred Scripture. Plato contains the true philosophy, but in Plato this philosophy is found to be mixed with error; Scripture alone contains true and unalloyed philosophy. Philo's aim, therefore, is simply to correct the errors of profane philosophy by setting forth the philosophy of Sacred Scripture. Now it is precisely here that we confront the most disconcerting and the frailest element in the work of Philo, his allegorical method. For Philo believes that the whole of Plato's philosophy, purged of its error, is to be discovered in Scripture under the guise of symbols.

This question of allegorical exegesis is one of those points which require the utmost clarification; for, if imperfectly grasped, it is capable of becoming a very serious obstacle to an understanding of Philo's thought. Prof. Wolfson shows quite clearly that Philo in no sense denies the literal sense, particularly in what has to do with the prescriptions of the Law. He is not, as Prof. Goodenough asserts, an anti-legalist. Prof. Wolfson states that the Alexandrian Jews of the period were divided into three groups with respect to the interpretation of Sacred Scripture: literalists, allegorists, and moderates, of which final group Philo may be taken as a type. Now it is of supreme importance to understand that these three categories of interpreters all agree that Scripture has both a literal and a symbolic sense. They disagree, however, as to the importance to be assigned to one or to the other. The literalists, who reject that philosophical allegorism employed by Philo, still retain certain allegorical interpretations (I, 58); the allegorists, on the other hand, do not deny the literal sense, but do tend to minimize it. Indeed, we shall rediscover this same attitude among Christian exegetes; the two senses of Sacred Scripture will be upheld by all the exegetes, both those of Alexandria and those of Antioch, but it will be the Alexandrians who, following the tradition of Philo, will accept and use philosophical allegorism.

What characterizes Philo, therefore, is the attempt to discover in Scripture, under the form of allegory, the great theories of his biblical Platonism. At this juncture two points, not sufficiently clarified in Prof. Wolfson's book, need a word of explanation. The first of these is that allegorism has nothing to do with exegesis; and in this regard we cannot follow Prof. Wolfson in putting the different senses of Scripture on the same level (I, 134). There is a certain typological interpretation, foreshadowed by the Prophets, which is to be rediscovered among the tannaitic rabbis—a method which constitutes an authentic exegesis of Sacred Scripture. This typology will later be carried over into the common exegesis of Christianity.⁵ From

⁵ L. Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des alten Testaments im neuen* (Gutersloh, 1939), p. 32 ff.

this typology one must very carefully distinguish the allegorical method of Philo, a method which reveals to us, in the images used by Scripture, the symbol of realities which have nothing at all in common with these images. Thus the method employed by Philo is not exegesis. It does not follow, however, that his theology is not a biblical theology. Artificial as is the process by which he draws his philosophy from Scripture, his thought remains most genuinely inspired by Scripture.

What are these basic truths which Scripture supplies and to which revelation imposes upon philosophy the obligation of conforming itself (I, 164)? Prof. Wolfson enumerates eight of them: God's existence, God's unity, providence, the creation of the world, the unity of the world, the existence of immaterial ideas, the revelation of the Law, and the eternity of this Law (I, 165). Now if we look closely at this list, we perceive that Prof. Wolfson has borrowed it from three different texts. The first (*De Opif.* 61, 170-172) enumerates what Moses has to tell us on the subject of creation: God's existence, His unity, the creation of the world, the unity of the world, and providence. In the second text those who deny the existence of the ideas and of God, or who believe in several gods, are condemned as impious. The third text affirms the divine origin of the Mosaic Law. Putting aside the last of the three, we could scarcely contend that the other two are on the same level. Only in the first does Philo assert "scriptural presuppositions." It does not seem evident to us, therefore, that we should list the existence of the ideas among these others. Moreover, Prof. Wolfson's attempt to show that this doctrine existed in non-Hellenistic Jewish tradition before Philo's time can hardly be said to be successful (I, 180 ff.).⁶

If we restrict ourselves to the first text, we find that Prof. Wolfson is quite correct in seeing there the essential points by which, for Philo, revelation corrects the weaknesses of Greek philosophy. They are, in fact, identical with the points made in Origen's *Contra Celsum*.⁷ They define the fundamental principles of all Judaeo-Christian philosophy, and it is noteworthy that Philo has formulated them so resolutely. It can truthfully be said that he is by that very fact the founder of Judaeo-Christian philosophy. These central points at which revelation has come to the aid of philosophy can be reduced to three. The first is what Prof. Wolfson calls the unity of God, a term which is synonymous with His transcendence. By using it Philo does not mean merely to reject all popular polytheism; this had been done by the philosophers who preceded him. He is rather affirming that

⁶ Cf. the opposite opinion in G. Foot Moore, *Judaism*, I, 417.

