

The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah

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Book II Bethlehem to the Baptism in Jordan

Chapter 1 In Jerusalem when Herod Reigned

If the dust of ten centuries could have been wiped from the eyelids of those sleepers, and one of them who thronged Jerusalem in the highday of its glory, during the reign of King Solomon, had returned to its streets, he would scarcely have recognised the once familiar city. Then, as now, a Jewish king reigned, who bore undivided rule over the whole land; then, as now, the city was filled with riches and adorned with palaces and architectural monuments; then, as now, Jerusalem was crowded with strangers from all lands. Solomon and Herod were each the last Jewish king over the Land of Promise; Solomon and Herod, each, built the Temple. But with the son of David began, and with the Idumaeans ended, the kingdom; or rather, having fulfilled its mission, it gave place to the spiritual world-kingdom of David's greater Son. The sceptre departed from Judah to where the nations were to gather under its sway. And the Temple which Solomon built was the first. In it the Shekinah dwelt visibly. The Temple which Herod reared was the last. The ruins of its burning, which the torch of the Romans had kindled, were never to be restored. Herod was not the antitype, he was the Barabbas, of David's Royal Son.

In other respects, also, the difference was almost equally great. The four companion-like hills on which the city was built, the deep clefts by which it was surrounded, the Mount of Olives rising in the east, were the same as a thousand years ago. There, as of old were the Pool of Siloam and the royal gardens, nay, the very wall that had then surrounded the city. And yet all was so altered as to be scarcely recognisable. The ancient Jebusite fort, the City of David, Mount Zion, was now the priests' quarter, Ophel, and the old royal palace and stables had been thrown into the Temple area now completely levelled where they formed the magnificent treble colonnade, known as the Royal Porch. Passing through it, and out by the Western Gate of the Temple, we stand on the immense bridge which spans the Valley of the Cheesemongers or the Tyropoeon, and connects the Eastern with the Western hills of the city. It is perhaps here that we can best mark the outstanding features, and note the changes. On the right, as we look northward, are (on the Eastern hill) Ophel, the Priest-quarter, and the Temple oh, how wondrously beautiful and enlarged, and rising terrace upon terrace, surrounded by massive walls: a palace, a fortress, a Sanctuary of shining marble and glittering gold. And beyond it frowns the old fortress of Baris, rebuilt by Herod, and named after his patron, Antonia. This is the Hill of Zion. Right below us is the cleft of the Tyropoeon, and here creeps up northwards the Lower City or Acra, in the form of a crescent, widening into an almost square suburb. Across the Tyropoeon westward, rises the Upper City. If the Lower City and suburb form the business-quarter with its markets, bazaars, and streets of trades and guilds, the Upper City is that of palaces. Here, at the other end of the great bridge which connects the Temple with the Upper City is the palace of the Maccabees; beyond it, the Xystos, or vast colonnaded enclosure, where popular assemblies are held; then the Palace of Ananias the High-Priest, and nearest to the Temple, the Council Chamber and public Archives. Behind it, westwards, rise, terrace upon terrace, the stately mansions of the Upper

City, till, quite in the north-west corner of the old city, we reach the Palace which Herod had built for himself almost a city and fortress, flanked by three high towers, and enclosing spacious gardens. Beyond it again, and outside the city walls, both of the first and the second, stretches all north of the city the new suburb of Bezetha. Here on every side are gardens and villas; here passes the great northern road; out there must they have laid hold on Simon the Cyrenian, and here must have led the way to the place of the Crucifixion.

Changes that marked the chequered course of Israel's history had come even over the city walls. The first and oldest that of David and Solomon ran round the west side of the Upper City, then crossed south to the Pool of Siloam, and ran up east, round Ophel, till it reached the eastern enclosure of the Temple, whence it passed in a straight line to the point from which it had started, forming the northern boundary of the ancient city. But although this wall still existed, there was now a marked addition to it. When the Maccabee Jonathan finally cleared Jerusalem of the Syrian garrison that lay in Fort Acra, he built a wall right through the middle of the city so as to shut out the foe. This wall probably ran from the western angle of the Temple southwards, to near the pool of Siloam, following the winding course of the Tyropoeon, but on the other side of it, where the declivity of the Upper City merged in the valley. Another monument of the Syrian Wars, of the Maccabees, and of Herod, was the fortress Antonia. Part of it had, probably, been formerly occupied by what was known as Fort Acra, of such unhappy prominence in the wars that preceded and marked the early Maccabean period. It had passed from the Ptolemies to the Syrians, and always formed the central spot round which the fight for the city turned. Judas Maccabee had not been able to take it. Jonathan had laid siege to it, and built the wall, to which reference has just been made, so as to isolate its garrison. It was at last taken by Simon, the brother and successor of Jonathan, and levelled with the ground. Fort Baris, which was constructed by his successor Hyrcanus I., covered a much wider space. It lay on the northwestern angle of the Temple, slightly jutting beyond it in the west, but not covering the whole northern area of the Temple. The rock on which it stood was higher than the Temple, although lower than the hill up which the new suburb Bezetha crept, which, accordingly, was cut off by a deep ditch, for the safety of the fortress. Herod greatly enlarged and strengthened it. Within encircling walls the fort rose to a height of sixty feet, and was flanked by four towers, of which three had a height of seventy, the fourth (S.E.), which jutted into the Temple area, of 105 feet, so as to command the sacred enclosure. A subterranean passage led into the Temple itself, which was also connected with it by colonnades and stairs. Herod had adorned as well as strengthened and enlarged, this fort (now Antonia), and made it a palace, an armed camp, and almost a city.

Hitherto we have only spoken of the first, or old wall, which was fortified by sixty towers. The second wall, which had only fourteen towers, began at some point in the northern wall at the Gate Gennath, whence it ran north, and then east, so as to enclose Acra and the Suburb. It terminated at Fort Antonia. Beyond, and all around this second wall stretched, as already noticed, the new, as yet unenclosed suburb Bezetha, rising towards the north-east. But these changes were as nothing compared with those within the city itself. First and foremost was the great transformation in the Temple itself, which, from a small building, little larger than an ordinary church, in the time of Solomon, had become that great and glorious House which excited the admiration of the foreigner, and kindled the enthusiasm of every son of Israel. At the time of Christ it had been already forty-six years in building, and workmen were still, and for a long time, engaged on it. But what a heterogeneous crowd thronged its porches and courts! Hellenists; scattered wanderers from the most distant parts of the earth east, west, north, and south; Galileans, quick of temper and uncouth of Jewish speech; Judaeans and Jerusalemites; white-robed Priests and Levites; Temple officials; broad-phyllacteried, wide-fringed Pharisees, and courtly, ironical Sadducees; and, in the outer court, curious Gentiles! Some had come to worship; others to pay vows, or bring offerings, or to seek purification; some to meet friends, and discourse on religious subjects in those colonnaded porches,

which ran round the Sanctuary; or else to have their questions answered, or their causes heard and decided, by the smaller Sanhedrin of twenty-three, that sat in the entering of the gate or by the Great Sanhedrin. The latter no longer occupied the Hall of Hewn Stones, Gazith, but met in some chamber attached to those shops or booths, on the Temple Mount, which belonged to the High-Priestly family of Ananias, and where such profitable trade was driven by those who, in their cupidity and covetousness, were worthy successors of the sons of Eli. In the Court of the Gentiles (or in its porches) sat the official money-changers, who for a fixed discount changed all foreign coins into those of the Sanctuary. Here also was that great mart for sacrificial animals, and all that was requisite for offerings. How the simple, earnest country people, who came to pay vows, or bring offerings for purifying, must have wondered, and felt oppressed in that atmosphere of strangely blended religious rigorism and utter worldliness; and how they must have been taxed, imposed upon, and treated with utmost curtness, nay, rudeness, by those who laughed at their boorishness, and despised them as cursed, ignorant country people, little better than heathens, or, for that matter, than brute beasts. Here also there lay about a crowd of noisy beggars, unsightly from disease, and clamorous for help. And close by passed the luxurious scion of the High-Priestly families; the proud, intensely self-conscious Teacher of the Law, respectfully followed by his disciples; and the quick-witted, subtle Scribe. These were men who, on Sabbaths and feast-days, would come out on the Temple-terrace to teach the people, or condescend to answer their questions; who in the Synagogues would hold their puzzled hearers spell-bound by their traditional lore and subtle argumentation, or tickle the fancy of the entranced multitude, that thronged every available space, by their ingenious frivolities, their marvellous legends, or their clever sayings; but who would, if occasion required, quell an opponent by well-poised questions, or crush him beneath the sheer weight of authority. Yet others were there who, despite the utterly lowering influence which the frivolities of the prevalent religion, and the elaborate trifling of its endless observances, must have exercised on the moral and religious feelings of all perhaps, because of them turned aside, and looked back with loving gaze to the spiritual promises of the past, and forward with longing expectancy to the near consolation of Israel waiting for it in prayerful fellowship, and with bright, heaven-granted gleams of its dawning light amidst the encircling gloom.

Descending from the Temple into the city, there was more than enlargement, due to the increased population. Altogether, Jerusalem covered, at its greatest, about 300 acres. As of old there were still the same narrow streets in the business quarters; but in close contiguity to bazaars and shops rose stately mansions of wealthy merchants, and palaces of princes. And what a change in the aspect of these streets, in the character of those shops, and, above all, in the appearance of the restless Eastern crowd that surged to and fro! Outside their shops in the streets, or at least in sight of the passers, and within reach of their talk, was the shoemaker hammering his sandals, the tailor plying his needle, the carpenter, or the worker in iron and brass. Those who were less busy, or more enterprising, passed along, wearing some emblem of their trade: the dyer, variously coloured threads; the carpenter, a rule; the writer, a reed behind his ear; the tailor, with a needle prominently stuck in his dress. In the side streets the less attractive occupations of the butcher, the wool-comber, or the flaxspinner were pursued: the elegant workmanship of the goldsmith and jeweller; the various articles de luxe, that adorned the houses of the rich; the work of the designer, the moulder, or the artificer in iron or brass. In these streets and lanes everything might be purchased: the production of Palestine, or imported from foreign lands nay, the rarest articles from the remotest parts. Exquisitely shaped, curiously designed and jewelled cups, rings and other workmanship of precious metals; glass, silks, fine linen, woollen stuffs, purple, and costly hangings; essences, ointments, and perfumes, as precious as gold; articles of food and drink from foreign lands in short, what India, Persia, Arabia, Media Egypt, Italy, Greece, and even the far-off lands of the Gentiles yielded, might be had in these bazaars.

