

E. Derivation.

Toward the end of the past century many books were written to show that the distinctive ideas of Christianity were taken over from various heathen religions, and similar ideas are widely taught today. It is alleged that during the first century A.D., various mystery cults and pagan religions made their way from the east into many sections of the Roman empire, that Christianity took ideas from many of these, and that Christianity was merely the particular one of these movements which happened to win out.

Discussion of this idea of deriving Christianity from pagan sources involves evidence of various types. At this point we shall restrict ourselves to noting two ways in which Archeological research affects the discussion.

The first of these relates to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Though greatly used as evidence for a claim of derivation of Christianity from Jewish sources (see discussion in VI.F.above), the Scrolls strike a blow against the claim of derivation from heathen sources. Many Christian ideas or terms that are said to be derived from heathen religions have been found in expressions in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This does not mean to say that these ideas were derived by Christianity from this Jewish sect. However, it does show that many general ideas and many that were alleged to show pagan influence were actually common in the Jewish culture at the very time of the rise of Christianity.

In the second place, we note the relation of archeological evidence to the sidespread claim that pagan religions and mystery sects were struggling to fill a vacuum in the Roman Empire during the first century. During the first half of the present century extensive excavations were carried out in Egypt, in Syria, in Palestine, and in other regions. Many evidences have been found of the well-established pagan religions, of the