⁷ I have pointed this out in a recent article, "La pensée chrétienne," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXXIX (1947), 930-940.

God represents an order of reality which is completely other, the order of the uncreated. To this realm of reality everything else in existence—that is, the world of the created—is opposed. He is thus able to dispel not only the immanent God of Stoicism (I, 177) but also Aristotle's conception of an eternal world (I, 177) and the uncreated ideas of Plato (I, 172). Prof. Wolfson is correct in seeing that here a new principle has been introduced by Philo into the history of philosophy (I, 116). Up to this time the frontiers of the divine were always somewhat indeterminate. Philo now shows that Sacred Scripture conceives of them in an absolutely radical way. Henceforth, this principle will remain the cornerstone of Judaeo-Christian philosophy. In fact, we may say that this is Philo's special contribution to philosophy and that it is his special glory to have formulated it. Prof. Wolfson makes it quite clear that it is a doctrine which he has been unable to discover in earlier philosophies (I, 130).

The second conception which biblical revelation imposes upon Philonic philosophy is the notion of creation (I, 180). It is implied, of course, in the previous notion of God's unity or transcendence, inasmuch as this concept indirectly defines the nature of everything existing apart from God. By his doctrine of creation Philo intends to say that everything which is not God is radically dependent upon Him. This is one of the topics on which he lays the greatest emphasis, although this is a fact not always remarked by commentators. The greatest sin possible to man, who receives everything from God, is to attribute something to himself (*De cher.* 23). On the other hand, his greatest virtue is *eucharistia*, a virtue in which humility, prayer, and a recognition by man of his creaturely state are all bound up together. However, we must go even further, for with Philo creation does not mean merely a perfect distinction of creatures from God and their complete dependence on Him; it also signifies contingency. There is no necessity in creation. Disagreeing with Aristotle, Philo asserts that there was a time when the created world did not exist (*Decal.*, 12, 58). In contradiction to Plato, he holds that the universe could cease to exist, since its incorruptibility is a sheer gift (I, 411). Finally, God is in no way subject to His own decrees. He abides by them because of His fidelity, though He is perfectly empowered to modify them (I, 354; II, 451). Miracles are but the expression of this sovereign divine liberty. Here again we find that Philo is giving voice to one of the most basic principles of biblical philosophy, and it is a question on which he finds himself in opposition to the whole of Greek philosophy.

Finally, there is a third topic which is stressed by Philo, the principle of providence. No doctrine was so dear as that of providence to the age in

which Philo lived. Here we might have supposed that Philo would do nothing but reiterate the thought of Plato and the Stoics. Hal Koch once claimed to have shown that Origen was on this point indebted to the Stoics of his time.⁸ But Prof. Wolfson now demonstrates "that Philo's conception of the scriptural doctrine of providence means something different from the providence which Plato and the Stoics attribute to God. To him it means individual providence, the power of God to change the order of nature for the benefit of certain of His favored individuals" (I, 180). Philo, therefore, believes in *individual* providence. For him this means not only the permanence of a cosmic order, but also the intrinsic value of the individuals within that order. This value of the individual stems from the fact that every man is created in the image of God and is endowed with a liberty which makes him superior to all kinds of determinism (I, 430; II, 453). Thus we discover in Philo the entire biblical teaching on the worth of the human soul and God's love for it. Thus once again, in a third essential characteristic of Judaeo-Christian thought, we find that Philo has completely outdistanced the philosophy of the Greeks. It must be remarked however, that for Philo God's favor is concerned only with the Jewish people. Moreover, his doctrine of providence, though it approaches the Christian idea of grace (indeed, Philo has both the idea and the word), does not imply the notion of man's participation in the life of God. This is to be the distinctive object of Christian revelation.