Ancient Jewish writings enable us to identify no fewer than 118 different articles of import from foreign lands, covering more than even modern luxury has devised. Articles of luxury, especially from abroad, fetched indeed enormous prices; and a lady might spend 36l. on a cloak; silk would be paid by its weight in gold; purple wool at 3l. 5s. the pound, or, if double-dyed, at almost ten times that amount; while the price of the best balsam and nard was most exorbitant. On the other hand, the cost of common living was very low. In the bazaars you might get a complete suit for your slave for eighteen or nineteen shillings, and a tolerable outfit for yourself from 3l. to 6l. For the same sum you might purchase an ass, an ox, or a cow, and, for little more, a horse. A calf might be had for less than fifteen shillings, a goat for five or six. Sheep were dearer, and fetched from four to fifteen or sixteen shillings, while a lamb might sometimes be had as low as two pence. No wonder living and labour were so cheap. Corn of all kinds, fruit, wine, and oil, cost very little. Meat was about a penny a pound; a man might get himself a small, of course unfurnished, lodging for about sixpence a week. A day labourer was paid about 7½d. a day, though skilled labour would fetch a good deal more. Indeed, the great Hillel was popularly supposed to have supported his family on less than twopence a day, while property to the amount of about 6l., or trade with 2l. or 3l. of goods, was supposed to exclude a person from charity, or a claim on what was left in the corners of fields and the gleaners.

To these many like details might be added. Sufficient has been said to show the two ends of society: the exceeding dearness of luxuries, and the corresponding cheapness of necessities. Such extremes would meet especially at Jerusalem. Its population, computed at from 200,000 to 250,000, was enormously swelled by travellers, and by pilgrims during the great festivals. The great Palace was the residence of King and Court, with all their following and luxury; in Antonia lay afterwards the Roman garrison. The Temple called thousands of priests, many of them with their families, to Jerusalem; while the learned Academies were filled with hundreds, though it may have been mostly poor, scholars and students. In Jerusalem must have been many of the large warehouses for the near commercial harbour of Joppa; and thence, as from the industrial centres of busy Galilee, would the pedlar go forth to carry his wares over the land. More especially would the markets of Jerusalem, held, however, in bazaars and streets rather than in squares, be thronged with noisy sellers and bargaining buyers. Thither would Galilee send not only its manufactures, but its provisions: fish (fresh or salted), fruit known for its lusciousness, oil, grape-syrup, and wine. There were special inspectors for these markets the Agardemis or Agronimos who tested weights and measures, and officially stamped them, tried the soundness of food or drink, and occasionally fixed or lowered the market-prices, enforcing their decision, if need were, even with the stick. Not only was there an upper and a lower market in Jerusalem, but we read of at least seven special markets: those for cattle, wool, iron-ware, clothes, wood, bread, and fruit and vegetables. The original market-days were Monday and Tuesday, afterwards Friday. The large fairs (Yeridin) were naturally confined to the centres of import and export the borders of Egypt (Gaza), the ancient Phoenician maritime towns (Tyre and Acco), and the Emporium across the Jordan (Botnah). 39 Besides, every caravansary, or khan (qatlīs, atlis, katalusiV), was a sort of mart, where goods were unloaded, and especially cattle set out for sale, and purchases made. But in Jerusalem one may suppose the sellers to have been every day in the market; and the magazines, in which greengrocery and all kinds of meat were sold (the Beth haShevaqim), must have been always open. Besides, there were the many shops (Chanuyoth) either fronting the streets, or in courtyards, or else movable wooden booths in the streets. Strangely enough, occasionally Jewish women were employed in selling. Business was also done in the restaurants and wineshops, of which there were many; where you might be served with some dish: fresh or salted fish, fried locusts, a mess of vegetables, a dish of soup, pastry, sweetmeats, or a piece of a fruit-cake, to be washed down with Judæan or Galilean wine, Idumæan vinegar, or foreign beer. If from these busy scenes we turn to the more aristocratic quarters of the Upper City, we still see the same narrow streets, but tenanted by another class. First, we pass the High-Priest's palace on the

slope of the hill, with a lower story under the principal apartments, and a porch in front. Here, on the night of the Betrayal, Peter was beneath in the Palace. Next, we come to Xystos, and then pause for a moment at the Palace of the Maccabees. It lies higher up the hill, and westward from the Xytos. From its halls you can look into the city, and even into the Temple. We know not which of the Maccabees had built this palace. But it was occupied, not by the actually reigning prince, who always resided in the fortress (Baris, afterwards Antonia), but by some other member of the family. From them it passed into the possession of Herod. There Herod Antipas was when, on that terrible Passover, Pilate sent Jesus from the old palace of Herod to be examined by the Ruler of Galilee. If these buildings pointed to the difference between the past and present, two structures of Herod's were, perhaps, more eloquent than any words in their accusations of the Idumaeen. One of these, at least, would come in sight in passing along the slopes of the Upper City. The Maccabean rule had been preceded by that of corrupt High-Priests, who had prostituted their office to the vilest purposes. One of them, who had changed his Jewish name of Joshua into Jason, had gone so far, in his attempts to Grecianise the people, as to build a Hippodrome and Gymnasium for heathen games. We infer, it stood where the Western hill sloped into the Tyropoeon, to the south-west of the Temple. It was probably this which Herod afterwards enlarged and beautified, and turned into a theatre. No expense was spared on the great games held there. The theatre itself was magnificently adorned with gold, silver, precious stones, and trophies of arms and records of the victories of Augustus. But to the Jews this essentially heathen place, over against their Temple, was cause of deep indignation and plots. Besides this theatre, Herod also built an immense amphitheatre, which we must locate somewhere in the north-west, and outside the second city wall.

All this was Jerusalem above ground. But there was an under ground Jerusalem also, which burrowed everywhere under the city under the Upper City, under the Temple, beyond the city walls. Its extent may be gathered from the circumstance that, after the capture of the city, besides the living who had sought shelter there, no fewer than 2,000 dead bodies were found in those subterranean streets.

Close by the tracks of heathenism in Jerusalem, and in sharp contrast, was what gave to Jerusalem its intensely Jewish character. It was not only the Temple, nor the festive pilgrims to its feasts and services. But there were hundreds of Synagogues, some for different nationalities such as the Alexandrians, or the Cyrenians; some for, or perhaps founded by, certain trade-guilds. If possible, the Jewish schools were even more numerous than the Synagogues. Then there were the many Rabbinic Academies; and, besides, you might also see in Jerusalem that mysterious sect, the Essenes, of which the members were easily recognised by their white dress. Essenes, Pharisees, stranger Jews of all hues, and of many dresses and languages! One could have imagined himself almost in another world, a sort of enchanted land, in this Jewish metropolis, and metropolis of Judaism. When the silver trumpets of the Priests woke the city to prayer, or the strain of Levite music swept over it, or the smoke of the sacrifices hung like another Shekhinah over the Temple, against the green background of Olivet; or when in every street, court, and housetop rose the booths at the Feast of Tabernacles, and at night the sheen of the Temple illumination threw long fantastic shadows over the city; or when, at the Passover, tens of thousands crowded up the Mount with their Paschal lambs, and hundreds of thousands sat down to the Paschal supper it would be almost difficult to believe, that heathenism was so near, that the Roman was virtually, and would soon be really, master of the land, or that a Herod occupied the Jewish throne.

Yet there he was; in the pride of his power, and the reckless cruelty of his ever-watchful tyranny. Everywhere was his mark. Temples to the gods and to Caesar, magnificent, and magnificently adorned, outside Palestine and in its non-Jewish cities; towns rebuilt or built: Sebaste for the ancient Samaria, the splendid city and harbour of Caesarea in the west, Antipatris (after his father) in the north, Kypros and Phasaelis (after his mother and brother), and Agrippeion; unconquerable

fortresses, such as Essebonitis and Machoerus in Peraea, Alexandreion, Herodeion, Hyrcania, and Masada in Judaea proclaimed his name and sway. But in Jerusalem it seemed as if he had gathered up all his strength. The theatre and amphitheatre spoke of his Grecianism; Antonia was the representative fortress; for his religion he had built that glorious Temple, and for his residence the noblest of palaces, at the north-western angle of the Upper City, close by where Milo had been in the days of David. It seems almost incredible, that a Herod should have reared the Temple, and yet we can understand his motives. Jewish tradition had it, that a Rabbi (Baba ben Buta) had advised him in this manner to conciliate the people, or else thereby to expiate the slaughter of so many Rabbis. Probably a desire to gain popularity, and superstition, may alike have contributed, as also the wish to gratify his love for splendour and building. At the same time, he may have wished to show himself a better Jew than that rabble of Pharisees and Rabbis, who perpetually would cast it in his teeth, that he was an Idumaeen. Whatever his origin, he was a true king of the Jews as great, nay greater, than Solomon himself. Certainly, neither labour nor money had been spared on the Temple. A thousand vehicles carried up the stone; 10,000 workmen, under the guidance of 1,000 priests, wrought all the costly material gathered into that house, of which Jewish tradition could say, He that has not seen the temple of Herod, has never known what beauty is. And yet Israel despised and abhorred the builder! Nor could his apparent work for the God of Israel have deceived the most credulous. In youth he had browbeaten the venerable Sanhedrin, and threatened the city with slaughter and destruction; again and again had he murdered her venerable sages; he had shed like water the blood of her Asmonean princes, and of every one who dared to be free; had stifled every national aspiration in the groans of the torture, and quenched it in the gore of his victims. Not once, nor twice, but six times did he change the High-Priesthood, to bestow it at last on one who bears no good name in Jewish theology, a foreigner in Judaea, an Alexandrian. And yet the power of that Idumaeen was but of yesterday, and of mushroom growth!

