

Prometheus Saga

Excerpt from *Christianity As Mystical Fact*

Mystery Wisdom and Myth

Of particular interest in relation to such an interpretation is the saga of Prometheus. Prometheus and Epimetheus were the sons of the Titan, Japetos. The Titans were the children of the oldest generation of the gods, of Uranos (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth). Kronos, the youngest of the Titans, dethroned his father and seized the rulership of the world. For this, together with the remaining Titans, he was overpowered by his son Zeus. And Zeus became supreme among the gods. In the battle with the Titans, Prometheus stood at the side of Zeus. On his advice Zeus banished the Titans into the nether world. But the Titans' attitude of mind continued to live in Prometheus. He was only half a friend to Zeus. When Zeus wished to destroy men for their presumption, Prometheus took their part, teaching them the art of numbers and writing, as well as other things leading to culture, especially the use of fire. Because of this Zeus was angry with Prometheus. **Hephaestus**, the son of Zeus, was commissioned to fashion the image of a woman of great beauty, which the gods adorned with all kinds of gifts. This woman was known as Pandora, the all-gifted. Hermes, the messenger of the gods, brought her to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. She brought him a casket as a gift from the gods. Epimetheus accepted the gift, despite the fact that Prometheus had advised him on no account to accept a gift from the gods. When the casket was opened, out flew all kinds of human plagues. Hope alone remained inside, and that only because Pandora quickly closed the lid. Therefore Hope has remained as the doubtful gift of the gods. — At the command of Zeus, Prometheus was chained to a rock in the Caucasus because of his relationship with men. An eagle constantly fed upon his liver, which continually renewed itself. Prometheus had to pass his days in tortured solitude until one of the gods voluntarily sacrificed himself, that is, dedicated himself to death. The tortured one bore his suffering steadfastly. He had learned that Zeus would be dethroned by the son of a mortal woman if he did not marry her. Zeus was anxious to know this secret; he sent the messenger of the gods, Hermes, to Prometheus to discover something about it. Prometheus denied him any information. — The legend of Hercules is linked with that of Prometheus. During his travels Hercules also came to the Caucasus. He killed the eagle which was consuming the liver of Prometheus. The centaur, Chiron, who could not die, although suffering from an incurable wound, sacrificed himself for Prometheus. Then the latter was reconciled with the gods.

The Titans are the force of will streaming from the original cosmic spirit (Uranos) in the form of nature (Kronos). Here we must not think of merely abstract forces of will, but of real beings of will. Prometheus belongs among the latter. This characterizes his being. But he is not entirely a Titan. In a certain sense he sides with Zeus, the spirit who assumed the rulership of the world after the unbridled nature-force (Kronos) had been tamed. Prometheus, therefore, represents those worlds which have given man that forward-striving, which is a force half of nature, half of spirit — the will. On the one side the will is directed toward good, on the other side toward evil. Its destiny is formed according to whether it

inclines toward the spiritual or the transitory. This destiny is the destiny of man himself. Man is chained to the transitory. The eagle gnaws at him. He must endure it. He can only attain the heights when he seeks his destiny in solitude. He has a secret. Its content is that the divine (Zeus) must marry a mortal, human consciousness itself, which is bound to the physical body, in order to bring forth a son, human wisdom (the Logos), who will redeem the god. Through this, consciousness becomes immortal. Man may not betray this secret until a mystic (Hercules) approaches him and removes the power which continually threatens him with death. A being, half animal, half human — a centaur — must sacrifice himself to redeem man. The centaur is man himself, the half animal, half spiritual man. He must die so that the purely spiritual man may be redeemed. What Prometheus, the human will, despises, is taken by Epimetheus, the intellect, shrewdness. But the gifts offered to Epimetheus are only troubles and plagues. For the intellect clings to nothingness, to the transitory. And only one thing remains — the hope that out of the transitory, one day the eternal may be born.