The above-mentioned scriptural principles are in themselves quite independent of any particular philosophy. They are simply the conditions to which every philosophy must submit in order to become a biblical philosophy. They are applied by Philo to the philosophy of his age, or rather to one of the current philosophies, namely, Middle Platonism. We must therefore define Philo's own system as a form of Platonism—a Platonism which has been *revised* in such a way as to have been brought into accord with the essential theses of revelation. The chief object of Prof. Wolfson's work is the exposition of this system. It was indeed a feat of scholarship to have drawn so clear and coherent an exposition from Philo's commentaries, where the thought is so often found to be fragmentary and allusive. Thus, the present study permits the system of Philo from this time forward to be situated with exactitude within the context of its relations to all other systems. It might be said that now at last, thanks to Prof. Wolfson's book, Philo is about to take his rightful place in the history of philosophy—a place which until now he could not assume for want of an introductory study like the one we are considering. This need has now been answered in our

⁸ *Pronoia et Paidueisis*, p. 235 ff.

author's precise and detailed analysis of the Philonic theses. Prof. Wolfson, in rigorous discussions of the text which leave nothing unclarified, studies one by one throughout a long series of chapters the great structural lines of Philo's thought. Each chapter ends with a brief summary wherein the chief conclusions are outlined. Moreover, as he deals with each of these problems, Prof. Wolfson shows what the position of the problem was when Philo approached it and how he modified that position by his own thinking.

The first problem is that of the ideas and of the Logos, one of the most controverted questions in ancient philosophy. There are, before Philo, three positions with regard to this problem: some hold with Plato that there exist from all eternity certain real, incorporeal beings called ideas; others, representatives of a mitigated Platonism, conceive of such ideas as existing only in the mind of God; while Aristotle and the Stoics form a third group for whom the ideas have no other existence save that which they enjoy in the concrete beings of our experience (I, 200). "Philo combines these three conceptions of ideas by endowing them with three stages or three kinds of existence" (I, 289-290). First of all, the ideas exist eternally in the divine mind; in this sense they are not to be distinguished from the essence of God. Secondly, they have real existence as constituents of an intelligible world; on this plane they have been created by God as the archetypes of the world of sense. Finally, they have a third mode of existence, that in which they are concretized in things. Moreover, the ideas are the objects of the thought of a spirit. To this spirit Philo gives the names of Logos, a biblical expression used to distinguish the divine *Nous* from that of man (I, 254). There will be three Logoi, just as there are three categories of ideas: an uncreated Logos, not to be distinguished from the divine essence; a created Logos, which is the unity of the intelligible world; and finally an immanent Logos, from which derives the unity of our immanent ideas (I, 291-92).

I have done no more than summarize here certain important pages of Prof. Wolfson's book. Casting as they do a definitive light on one of the most involved aspects of Philo's thought, these pages are extremely valuable, for they indicate the relations which obtain between the different meanings of Logos, of Wisdom (identical with Logos), of ideas (or powers), and of the intelligible world (the expression derives from Philo). They show us precisely where we must locate the originality of Philo in the history of philosophy, namely, "in his application of the term Logos to the totality of the ideas" (I, 293); for it is this that marks a definite moment in the history of the development of Platonism. Above all, we see how Philo has revised the Platonic theory of ideas in order to adapt it to the needs of Scripture. Plato's conception of a realm of uncreated ideas, really distinct from God

and constituting a sort of intermediary between God and the world, was quite incompatible with the scriptural notions of God's unity and transcendence (I, 285). Notwithstanding an opinion to the contrary which is frequently voiced, Philo rejects this theory. Because of this rejection he divides the world of the ideas and of the Logos which is their totality into two distinct levels of reality. He posits on one hand a world of uncreated ideas and an uncreated Logos, but these he does not make really distinct from God; over against these he posits another world of ideas and another Logos which are distinct from God and created. Thus we see that Philo permits no intermediary to come between God and creation. This is one of the topics whereon Prof. Wolfson's analysis is most rewarding and most important.