Chapter 2 The Personal History of Herod

The Two Worlds in Jerusalem

It is an intensely painful history, 1 in the course of which Herod made his way to the throne. We look back nearly two and a half centuries to where, with the empire of Alexander, Palestine fell to his successors. For nearly a century and a half it continued the battle-field of the Egyptian and Syrian kings (the Ptolemies and the Seleucidae). At last it was a corrupt High-Priesthood with which virtually the government of the land had all along lain that betrayed Israel's precious truth. The great-grandson of so noble a figure in Jewish history as Simon the Just (compare Eccles. 1.) bought from the Syrians the High-Priestly office of his brother, adopted the heathen name Jason, and sought to Grecianise the people. The sacred office fell, if possible, even lower when, through bribery, it was transferred to his brother Menelaus. Then followed the brief period of the terrible persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, when Judaism was all but exterminated in Palestine. The glorious uprising of the Maccabees called forth all the national elements left in Israel, and kindled afresh the smouldering religious feeling. It seemed like a revival of Old Testament times. And when Judas the Maccabee, with a band so inferior in numbers and discipline, defeated the best of the Syrian soldiery, led by its ablest generals, and, on the anniversary of its desecration by heathen rites, set up again the great altar of burnt-offering, it appeared as if a new Theocracy were to be inaugurated. The ceremonial of that feast of the new dedication of the Temple when each night the number of lights grew larger in the winter's darkness, seemed symbolic of what was before Israel. But the Maccabees were not the Messiah; nor yet the

kingdom, which their sword would have restored that of Heaven, with its blessings and peace. If ever, Israel might then have learned what Saviour to look for.

The period even of promise was more brief than might have been expected. The fervour and purity of the movement ceased almost with its success. It was certainly never the golden age of Israel not even among those who remained faithful to its God which those seem to imagine who, forgetful of its history and contests, would trace to it so much that is most precious and spiritual in the Old Testament. It may have been the pressure of circumstances, but it was anything but a pious, or even a happy thought of Judas the Maccabee, to seek the alliance of the Romans. From their entrance on the scene dates the decline of Israel's national cause. For a time, indeed though after varying fortunes of war all seemed prosperous. The Maccabees became both High-Priests and Kings. But party strife and worldliness, ambition and corruption, and Grecianism on the throne, soon brought their sequel in the decline of morale and vigour, and led to the decay and decadence of the Maccabean house. It is a story as old as the Old Testament, and as wide as the history of the world. Contention for the throne among the Maccabees led to the interference of the foreigner. When, after capturing Jerusalem, and violating the sanctity of the Temple, although not plundering its treasures, Pompey placed Hyrcanus II. in the possession of the High-Priesthood, the last of the Maccabean rulers was virtually shorn of power. The country was now tributary to Rome, and subject to the Governor of Syria. Even the shadow of political power passed from the feeble hands of Hyrcanus when, shortly afterwards, Gabinius (one of the Roman governors) divided the land into five districts, independent of each other.

But already a person had appeared on the stage of Jewish affairs, who was to give them their last decisive turn. About fifty years before this, the district of Idumaea had been conquered by the Maccabean King Hyrcanus I., and its inhabitants forced to adopt Judaism. By this Idumaea we are not, however, to understand the ancient or Eastern Edom, which was now in the hands of the Nabataeans, but parts of Southern Palestine which the Edomites had occupied since the Babylonian Exile, and especially a small district on the northern and eastern boundary of Judaea, and below Samaria. After it became Judaeian, its administration was entrusted to a governor. In the reign of the last of the Maccabees this office devolved on one Antipater, a man of equal cunning and determination. He successfully interfered in the unhappy dispute for the crown, which was at last decided by the sword of Pompey. Antipater took the part of the utterly weak Hyrcanus in that contest with his energetic brother Aristobulus. He soon became the virtual ruler, and Hyrcanus II. only a puppet in his hands. From the accession of Judas Maccabaeus, in 166 b.c., to the year 63 b.c., when Jerusalem was taken by Pompey, only about a century had elapsed. Other twenty-four years, and the last of the Maccabees had given place to the son of Antipater: Herod, surnamed the Great.

The settlement of Pompey did not prove lasting. Aristobulus, the brother and defeated rival of Hyrcanus, was still alive, and his sons were even more energetic than he. The risings attempted by them, the interference of the Parthians on behalf of those who were hostile to Rome, and, lastly, the contentions for supremacy in Rome itself, made this period one of confusion, turmoil, and constant warfare in Palestine. When Pompey was finally defeated by Caesar, the prospects of Antipater and Hyrcanus seemed dark. But they quickly changed sides; and timely help given to Caesar in Egypt brought to Antipater the title of Procurator of Judaea, while Hyrcanus was left in the High-Priesthood, and, at least, nominal head of the people. The two sons of Antipater were now made governors: the elder, Phasaelus, of Jerusalem; the younger, Herod, only twenty-five years old, of Galilee. Here he displayed the energy and determination which were his characteristics, in crushing a guerilla warfare, of which the deeper springs were probably national. The execution of its leader brought Herod a summons to appear before the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, for having arrogated to himself the power of life and death. He came, but arrayed in purple, surrounded by a body-guard, and supported by the express direction of the Roman Governor to Hyrcanus, that he was to be acquitted. Even so he

would have fallen a victim to the apprehensions of the Sanhedrin only too well grounded had he not been persuaded to withdrawn from the city. He returned at the head of an army, and was with difficulty persuaded by his father to spare Jerusalem . Meantime Caesar had named him Governor of Coelesyria.

On the murder of Caesar, and the possession of Syria by Cassius, Antipater and Herod again changed sides. But they rendered such substantial service as to secure favour, and Herod was continued in the position conferred on him by Caesar. Antipater was, indeed, poisoned by a rival, but his sons Herod and Phasaelus repressed and extinguished all opposition. When the battle of Philippi placed the Roman world in the hands of Antony and Octavius, the former obtained Asia. Once more the Idumaeans knew how to gain the new ruler, and Phasaelus and Herod were named Tetrarchs of Judaea. Afterwards, when Antony was held in the toils of Cleopatra, matters seemed, indeed, to assume a different aspect. The Parthians entered the land, in support of the rival Maccabean prince Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus. By treachery, Phasaelus and Hyrcanus were induced to go to the Parthian camp, and made captives. Phasaelus shortly afterwards destroyed himself in his prison, while Hyrcanus was deprived of his ears, to unfit him for the High-Priestly office. And so Antigonus for a short time succeeded both to the High-Priesthood and royalty in Jerusalem. Meantime Herod, who had in vain warned his brother and Hyrcanus against the Parthian, had been able to make his escape from Jerusalem. His family he left to the defence of his brother Joseph, in the inaccessible fortress of Masada; himself fled into Arabia, and finally made his way to Rome. There he succeeded, not only with Antony, but obtained the consent of Octavius, and was proclaimed by the Senate King of Judaea. A sacrifice on the Capitol, and a banquet by Antony, celebrated the accession of the new successor of David.

But he had yet to conquer his kingdom. At first he made way by the help of the Romans. Such success, however, as he had gained, was more than lost during his brief absence on a visit to Antony. Joseph, the brother of Herod, was defeated and slain, and Galilee, which had been subdued, revolted again. But the aid which the Romans rendered, after Herod's return from Antony , was much more hearty, and his losses were more than retrieved. Soon all Palestine', with the exception of Jerusalem , was in his hands. While laying siege to it, he went to Samaria , there to wed the beautiful Maccabean princess Mariamme, who had been betrothed to him five years before. That ill-fated Queen, and her elder brother Aristobulus, united in themselves the two rival branches of the Maccabean family. Their father was Alexander, the eldest son of Aristobulus, and brother of that Antigonus whom Herod now besieged in Jerusalem; and their mother, Alexandra, the daughter of Hyrcanus II. The uncle of Mariamme was not long able to hold out against the combined forces of Rome and Herod. The carnage was terrible. When Herod, by rich presents, at length induced the Romans to leave Jerusalem, they took Antigonus with them. By desire of Herod he was executed.

This was the first of the Maccabees who fell victim to his jealousy and cruelty. The history which now follows is one of sickening carnage. The next to experience his vengeance were the principal adherents in Jerusalem of his rival Antigonus. Forty-five of the noblest and richest were executed. His next step was to appoint an obscure Babylonian to the High-Priesthood. This awakened the active hostility of Alexandra, the mother of Marimme, Herod's wife. The Maccabean princess claimed the High-Priesthood for her son Aristobulus. Her intrigues with Cleopatra and through her with Antony and the entreaties of Mariamme, the only being whom Herod loved, though in his own mad way, prevailed. At the age of seventeen Aristobulus was made High-Prie But Herod, who well knew the hatred and contempt of the Maccabean members of his family, had his mother-in-law watched, a precaution increased after the vain attempt of Alexandra to have herself and her son removed in coffins from Jerusalem , to flee to Cleopatra. Soon the jealousy and suspicions of Herod were raised to murderous madness, by the acclamations which greeted the young Aristobulus at the Feast of Tabernacles. So dangerous a Maccabean rival must be got rid of; and, by secret order of Herod,

Aristobulus was drowned while bathing. His mother denounced the murderer, and her influence with Cleopatra, who also hated Herod, led to his being summoned before Antony. Once more bribery, indeed, prevailed; but other troubles awaited Herod.

