# Christianity, Polytheism, and Salvation Origins of Christianity

## Outline

- 1. Polytheism as a Religious System
- 2. The Greco-Roman Mystery Religions
- 3. Christianity among the Mysteries

#### **Terms**

Anthropomorphic syncretism pax deorum Eleusinian mysteries Cybele = Magna Mater Mithras

# **GRECO-ROMAN GODS**

The Olympians Imperial Cult
Jupiter – Zeus Deified emperors
Juno – Hera
Mars – Ares Other Gods

Venus – AphroditeNon-Olympian godsApollo – ApolloForeign godsDiana – ArtemisIdeas

Ceres – Demeter Elements of Nature Bacchus – Dionysus

Mercury – Hermes Household Gods
Neptune – Poseidon Lares

Minerva – Athena
Vulcan – Hephaestus

Lesser Spirits

### Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Greeks, 12

Come, O madman, not leaning on the thyrsus, not crowned with ivy; throw away the mitre, throw away the fawn-skin; come to thy senses. I will show thee the Word, and the mysteries of the Word, expounding them after thine own fashion. This is the mountain beloved of God, not the subject of tragedies like Cithaeron, but consecrated to dramas of the truth,—a mount of sobriety, shaded with forests of purity; and there revel on it not the Maenades, the sisters of Semele, who was struck by the thunderbolt, practising in their initiator rites unholy division of flesh, but the daughters of God, the fair lambs, who celebrate the holy rites of the Word, raising a sober choral dance. The righteous are the chorus; the music is a hymn of the King of the universe. The maidens strike the lyre, the angels praise, the prophets speak; the sound of music issues forth, they run and pursue the jubilant band; those that are called make haste, eagerly desiring to receive the Father.

Come thou also, O aged man, leaving Thebes, and casting away from thee both divination and Bacchic frenzy, allow thyself to be led to the truth. I give thee the staff [of the cross] on which to lean. Haste, Tiresias; believe, and thou wilt see. Christ, by whom the eyes of the blind recover sight, will shed on thee a light brighter than the sun; night will flee from thee, fire will fear, death will be gone; thou, old man, who saw not Thebes, shalt see the heavens. O truly sacred mysteries! O stainless light! My way is lighted with torches, and I survey the heavens and God; I become holy whilst I am initiated. The Lord is the hierophant, and seals while illuminating him who is initiated, and presents to the Father him who believes, to be kept safe for ever. Such are the reveries of my mysteries. If it is thy wish, be thou also initiated; and thou shall join the choir along with angels around the unbegotten and indestructible and the only true God, the Word of God, raising the hymn with us. This Jesus, who is eternal, the one great High Priest of the one God, and of His Father, prays for and exhorts men.

"Hear, ye myriad tribes, rather whoever among men are endowed with reason, both barbarians and Greeks. I call on the whole race of men, whose Creator I am, by the will of the Father. Come to Me, that you may be put in your due rank under the one God and the one Word of God; and do not only have the advantage of the irrational creatures in the possession of reason; for to you of all mortals I grant the enjoyment of immortality. For I want, I want to impart to you this grace, bestowing on you the perfect boon of immortality; and I confer on you both the Word and the knowledge of God, My complete self. This am I, this God wills, this is symphony, this the harmony of the Father, this is the Son, this is Christ, this the Word of God, the arm of the Lord, the power of the universe, the will of the Father; of which things there were images of old, but not all adequate. I desire to restore you according to the original model, that ye may become also like Me. I anoint you with the ungent of faith, by which you throw off corruption, and show you the naked form of righteousness by which you ascend to God. Come to Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden light."