Prof. Wolfson's clear distinction of these two realms throws a strong light on the Trinitarian controversies of the second and third centuries. In fact, the two theories concerning the Logos which are to be met with in those centuries correspond to the two distinct levels of the Philonic teaching. One group, the Modalists, held for an uncreated Word, whom they did not distinguish in reality from the Father. The other group, the theologians of the Word, asserted quite plainly His distinction from the Father, but conceived the Word as a created being. Revelation had introduced a new reality and a new problem, a Logos at once equal to God and yet distinct from the Father. In order to adapt philosophical thinking to this new revelation, theologians were obliged to revise the philosophy of Philo, as Philo himself had revised the thought of Plato in order to accommodate it to the Old Testament.⁹ This revision of Philo was not, of course, accomplished in a moment. It was a slow process, but now that we have a clear presentation of Philo's thought we are helped immensely in understanding the way in which the problem presented itself for solution. It would be extremely interesting to make a study of the way in which the first Christian theologians, particularly Clement of Alexandria, remained most definitely in the tradition of Philo, and yet effected a correction of his thought in order to bring it into line with Christian revelation. Such a venture in scholarship, unfortunately impossible heretofore for want of a sufficiently scholarly presentation of Philo's thought, can now be begun.

As to the other important problems of philosophy in which Philo labored to revise Platonism, I shall not lay stress on those which concern the creation of the world or anthropology, though these are questions to which Prof.

⁹ Prof. Wolfson makes the incorrect statement that "the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is a direct development . . . of the theory of ideas as revised by Philo" (I, 197). Actually, this doctrine is a "revision" of Philo's theory, and one which modifies it radically.

Wolfson has devoted important chapters. He points out how Philo, while of the opinion that God creates with pre-existent matter, is quite definite in his position that this matter is itself created, thus solving one of the ambiguities of Platonism (I, 304). He has also some interesting observations on Philo's angelology, showing that angels are "a special kind of immanent powers in the world" and do not pertain to the realm of the intelligible (I, 372). But I have already underscored the essential notions of these chapters in connection with the ideas of creation and providence. Moreover, what is strictly original here is not so much the cosmological and anthropological theories advanced by Philo (for which he is strictly dependent upon Plato and Aristotle); it is rather his general affirmation of the sovereign liberty of God and of His loving providence. From these matters, therefore, I shall pass on to a final question in which we may see even more clearly the inner transformation induced into Platonism by Philo, and where his influence upon the subsequent history of the philosophies of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam will be found to be immense. It is the problem of the unknowability of God.

The doctrine of our knowledge of God is one of the most essential elements in Philo's thought, as it is also one of the most involved. Here again the work of unraveling so knotty a skein must have taxed the patience of Prof. Wolfson, who shows that Philo, after the manner of the philosophy of his time, distinguishes three modes of knowledge: knowledge by sensation, by science, and by inspiration. The two latter modes are those by which we can come to a knowledge of God. There is, in the first case, a knowledge of God by reason, operating on the data of the external world. This is the doctrine of the proofs for the existence of God, borrowed in part from Aristotle and incorporated into the Philonic system. Moreover, this knowledge of God by reason is held to be quite easy of attainment (II, 73). But for Philo the real means by which we come to know God must be discovered in the third and last mode of knowledge, a mode corresponding to the Platonic reminiscence by which the soul obtains a vision of the incorporeal ideas and of God Himself. Now in this matter Philo is quite thorough in his modification of Platonism. Philo affirms that its source is revelation; it coincides with the biblical notion of prophecy and is an illumination of the intellect by God. By adopting this stand with regard to the nature of this knowledge, Philo avoids both the innatism of the Stoa and the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence.

Philo and Plato do not agree, moreover, as to the object of this higher kind of knowledge. Plato founds his vision of the ideas upon a kind of connaturality between the human spirit and the divine, but Philo here re-