When obeying the summons of Antony, Herod had committed the government to his uncle Joseph, who was also his brother-in-law, having wedded Salome, the sister of Herod. His mad jealousy had prompted him to direct that, in case of his condemnation, Mariamme was to be killed, that she might not become the wife of another. Unfortunately, Joseph told this to Mariamme, to show how much she was loved. But on the return of Herod, the infamous Salome accused her old husband of impropriety with Mariamme. When it appeared that Joseph had told the Queen of his commission, Herod, regarding it as confirming his sister's charge, ordered him to be executed, without even a hearing. External complications of the gravest kind now supervened. Herod had to cede to Cleopatra the districts of Phoenice and Philistia, and that of Jericho with its rich balsam plantations. Then the dissensions between Antony and Octavius involved him, in the cause of the former, in a war with Arabia', whose king had failed to pay tribute to Cleopatra. Herod was victorious; but he had now to reckon with another master. The battle of Actium decided the fate on Antony, and Herod had to make his peace with Octavius. Happily, he was able to do good service to the new cause, ere presenting himself before Augustus. But, in order to be secure from all possible rivals, he had the aged Hyrcanus II. executed, on pretence of intrigues with the Arabs. Herod was successful with Augustus; and when, in the following summer, he furnished him supplies on his march to Egypt, he was rewarded by a substantial addition of territory.

When about to appear before Augustus, Herod had entrusted to one Soemus the charge of Mariamme, with the same fatal directions as formerly to Joseph. Again Mariamme learnt the secret; again the old calumnies were raised this time not only by Salome, but also by Kypros, Herod's mother; and again Herod imagined he had found corroborative evidence. Soemus was slain without a hearing, and the beautiful Mariamme executed after a mock trial. The most fearful paroxysm of remorse, passion, and longing for his murdered wife now seized the tyrant, and brought him to the brink of the grave. Alexandra, the mother of Mariamme, deemed the moment favorable for her plots but she was discovered, and executed. Of the Maccabean race there now remained only distant members, the sons of Babas, who had found an asylum with Costobarus, the Governor of Idumaea, who had wedded Salome after the death of her first husband. Tired of him, as she had been of Joseph, Salome denounced her second husband; and Costobarus, as well as the sons of Babas, fell victims to Herod. Thus perished the family of the Maccabees.

The hand of the maddened tyrant was next turned against his own family. Of his ten wives, we mention only those whose children occupy a place in this history. The son of Doris was Antipater; those of the Maccabean Mariamme, Alexander and Aristobulus; another Mariamme, whose father Herod had made High-Priest, bore him a son named Herod (a name which other of the sons shared); Malthake, a Samaritan, was the mother of Archelaus and Herod Antipas; and, lastly, Cleopatra of Jerusalem bore Philip. The sons of the Maccabean princess, as heirs presumptive, were sent to Rome for their education. On this occasion Herod received, as reward for many services, the country east of the Jordan, and was allowed to appoint his still remaining brother, Pheroras, Tetrarch of Peraea. On their return from Rome the young princes were married: Alexander to a daughter of the King of Cappadocia, and Aristobulus to his cousin Berenice, the daughter of Salome. But neither kinship, nor the yet nearer relation in which Aristobulus now stood to her, could extinguish the hatred of Salome towards the dead Maccabean princess or her children. Nor did the young princes, in their pride of descent, disguise their feelings towards the house of their father. At first, Herod gave not heed to the denunciations of his sister. Presently he yielded to vague apprehensions. As a first step, Antipater, the son of Doris, was recalled from exile, and sent to Rome for education. So the breach became open; and Herod took his sons to Italy, to lay formal accusation against them before

Augustus. The wise counsels of the Emperor restored peace for a time. But Antipater now returned to Palestine, and joined his calumnies to those of Salome. Once more the King of Cappadocia succeeded in reconciling Herod and his sons. But in the end the intrigues of Salome, Antipater, and of an infamous foreigner who had made his way at Court, prevailed. Alexander and Aristobulus were imprisoned, and an accusation of high treason laid against them before the Emperor. Augustus gave Herod full powers, but advised the convocation of a mixed tribunal of Jews and Romans to try the case. As might have been expected, the two princes were condemned to death, and when some old soldiers ventured to intercede for them, 300 of the supposed adherents of the cause were cut down, and the two princes strangled in prison. This happened in Samaria, where, thirty years before, Herod had wedded their ill-fated mother.

Antipater was now the heir presumptive. But, impatient of the throne, he plotted with Herod's brother, Pheroras, against his father. Again Salome denounced her nephew and her brother. Antipater withdrew to Rome'; but when, after the death of Pheraras, Herod obtained indubitable evidence that his son had plotted against his life, he lured Antipater to Palestine, where on his arrival he was cast into prison. All that was needed was the permission of Augustus for his execution. It arrived, and was carried out only five days before the death of Herod himself. So ended a reign almost unparalleled for reckless cruelty and bloodshed, in which the murder of the Innocents in Bethlehem formed but so trifling an episode among the many deeds of blood, as to have seemed not deserving of record on the page of the Jewish historian.

But we can understand the feelings of the people towards such a King. They hated the Idumaeen; they detested his semi-heathen reign; they abhorred his deeds of cruelty. The King had surrounded himself with foreign councillors, and was protected by foreign mercenaries from Thracia, Germany, and Gaul. So long as he lived, no woman's honour was safe, no man's life secure. An army of all-powerful spies pervaded Jerusalem nay, the King himself was said to stoop to that office. If pique or private enmity led to denunciation, the torture would extract any confession from the most innocent. What his relation to Judaism had been, may easily be inferred. He would be a Jew even build the Temple, advocate the cause of the Jews in other lands, and, in a certain sense, conform to the Law of Judaism. In building the Temple, he was so anxious to conciliate national prejudice, that the Sanctuary itself was entrusted to the workmanship of priests only. Nor did he ever intrude into the Holy Place, nor interfere with any functions of the priesthood. None of his coins bear devices which could have shocked popular feeling, nor did any of the buildings he erected in Jerusalem exhibit any forbidden emblems. The Sanhedrin did exist during his reign, though it must have been shorn of all real power, and its activity confined to ecclesiastical, or semi-ecclesiastical, causes. Strangest of all, he seems to have had at least the passive support of two of the greatest Rabbis the Pollio and Sameas of Josephus supposed to represent those great figures in Jewish tradition, Abtalion and Shemajah. We can but conjecture, that they preferred even his rule to what had preceded; and hoped it might lead to a Roman Protectorate, which would leave Judaea practically independent, or rather under Rabbinic rule.

It was also under the government of Herod, that Hillel and Shammai lived and taught in Jerusalem: the two, whom tradition designates as the fathers of old. Both gave their names to schools whose direction was generally different not unfrequently, it seems, chiefly for the sake of opposition. But it is not correct to describe the former as consistently the more liberal and mild. The teaching of both was supposed to have been declared by the Voice from Heaven (the Bath-Qol) as the words of the living God; yet the Law was to be henceforth according to the teaching of Hillel. But to us Hillel is so intensely interesting, not merely as the mild and gentle, nor only as the earnest student who came from Babylon to learn in the Academies of Jerusalem; who would support his family on a third of his scanty wages as a day labourer, that he might pay for entrance into the schools; and whose zeal and merits were only discovered when, after a severe night, in which, from poverty, he had been unable to

gain admittance into the Academy, his benumbed form was taken down from the window-sill, to which he had crept up not to lose aught of the precious instruction. And for his sake did they gladly break on that Sabbath the sacred re Nor do we think of him, as tradition fables him the descendant of David, 18 possessed of every great quality of body, mind, and heart; nor yet as the second Ezra, whose learning placed him at the head of the Sanhedrin, who laid down the principles afterwards applied and developed by Rabbinism, and who was the real founder of traditionalism. Still less do we think of him, as he is falsely represented by some: as he whose principles closely resemble the teaching of Jesus, or, according to certain writers, were its source. By the side of Jesus we think of him otherwise than this. We remember that, in his extreme old age and near his end, he may have presided over that meeting of Sanhedrin which, in answer to Herod's inquiry, pointed to Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah. We think of him also as the grandfather of that Gamaliel, at whose feet Saul of Tarsus sat. And to us he is the representative Jewish reformer, in the spirit of those times, and in the sense of restoring rather than removing; while we think of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, in the sense of bringing the Kingdom of God to all men, and opening it to all believers.

And so there were two worlds in Jerusalem, side by side. On the one hand, was Grecianism with its theatre and amphitheatre; foreigners filling the Court, and crowding the city; foreign tendencies and ways, from the foreign King downwards. On the other hand, was the old Jewish world, becoming now set and ossified in the Schools of Hillel and Shammai, and overshadowed by Temple and Synagogue. And each was pursuing its course, by the side of the other. If Herod had everywhere his spies, the Jewish law provided its two police magistrates in Jerusalem, the only judges who received remuneration. If Herod judged cruelly and despotically, the Sanhedrin weighed most deliberately, the balance always inclining to mercy. If Greek was the language of the court and camp, and indeed must have been understood and spoken by most in the land, the language of the people, spoken also by Christ and His Apostles, was a dialect of the ancient Hebrew, the Western or Palestinian Aramaic. It seems strange, that this could ever have been doubted. A Jewish Messiah Who would urge His claim upon Israel in Greek, seems almost a contradiction in terms. We know, that the language of the Temple and the Synagogue was Hebrew, and that the addresses of the Rabbis had to be targumed into the vernacular Aramaean and can we believe that, in a Hebrew service, the Messiah could have risen to address the people in Greek, or that He would have argued with the Pharisees and Scribes in that tongue, especially remembering that its study was actually forbidden by the Rabbis?

Indeed, it was a peculiar mixture of two worlds in Jerusalem: not only of the Grecian and the Jewish, but of piety and frivolity also. The devotion of the people and the liberality of the rich were unbounded. Fortunes were lavished on the support of Jewish learning, the promotion of piety, or the advance of the national cause. Thousands of votive offerings, and the costly gifts in the Temple, bore evidence of this. Priestly avarice had artificially raised the price of sacrificial animals, a rich man would bring into the Temple at his own cost the number requisite for the poor. Charity was not only open-handed, but most delicate, and one who had been in good circumstances would actually be enabled to live according to his former station. Then these Jerusalemite townspeople, as they called themselves were so polished, so witty, so pleasant. There was a tact in their social intercourse, and a considerateness and delicacy in their public arrangements and provisions, nowhere else to be found. Their very language was different. There was a Jerusalem dialect, quicker, shorter, lighter (Lishna Qalila). And their hospitality, especially at festive seasons, was unlimited. No one considered his house his own, and no stranger or pilgrim but found reception. And how much there was to be seen and heard in those luxuriously furnished houses, and at those sumptuous entertainments! In the women's apartments, friends from the country would see every novelty in dress, adornment, and jewellery, and have the benefit of examining themselves in looking-glasses. To be sure, as being womanish vanity, their use was interdicted to men, except it were to the members of the family of the President of the Sanhedrin, on account of their intercourse with those in authority, just as for the

same reason they were allowed to learn Greek. Nor might even women look in the glass on the Sabbath. But that could only apply to those carried in the hand, since one might be tempted, on the holy day, to do such servile work as to pull out a grey hair with the pincers attached to the end of the glass; but not to a glass fixed in the lid of a basket; nor to such as hung on the wall. And then the lady-visitor might get anything in Jerusalem; from a false tooth to an Arabian veil, a Persian shawl, or an Indian dress!

While the women so learned Jerusalem manners in the inner apartments, the men would converse on the news of the day, or on politics. For the Jerusalemites had friends and correspondents in the most distant parts of the world, and letters were carried by special messengers, in a kind of post-bag. Nay, there seem to have been some sort of receiving-offices in towns, and even something resembling our parcel-po And, strange as it may sound, even a species of newspapers, or broadsheets, appears to have been circulating (Mikhtabhin), not allowed, however, on the Sabbath, unless they treated of public affairs.

Of course, it is difficult accurately to determine which of these things were in use in the earliest times, or else introduced at a later period. Perhaps, however, it was safer to bring them into a picture of Jewish society. Undoubted, and, alas, too painful evidence comes to us of the luxuriousness of Jerusalem at that time, and of the moral corruption to which it led. It seems only too clear, that such commentations as the Talmud gives of Is. iii. 16-24, in regard to the manners and modes of attraction practised by a certain class of the female population in Jerusalem, applied to a far later period than that of the prophet. With this agrees only too well the recorded covert lascivious expressions used by the men, which gives a lamentable picture of the state of morals of many in the city, and the notices of the indecent dress worn not only by women, but even by corrupt High-Priestly youths. Nor do the exaggerated descriptions of what the Midrash on Lamentations describes as the dignity of the Jerusalemites; of the wealth which they lavished on their marriages; of the ceremony which insisted on repeated invitations to the guests to a banquet, and that men inferior in rank should not be bidden to it; of the dress in which they appeared; the manner in which the dishes were served, the wine in white crystal vases; and the punishment of the cook who had failed in his duty, and which was to be commensurate to the dignity of the party give a better impression of the great world in Jerusalem. And yet it was the City of God, over whose destruction not only the Patriarch and Moses, but the Angelic hosts nay, the Almighty Himself and His Shekhinah had made bitterest lamentation. The City of the Prophets, also, since each of them whose birthplace had not been mentioned, must be regarded as having sprung from it. Equally, even more, marked, but now for joy and triumph, would be the hour of Jerusalem's uprising, when it would welcome its Messiah. Oh, when would He come? In the feverish excitement of expectancy they were only too ready to listen to the voice of any pretender, however coarse and clumsy the imposture. Yet He was at hand even now coming: only quite other than the Messiah of their dreams. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become children of God, even to them that believe on His Name.

Chapter 3 The Annunciation of John the Baptist

(Luke 1:5-25.)

It was the time of the Morning Sacrifice. As the massive Temple gates slowly swung on their hinges, a three-fold blast from the silver trumpets of the Priests seemed to waken the City, as with the Voice of God, to the life of another day. As its echoes came in the still air across the cleft of the Tyropoeon, up

the slopes of the Upper City, down the busy quarters below, or away to the new suburb beyond, they must, if but for a moment, have brought holier thoughts to all. For, did it not seem to link the present to the past and the future, as with the golden chain of promises that bound the Holy City to the Jerusalem that was above, which in type had already, and in reality would soon descend from heaven? Patriot, saint, or stranger, he could not have heard it unmoved, as thrice the summons from within the Temple-gates rose and fell.

It had not come too soon. The Levites on ministry, and those of the laity, whose course it was to act as the representatives of Israel, whether in Palestine or far away, in a sacrifice provided by, and offered for, all Israel, hastened to their duties. For already the blush of dawn, for which the Priest on the highest pinnacle of the Temple had watched, to give the signal for beginning the services of the day, had shot its brightness far away to Hebron and beyond. Within the Courts below all had long been busy. At some time previously, unknown to those who waited for the morning whether at cockcrowning, or a little earlier or later, the superintending Priest had summoned to their sacred functions those who had washed according to the ordinance. There must have been each day about fifty priests on duty. Such of them as were ready now divided into two parties, to make inspection of the Temple courts by torchlight. Presently they met, and trooped to the well-known Hall of Hewn Polished Stones, where formerly the Sanhedrin had been wont to sit. The ministry for the day was there apportioned. To prevent the disputes of carnal zeal, the lot was to assign to each his function. Four times was it resorted to: twice before, and twice after the Temple-gates were opened. The first act of their ministry had to be done in the grey dawn, by the fitful red light that glowed on the altar of burnt offering, ere the priests had stirred it into fresh flame. It was scarcely daybreak, when a second time they met for the lot which designated those who were to take part in the sacrifice itself, and who were to trim the golden candlestick, and make ready the altar of incense within the Holy Place. And now morn had broken, and nothing remained before the admission of worshippers but to bring out the lamb, once again to make sure of its fitness for sacrifice, to water it from a golden bowl, and then to lay it in mystic fashion as tradition described the binding of Isaac on the north side of the altar, with its face to the we

All, priests and laity, were present as the Priest, standing on the east side of the altar, from a golden bowl sprinkled with sacrificial blood two sides of the altar, below the red line which marked the difference between ordinary sacrifices and those that were to be wholly consumed. While the sacrifice was prepared for the altar, the priests, whose lot it was, had made ready all within the Holy Place, where the most solemn part of the day's service was to take place that of offering the incense, which symbolised Israel's accepted prayers. Again was the lot (the third) cast to indicate him, who was to be honoured with this highest mediatorial act. Only once in a lifetime might any one enjoy that privilege. Henceforth he was called rich and must leave to his brethren the hope of the distinction which had been granted him. It was fitting that, as the custom was, such lot should be preceded by prayer and confession of their faith on the part of the assembled priests.

It was the first week in October 748 a.u.c., that is, in the sixth year before our present era, when the course of Abia the eighth in the original arrangement of the weekly service was on duty in the Temple. True this, as indeed most of the twenty-four courses into which the Priesthood had been arranged, could not claim identity, only continuity, with those whose names they bore. For only three, or at most four, of the ancient courses had returned from Babylon. But the original arrangement had been preserved, the names of the missing courses being retained, and their number filled up by lot from among those who had come back to Palestine. In our ignorance of the number of houses of their father or families which constituted the course of Abia it is impossible to determine, how the services of that week had been apportioned among them. But this is of comparatively small importance, since there is no doubt about the central figure in the scene.

In the group ranged that autumn morning around the superintending Priest was one, on whom the

snows of at least sixty winters had fallen. But never during these many years had he been honoured with the office of incensing and it was perhaps well he should have learned, that this distinction came direct from God. Yet the venerable figure of Zacharias must have been well known in the Temple . For, each course was twice a year on ministry, and, unlike the Levites, the priests were not disqualified by age, but only by infirmity. In many respects he seemed different from those around. His home was not in either of the great priest-centres the Ophel-quarter in Jerusalem , nor in Jericho but in some small town in those uplands, south of Jerusalem : the historic hill-country of Judea . And yet he might have claimed distinction. To be a priest, and married to the daughter of a priest, was supposed to convey twofold honour. That he was surrounded by relatives and friends, and that he was well known and respected throughout his district, appears incidentally from the narrative. It would, indeed, have been strange had it been otherwise. There was much in the popular habits of thought, as well as in the office and privileges of the Priesthood, if worthily represented, to invest it with a veneration which the aggressive claims of Rabbinism could not wholly monopolise. And in this instance Zacharias and Elisabeth, his wife, were truly righteous in the sense of walking, so far as man could judge, blamelessly alike in those commandments which were specially binding on Israel , and in those statutes that were of universal bearing on mankind. No doubt their piety assumed in some measure the form of the time, being, if we must use the expression, Pharisaic, though in the good, not the evil sense of it.