introduces his fundamental doctrine of the complete transcendence of God. To him there is no standard of measurement common to God and the human soul. Philo's God, therefore, is completely unknowable. The reader will recall those celebrated pages where Philo, describing the entrance of Moses into the darkness of Sinai, explains it as the supreme revelation; for to know God is to come to know the unknowable (II, 116). Thus a theme is begun in these pages which will be caught up and repeated literally by Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa,¹⁰ and the pseudo-Areopagite, for they are pages which are destined to become part and parcel of all subsequent biblical philosophy. Prof. Wolfson is perfectly right when he says that here Philo is inaugurating something completely new in philosophy (II, 154). Plato spoke of the difficulty of knowing God, but for him that difficulty was not radical impossibility. Here again the thought of Philo appears remarkably coherent and orthodox. The highest knowledge to which man can be elevated by God's inspiration will never be other than a knowledge of the existence of God which takes its rise from the things of earth, though it will be the gift of grace and not the product of human effort (II, 86). Even the created intelligible realm is not susceptible of direct knowledge (II, 138). It is possible that here Philo adds to the biblical conception of transcendence the Stoic and Aristotelian criticism of Platonic contemplation of the ideas.¹¹ Nevertheless, pursuing an idea which Gregory of Nyssa will develop, we must remember that this knowledge of God's existence, though it never attains to His essence and remains always a somewhat shadowy thing, is capable of an indefinite progression in which the presence of God makes itself more and more real (II, 148).

Thus, once again we witness how profoundly Philo has revised Platonic tenets in virtue of the biblical conception of divine transcendence. There can be no doubt that he stands at the beginning of a new era of philosophical thought. Philo has laid down, for the first time in the history of philosophy, the fundamental demands of biblical revelation with regard to our knowledge of God. The Fathers of the Church will have only to continue what Philo has begun. Here again, however, this will not be merely a matter of imitation; for the New Testament will have brought the Joannine revelation to bear on the question: "No one has at any time seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him" (John 1: 18). The first sentence of this verse expresses the theology of Philo; the second adds the specific contribution of the Gospel. But the second sentence has meaning only after the first has been firmly established. The gift of God

¹⁰ J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, p. 201 ff.

¹¹ E. von Ivanka, "Von Platonismus zur Theologie der Mystik," *Scholastik*, 1936, pp. 163 ff.

through Jesus Christ lacks significance if the fundamental invisibility of God has not previously been guaranteed. Thus in Origen we shall hear a clear echo of this theology of Philo; but it will be a voice which, while it reasserts, also modifies what Philo has taught. Taking his stand with Philo against Plato, Origen will teach that knowledge of the divine essence is completely inaccessible to man; against Philo, however, he will assert that this knowledge is now made possible for all in Jesus Christ.

One might go on to a consideration of the pages which Prof. Wolfson devotes to the ethical and political theories of Philo, the result of which would be again to conclude to the importance of the work we have been studying. However, let us allow the foregoing observations to suffice; for they convey, I believe, some idea of the significance of Prof. Wolfson's volumes. His work is not an exhaustive portrait of Philo. For alongside Philo the philosopher, there is also Philo the pious Jew, whom Dr. Völker has studied, and this is indeed another equally authentic element in the Alexandrian's personality. But as regards those aspects of Philo which he set out to investigate, we can readily say that Prof. Wolfson's work is definitive. In his hands the study of Philonic philosophy enters the field of science. One might discuss this or that particular point in his interpretation, as we have done here and there in this review, but the great lines of Philo's system appear to be now definitely secured. This work, then, has filled a considerable lacuna in the history of philosophy; for Philo is an essential link in the chain of that history. Between pagan Platonism and Christian Platonism he represents biblical Platonism, that is, an initial revision of Platonism in terms of revelation. Now it is upon this first revision that the Christian theologians will take their stand when they attempt to make a second revision of Platonism in the light of the New Testament.¹² So long as this initial revision by Philo remained unclarified, the relations between Platonism and Christianity were never able to become the object of serious historical study. It now remains for us to employ this same method in doing for the first Christian philosophers, and particularly for Clement of Alexandria, the work which Prof. Wolfson has done for Philo. Thus that period of the history of thought which extends from antiquity to the Middle Ages will at long last emerge from its darkness.

JEAN DANIELÉLOU, S.J.

¹² This is a matter in which Prof. Wolfson's book evokes definite reservations on the part of the Catholic theologian. He tends too much to present Christian theology as though it were a mere development of the theology of Philo, thus placing it on the same plane with the theologies of Judaism and Islam. It would be better to have portrayed it as a distinct *revision* of this theology in function of a new Revelation which completes the first.