There is much about those earlier Rabbis Hillel, Gamaliel, and others to attract us, and their spirit oftentimes sharply contrasts with the narrow bigotry, the self-glory, and the unspiritual externalism of their successors. We may not unreasonably infer, that the Tsaddiq in the quiet home of the hill-country was quite other than the self-asserting Rabbi, whose dress and gait, voice and manner, words and even prayers, were those of the religious parvenu, pushing his claims to distinction before angels and men. Such a household as that of Zacharias and Elisabeth would have all that was beautiful in the religion of the time: devotion towards God; a home of affection and purity; reverence towards all that was sacred in things Divine and human; ungrudging, self-denying, loving charity to the poor; the tenderest regard for the feelings of others, so as not to raise a blush, nor to wound their hearts; above all, intense faith and hope in the higher and better future of Israel. Of such, indeed, there must have been not a few in the land the quiet, the prayerful, the pious, who, though certainly not Sadducees nor Essenes, but reckoned with the Pharisaic party, waited for the consolation of Israel , and received it with joy when manifested. Nor could aught more certainly have marked the difference between the one and the other section than on a matter, which must almost daily, and most painfully have forced itself on Zacharias and Elisabeth. There were among the Rabbis those who, remembering the words of the prophet, spoke in most pathetic language of the wrong of parting from the wife of youth, and there were those to whom the bare fact of childlessness rendered separation a religious duty. Elisabeth was childless. For many a year this must have been the burden of Zacharias prayer; the burden also of reproach, which Elisabeth seemed always to carry with her. They had waited together these many years, till in the evening of life the flower of hope had closed its fragrant cup; and still the two sat together in the twilight, content to wait in loneliness, till night would close around them. But on that bright autumn morning in the Temple no such thoughts would come to Zacharias. For the first, and for the last time in life the lot had marked him for incensing, and every thought must have centred on what was before him. Even outwardly, all attention would be requisite for the proper performance of his office. First, he had to choose two of his special friends or relatives, to assist in his sacred service. Their duties were comparatively simple. One reverently removed what had been left on the altar from the previous evening's service; then, worshipping, retired backwards. The second assistant now advanced, and, having spread to the utmost verge of the golden altar the live coals taken from that of burnt-offering, worshipped and retired. Meanwhile the sound of the organ (the Magrephah), heard to the most distant parts of the Temple, and, according to tradition, far beyond its

precincts, had summoned priests, Levites, and people to prepare for whatever service or duty was before them. For, this was the innermost part of the worship of the day. But the celebrant Priest, bearing the golden censer, stood alone within the Holy Place, lit by the sheen of the seven-branched candlestick. Before him somewhat farther away, towards the heavy Veil that hung before the Holy of Holies, was the golden altar of incense, on which the red coals glowed. To his right (the left of the altar that is, on the north side) was the table of shewbread; to his left, on the right or south side of the altar, was the golden candlestick. And still he waited, as instructed to do, till a special signal indicated, that the moment had come to spread the incense on the altar, as near as possible to the Holy of Holies. Priests and people had reverently withdrawn from the neighbourhood of the altar, and were prostrate before the Lord, offering unspoken worship, in which record of past deliverance, longing for mercies promised in the future, and entreaty for present blessing and peace, seemed the ingredients of the incense, that rose in a fragrant cloud of praise and prayer. Deep silence had fallen on the worshippers, as if they watched to heaven the prayers of Israel, ascending in the cloud of odours that rose from the golden altar in the Holy Place. Zacharias waited, until he saw the incense kindling. Then he also would have bowed down in worship and reverently withdrawn, had not a wondrous sight arrested his steps.

On the right (or south) side of the altar, between it and the golden candlestick, stood what he could not but recognise as an Angelic form. Never, indeed, had even tradition reported such a vision to an ordinary Priest in the act of incensing. The two super-natural apparitions recorded one of an Angel each year of the Pontificate of Simon the Just; the other in that blasphemous account of the vision of the Almighty by Ishmael, the son of Elisha, and of the conversation which then ensued had both been vouchsafed to High-Priests, and on the Day of Atonement. Still, there was always uneasiness among the people as any mortal approached the immediate Presence of God, and every delay in his return seemed ominous. No wonder, then, that Zacharias was troubled, and fear fell on him as of a sudden probably just after he had spread the incense on the altar, and was about to offer his parting prayer he beheld what afterwards he knew to be the Angel Gabriel (the might of God). Apart from higher considerations, there could perhaps be no better evidence of the truth of this narrative than its accord with psychological facts. An Apocryphal narrative would probably have painted the scene in agreement with what, in the view of such a writer, should have been the feelings of Zacharias, and the language of the Angel. The Angel would have commenced by referring to Zacharias prayers for the coming of a Messiah, and Zacharias would have been represented in a highly enthusiastic state. Instead of the strangely prosaic objection which he offered to the Angelic announcement, there would have been a burst of spiritual sentiment, or what passed for such. But all this would have been psychologically untrue. There are moments of moral faintness, so to speak, when the vital powers of the spiritual heart are depressed, and, as in the case of the Disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane, the physical part of our being and all that is weakest in us assert their power.

It was true to this state of semi-consciousness, that the Angel first awakened within Zacharias the remembrance of life-long prayers and hopes, which had now passed into the background of his being, and then suddenly startled him by the promise of their realisation. But that Child of so many prayers, who was to bear the significant name of John (Jehochanan, or Jochanan), the Lord is gracious was to be the source of joy and gladness to a far wider circle than that of the family. This might be called the first rung of the ladder by which the Angel would take the priest upwards. Nor was even this followed by an immediate disclosure of what, in such a place, and from such a messenger, must have carried to a believing heart the thrill of almost unspeakable emotion. Rather was Zacharias led upwards, step by step. The Child was to be great before the Lord; not only an ordinary, but a life-Nazarite, as Samson and Samuel of old had been. Like them, he was not to consecrate himself, but from the inception of life wholly to belong to God, for His work. And, greater than either of these

representatives of the symbolical import of Nazarism, he would combine the twofold meaning of their mission outward and inward might in God, only in a higher and more spiritual sense. For this lifework he would be filled with the Holy Ghost, from the moment life woke within him. Then, as another Samson, would he, in the strength of God, lift the axe to each tree to be felled, and, like another Samuel, turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. Nay, combining these two missions, as did Elijah on Mount Carmel, he should, in accordance with prophecy, precede the Messianic manifestation, and, not indeed in the person or form, but in the spirit and power of Elijah, accomplish the typical meaning of his mission, as on that day of decision it had risen as the burden of his prayer that is, in the words of prophecy, turn the heart of the fathers to the children which, in view of the coming dispensation, would be the disobedient (to walk) in the wisdom of the ju Thus would this new Elijah make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

If the apparition of the Angel, in that place, and at that time, had overwhelmed the aged priest, the words which he heard must have filled him with such bewilderment, that for the moment he scarcely realised their meaning. One idea alone, which had struck its roots so long in his consciousness, stood out: A son while, as it were in the dim distance beyond, stretched, as covered with a mist of glory, all those marvellous things that were to be connected with him. So, when age or strong feeling renders us almost insensible to the present, it is ever that which connects itself with the past, rather than with the present, which emerges first and strongest in our consciousness. And so it was the obvious doubt, that would suggest itself, which fell from his lips almost unconscious of what he said. Yet there was in his words an element of faith also, or at least of hope, as he asked for some pledge or confirmation of what he had heard.

It is this demand of some visible sign, by which to know all that the Angel had promised, which distinguishes the doubt of Zacharias from that of Abraham, or of Manoah and his wife, under somewhat similar circumstances although, otherwise also, even a cursory reading must convey the impression of most marked differences. Nor ought we perhaps to forget, that we are on the threshold of a dispensation, to which faith is the only entrance. This door Zacharias was now to hold ajar, a dumb messenger. He that would not speak the praises of God, but asked a sign, received it. His dumbness was a sign though the sign, as it were the dumb child of the prayer of unbelief, was its punishment also. And yet, when rightly applied, a sign in another sense also a sign to the waiting multitude in the Temple; a sign to Elisabeth; to all who knew Zacharias in the hill-country; and to the priest himself, during those nine months of retirement and inward solitude; a sign also that would kindle into flame in the day when God would loosen his tongue.

A period of unusual length had passed, since the signal for incensing had been given. The prayers of the people had been offered, and their anxious gaze was directed towards the Holy Place. At last Zacharias emerged to take his stand on the top of the steps which led from the Porch to the Court of the Priests, waiting to lead in the priestly benediction, 36 that preceded the daily meat-offering and the chant of the Psalms of praise, accompanied with joyous sound of music, as the drink-offering was poured out. But already the sign of Zacharias was to be a sign to all the people. The pieces of the sacrifices had been ranged in due order on the altar of burnt-offering; the priests stood on the steps to the porch, and the people were in waiting. Zacharias essayed to speak the words of benediction, unconscious that the stroke had fallen. But the people knew it by his silence, that he had seen a vision in the Temple. Yet as he stood helpless, trying by signs to indicate it to the awestruck assembly, he remained dumb.

Wondering, they had dispersed people and priests. The day's service over, another family of ministrants took the place of those among whom Zacharias had been; and again, at the close of the week's service, another course that of Abia. They returned to their homes some to Ophel, some to Jericho, some to their quiet dwellings in the country. But God fulfilled the word which He had spoken by His Angel.

Before leaving this subject, it may be well to inquire into the relation between the events just described, and the customs and expectations of the time. The scene in the Temple, and all the surroundings, are in strictest accordance with what we know of the services of the Sanctuary. In a narrative that lays hold on some details of a very complex service, such entire accuracy conveys the impression of general truthfulness. Similarly, the sketch of Zacharias and Elisabeth is true to the history of the time though Zacharias could not have been one of the learned nor to the Rabbins, a model priest. They would have described him as an idiot ³⁷ or common, and as an Amha-arets, a rustic priest, and treated him with benevolent contempt. ³⁸ The Angelic apparition, which he saw, was wholly unprecedented, and could therefore not have lain within range of common expectation; though the possibility, or rather the fear, of some contact with the Divine was always present to the popular mind. But it is difficult to conceive how, if not true, the invention of such a vision in such circumstances could have suggested itself. This difficulty is enhanced by the obvious difference between the Evangelic narrative, and the popular ideas of the time. Far too much importance has here been attached by a certain class of writers to a Rabbinic saying, that the names of the Angels were brought from Babylon. For, not only was this saying (of Ben Lakish) only a clever Scriptural deduction (as the context shows), and not even an actual tradition, but no competent critic would venture to lay down the principle, that isolated Rabbinic sayings in the Talmud are to be regarded as sufficient foundation for historical facts. On the other hand, Rabbinic tradition does lay it down, that the names of the Angels were derived from their mission, and might be changed with it. Thus the reply of the Angel to the inquiry of Manoah is explained as implying, that he knew not what other name might be given him in the future. In the Book of Daniel, to which the son of Lakish refers, the only two Angelic names mentioned are Gabriel and Michael, while the appeal to the Book of Daniel, as evidence of the Babylonish origin of Jewish Angelology, comes with strange inconsistency from writers who date it in Maccabean times. But the question of Angelic nomenclature is quite secondary. The real point at issue is, whether or not the Angelology and Demonology of the New Testament was derived from contemporary Judaism. The opinion that such was the case, has been so dogmatically asserted, as to have almost passed among a certain class as a settled fact. That nevertheless such was not the case, is capable of the most ample proof. Here also, with similarity of form, slighter than usually, there is absolutely contrast of substance.

Admitting that the names of Gabriel and Michael must have been familiar to the mind of Zacharias, some not unimportant differences must be kept in view. Thus, Gabriel was regarded in tradition as inferior to Michael; and, though both were connected with Israel, Gabriel was represented as chiefly the minister of justice, and Michael of mercy; while, thirdly, Gabriel was supposed to stand on the left, and not (as in the Evangelic narrative) on the right, side of the throne of glory. Small as these divergences may seem, they are all important, when derivation of one set of opinions from another is in question. Finally, as regarded the coming of Elijah as forerunner of the Messiah, it is to be observed that, according to Jewish notions, he was to appear personally, and not merely in spirit and power. In fact, tradition represents his ministry and appearances as almost continuous not only immediately before the coming of Messiah, but at all times. Rabbinic writings introduce him on the scene, not only frequently, but on the most incongruous occasions, and for the most diverse purposes. In this sense it is said of him, that he always liveth. Sometimes, indeed, he is blamed, as for the closing words in his prayer about the turning of the heart of the people, and even his sacrifice on Carmel was only excused on the ground of express command. But his great activity as precursor of the Messiah is to resolve doubts of all kinds; to reintroduce those who had been violently and improperly extruded from the congregation of Israel, and vice-versa; to make peace; while, finally, he was connected with the raising of the dead. But nowhere is he prominently designated as intended to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

Thus, from whatever source the narrative may be supposed to have been derived, its details certainly

differ, in almost all particulars, from the theological notions current at the time. And the more Zacharias meditated on this in the long solitude of his enforced silence, the more fully must new spiritual thoughts have come to him. As for Elisabeth, those tender feelings of woman, which ever shrink from the disclosure of the dearest secret of motherhood, were intensely deepened and sanctified in the knowledge of all that had passed. Little as she might understand the full meaning of the future, it must have been to her, as if she also now stood in the Holy Place, gazing towards the Veil which concealed the innermost Presence. Meantime she was content with, nay, felt the need of, absolute retirement from other fellowship than that of God and her own heart. Like her husband, she too would be silent and alone till another voice called her forth. Whatever the future might bring, sufficient for the present, that thus the Lord had done to her, in days in which He looked down to remove her reproach among men. The removal of that burden, its manner, its meaning, its end, were all from God, and with God; and it was fitting to be quite alone and silent, till God's voice would again wake the echoes within. And so five months passed in absolute retirement.

Chapter 4 The Annunciation of Jesus the Messiah

(Matthew 1; Luke 1:26-80)

From the Temple to Nazareth! It seems indeed most fitting that the Evangelic story should have taken its beginning within the Sanctuary, and at the time of sacrifice. Despite its outward veneration for them, the Temple, its services, and specially its sacrifices, were, by an inward logical necessity, fast becoming a superfluity for Rabbinism. But the new development, passing over the intruded elements, which were, after all, of rationalistic origin, connected its beginning directly with the Old Testament dispensation its sacrifices, priesthood, and promises. In the Sanctuary, in connection with sacrifice, and through the priesthood such was significantly the beginning of the era of fulfillment. And so the great religious reformation of Israel under Samuel had also begun in the Tabernacle, which had so long been in the background. But if, even in this Temple-beginning, and in the communication to, and selection of an idiot priest there was marked divergence from the Rabbinic ideal, that difference widens into the sharpest contrast, as we pass from the Forerunner to the Messiah, from the Temple to Galilee, from the idiot priest to the humble, unlettered family of Nazareth. It is necessary here to recall our general impression of Rabbinism: its conception of God, and of the highest good and ultimate object of all things, as concentrated in learned study, pursued in Academies; and then to think of the unmitigated contempt with which they were wont to speak of Galilee, and of the Galileans, whose very patois was an offence; of the utter abhorrence with which they regarded the unlettered country-people, in order to realise, how such an household as that of Joseph and Mary would be regarded by the leaders of Israel. A Messianic announcement, not the result of learned investigation, nor connected with the Academies, but in the Sanctuary, to a rustic priest; an Elijah unable to untie the intellectual or ecclesiastical knots, of whose mission, indeed, this formed no part at all; and a Messiah, the offspring of a Virgin in Galilee betrothed to a humble workman assuredly, such a picture of the fulfillment of Israel's hope could never have been conceived by contemporary Judaism. There was in such a Messiah absolutely nothing past, present, or possible; intellectually, religiously, or even nationally to attract, but all to repel. And so we can, at the very outset of this history, understand the infinite contrast which it embodied with all the difficulties to its reception, even to those who became disciples, as at almost every step of its progress they were, with ever fresh surprise, recalled from all that they had formerly thought, to that which was so entirely new and strange. And yet, just as Zacharias may be described as the representative of the good and the true in the

Priesthood at that time, so the family of Nazareth as a typical Israelitish household. We feel, that the scantiness of particulars here supplied by the Gospels, was intended to prevent the human interest from overshadowing the grand central Fact, to which alone attention was to be directed. For, the design of the Gospels was manifestly not to furnish a biography of Jesus the Messiah, but, in organic connection with the Old Testament, to tell the history of the long-promised establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Yet what scanty details we possess of the Holy Family and its surroundings may here find a place.

The highlands which form the central portion of Palestine are broken by the wide, rich plain of Jezreel, which severs Galilee from the rest of the land. This was always the great battle-field of Israel. Appropriately, it is shut in as between mountain-walls. That along the north of the plain is formed by the mountains of Lower Galilee, cleft about the middle by a valley that widens, till, after an hour's journey, we stand within an enclosure which seems almost one of Nature's own sanctuaries. As in an amphitheatre, fifteen hill-tops rise around. That to the west is the highest about 500 feet. On its lower slopes nestles a little town, its narrow streets ranged like terraces. This is Nazareth, probably the ancient Sarid (or En-Sarid), which, in the time of Joshua, marked the northern boundary of Zebulun. Climbing this steep hill, fragrant with aromatic plants, and bright with rich-coloured flowers, a view almost unsurpassed opens before us. For, the Galilee of the time of Jesus was not only of the richest fertility, cultivated to the utmost, and thickly covered with populous towns and villages, but the centre of every known industry, and the busy road of the world's commerce. Northward the eye would sweep over a rich plain; rest here and there on white towns, glittering in the sunlight; then quickly travel over the romantic hills and glens which form the scenes of Solomon's Song, till, passing beyond Safed (the Tsephath of the Rabbis the city set on a hill), the view is bounded by that giant of the far-off mountain-chain, snow-tipped Hermon. Westward stretched a like scene of beauty and wealth a land not lonely, but wedded; not desolate, but teeming with life; while, on the edge of the horizon, lay purple Carmel; beyond it a fringe of silver sand, and then the dazzling sheen of the Great Sea. In the farthest distance, white sails, like wings outspread towards the ends of the world; nearer, busy ports; then, centres of industry; and close by, travelled roads, all bright in the pure Eastern air and rich glow of the sun. But if you turned eastwards, the eye would soon be arrested by the wooded height of Tabor, yet not before attention had been riveted by the long, narrow string of fantastic caravans, and curiosity roused by the motley figures, of all nationalities and in all costumes, busy binding the East to the West by that line of commerce that passed along the route winding around Tabor. And when, weary with the gaze, you looked once more down on little Nazareth nestling on the breast of the mountain, the eye would rest on a scene of tranquil, homely beauty. Just outside the town, in the north-west, bubbled the spring or well, the trysting-spot of townspeople, and welcome resting-place of travellers. Beyond it stretched lines of houses, each with its flat roof standing out distinctly against the clear sky; watered, terraced gardens, gnarled wide-spreading figtrees, graceful feathery palms, scented oranges, silvery olive-trees, thick hedges, rich pasture-land, then the bounding hills to the south; and beyond, the seemingly unbounded expanse of the wide plain of Esdraelon!

And yet, withdrawn from the world as, in its enclosure of mountains, Nazareth might seem, we must not think of it as a lonely village which only faint echoes reached of what roused the land beyond. With reverence be it said: such a place might have suited the training of the contemplative hermit, not the upbringing of Him Whose sympathies were to be with every clime and race. Nor would such an abode have furnished what (with all due acknowledgment of the supernatural) we mark as a constant, because a rationally necessary, element in Scripture history: that of inward preparedness in which the higher and the Divine afterwards find their ready points of contact.

Nor was it otherwise in Nazareth. The two great interests which stirred the land, the two great factors in the religious future of Israel, constantly met in the retirement of Nazareth. The great caravan-route which led from Acco on the sea to Damascus divided at its commencement into three roads: the most

northern passing through Caesarea Philippi; the Upper Galilean; and the Lower Galilean. The latter, the ancient Via Maris led through Nazareth, and thence either by Cana, or else along the northern shoulder of Mount Tabor, to the Lake of Gennesaret each of these roads soon uniting with the Upper Galilean. 5 Hence, although the stream of commerce between Acco and the East was divided into three channels, yet, as one of these passed through Nazareth, the quiet little town was not a stagnant pool of rustic seclusion. Men of all nations, busy with another life than that of Israel, would appear in the streets of Nazareth; and through them thoughts, associations, and hopes connected with the great outside world be stirred. But, on the other hand, Nazareth was also one of the great centers of Jewish Temple-life. It has already been indicated that the Priesthood was divided into twenty-four courses which, in turn, ministered in the Temple . The Priests of the course which was to be on duty always gathered in certain towns, whence they went up in company to Jerusalem , while those of their number who were unable to go spent the week in fasting and prayer. Now Nazareth was one of these Priest-centres, 6 and although it may well have been, that comparatively few in distant Galilee conformed to the Priestly regulations some must have assembled there in preparation for the sacred functions, or appeared in its Synagogue. Even the fact, so well known to all, of this living connection between Nazareth and the Temple , must have wakened peculiar feelings. Thus, to take the wider view, a double symbolic significance attached to Nazareth , since through it passed alike those who carried on the traffic of the world, and those who ministered in the Temple .

We may take it, that the people of Nazareth were like those of other little towns similarly circumstanced: with all the peculiarities of the impulsive, straight-spoken, hot-blooded, brave, intensely national Galileans; with the deeper feelings and almost instinctive habits of thought and life, which were the outcome of long centuries of Old Testament training; but also with the petty interest and jealousies of such places, and with all the ceremonialism and punctilious self-assertion of Orientals. The cast of Judaism prevalent in Nazareth would, of course, be the same as in Galilee generally. We know that there were marked divergences from the observances in that stronghold of Rabbinism, 10 Judaea indicating greater simplicity and freedom from the constant intrusion of traditional ordinances. The home-life would be all the purer, that the veil of wedded life was not so coarsely lifted as in Judaea, nor its sacred secrecy interfered with by an Argus-eyed legislation. The purity of betrothal in Galilee was less likely to be sullied, and weddings were more simple than in Judaea without the dubious institution of groomsmen, or friends of the bridegroom whose office must not unfrequently have degenerated into utter coarseness. The bride was chosen, not as in Judaea, where money was too often the motive, but as in Jerusalem, with chief regard to a fair degree; and widows were (as in Jerusalem) more tenderly cared for, as we gather even from the fact, that they had a life-right of residence in their husband's house.

Such a home was that to which Joseph was about to bring the maiden, to whom he had been betrothed. Whatever view may be taken of the genealogies in the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke whether they be regarded as those of Joseph and of Mary, or, which seems the more likely, as those of Joseph only, marking his natural and his legal descent from David, or vice versâ there can be no question, that both Joseph and Mary were of the royal lineage of David. 20 Most probably the two were nearly related, while Mary could also claim kinship with the Priesthood, being, no doubt on her mother's side, a blood-relative of Elisabeth, the Priest-wife of Zacharias. Even this seems to imply that Mary's family must shortly before have held higher rank, for only with such did custom sanction any alliance on the part of Priests. But at the time of their betrothal, alike Joseph and Mary were extremely poor, as appears not indeed from his being a carpenter, since a trade was regarded as almost a religious duty but from the offering at the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Accordingly, their betrothal must have been of the simplest, and the dowry settled the smallest possible.

Whichever of the two modes of betrothal may have been adopted: in the presence of witnesses either by solemn word of mouth, in due prescribed formality, with the added pledge of a piece of money,

however small, or of money's worth for use; or else by writing (the so-called Shitre Erusin) there would be no sumptuous feast to follow; and the ceremony would conclude with some such benediction as that afterwards in use: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the World, Who hath sanctified us by His Commandments, and enjoined us about incest, and forbidden the betrothed, but allowed us those wedded by Chuppah (the marriage-baldachino) and betrothal. Blessed art Thou, Who sanctifiest Israel by Chuppah and betrothal' the whole being perhaps concluded by a benediction over the statutory cup of wine, which was tasted in turn by the betrothed. From that moment Mary was the betrothed wife of Joseph; their relationship as sacred, as if they had already been wedded. Any breach of it would be treated as adultery; nor could the band be dissolved except, as after marriage, by regular divorce. Yet months might intervene between the betrothal and marriage.

Five months of Elisabeth's sacred retirement had passed, when a strange messenger brought its first tidings to her kinswoman in far-off Galilee'. It was not in the solemn grandeur of the Temple', between the golden altar of incense and the seven-branched candlesticks that the Angel Gabriel now appeared, but in the privacy of a humble home at Nazareth . The greatest honor bestowed on man was to come amidst circumstances of deepest human lowliness, as if the more clearly to mark the exclusively Divine character of what was to happen. And, although the awe of the Supernatural must unconsciously have fallen upon her, it was not so much the sudden appearance of the mysterious stranger in her retirement that startled the maiden, as the words of his greeting, implying unthought blessing. The Peace to thee was, indeed, the well-known salutation, while the words, The Lord is with thee might waken the remembrance of the Angelic call, to great deliverance in the pa But this designation of highly favored came upon her with bewildering surprise, perhaps not so much from its contrast to the humbleness of her estate, as from the self-conscious humility of her heart. And it was intended so, for of all feelings this would now most become her. Accordingly, it is this story of special favour or grace, which the Angel traces in rapid outline, from the conception of the Virgin Mother to the distinctive, Divinely-given Name, symbolic of the meaning of His coming; His absolute greatness; His acknowledgment as the Son of God; and the fulfillment in Him of the great Davidic hope, with its never-ceasing royalty, and its never-ending, boundless Kingdom.

In all this, however marvellous, there could be nothing strange to those who cherished in their hearts Israel's great hope, not merely as an article of abstract belief, but as matter of certain fact least of all to the maiden of the lineage of David, betrothed to him of the house and lineage of David. So long as the hand of prophetic blessing rested on the house of David, and before its finger had pointed to the individual who found favor in the highest sense, the consciousness of possibilities, which scarce dared shape themselves into definite thoughts, must at times have stirred nameless feelings perhaps the more often in circumstances of outward depression and humility, such as those of the Holy Family. Nor was there anything strange even in the naming of the yet unconceived Child. It sounds like a saying current among the people of old, this of the Rabbis, concerning the six whose names were given before their birth: Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Solomon, Josiah, and the Name of the Messiah, Whom may the Holy One, blessed be His Name, bring quickly in our days! But as for the deeper meaning of the name Jesus, 36 which, like an unopened bud, enclosed the flower of His Passion, that was mercifully yet the unthought-of secret of that sword, which should pierce the soul of the Virgin Mother, and which only His future history would lay open to her and to others.

Thus, on the supposition of the readiness of her believing heart, and her entire self-unconsciousness, it would have been only the glorious announcement of the impending event, which would absorb her thinking with nothing strange about it, or that needed further light, than the how of her own connection with it. And the words, which she spake, were not of trembling doubt, that required to lean on the staff of a sign but rather those of enquiry, for the further guidance of a willing self-surrender. The Angel had pointed her opened eyes to the shining path: that was not strange; only, that She should walk in it,

seemed so. And now the Angel still further unfolded it in words which, however little she may have understood their full meaning, had again nothing strange about them, save once more that she should be thus favoured; words which, even to her understanding, must have carried yet further thoughts of Divine favour, and so deepened her humility. For, the idea of the activity of the Holy Ghost in all great events was quite familiar to Israel at the time, even though the Individuation of the Holy Ghost may not have been fully apprehended. Only, that they expected such influences to rest exclusively upon those who were either mighty, or rich, or wise. And of this twofold manifestation of miraculous favour' that she, and as a Virgin, should be its subject Gabriel, the might of God gave this unasked sign, in what had happened to her kinswoman Elisabeth.

The sign was at the same time a direction. The first, but also the ever-deepening desire in the heart of Mary, when the Angel left her, must have been to be away from Nazareth, and for the relief of opening her heart to a woman, in all things like-minded, who perhaps might speak blessed words to her. And to such an one the Angel himself seemed to have directed her. It is only what we would have expected, that with haste she should have resorted to her kinswoman, without loss of time, and before she would speak to her betrothed of what even in wedded life is the first secret whispered. It could have been no ordinary welcome that would greet the Virgin Mother, on entering the house of her kinswoman. Elisabeth must have learnt from her husband the destiny of their son, and hence the near Advent of the Messiah. But she could not have known either when, or of whom He would be born. When, by a sign not quite strange to Jewish expectancy, she recognised in her near kinswoman the Mother of her Lord, her salutation was that of a mother to a mother the mother of the preparer to the mother of Him for Whom he would prepare. To be more precise: the words which, filled with the Holy Ghost, she spake, were the mother's utterance, to the mother, of the homage which her unborn babe offered to his Lord; while the answering hymn of Mary was the offering of that homage unto God. It was the antiphonal morning-psalmody of the Messianic day as it broke, of which the words were still all of the old dispensation, but their music of the new; the keynote being that of favour grace struck by the Angel in his first salutation: favour to the Virgin; 43 favour eternal favour to all His humble and poor ones; and favour to Israel, stretching in golden line from the calling of Abraham to the glorious future that now opened. Not one of these fundamental ideas but lay strictly within the range of the Old Testament; and yet all of them now lay beyond it, bathed in the golden light of the new day. Miraculous it all is, and professes to be; not indeed in the connection of these events, which succeed each other with psychological truthfulness; nor yet in their language, which is of the times and the circumstances; but in the underlying facts. 46 And for these there can be no other evidence than the Life, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. If He was such, and if He really rose from the dead, then, with all soberness and solemnity, such inception of His appearance seems almost a logical necessity. But of this whole narrative it may be said, that such inception of the Messianic appearance, such announcement of it, and such manner of His Coming, could never have been invented by contemporary Judaism; indeed, ran directly counter to all its preconceptions.

Three months had passed since the Virgin Mother entered the home of her kinswoman. And now she must return to Nazareth. Soon Elisabeth's neighbours and kinsfolk would gather with sympathetic joy around a home which, as they thought, had experienced unexpected mercy little thinking, how wide-reaching its consequences would be. But the Virgin Mother must not be exposed to the publicity of such meetings. However conscious of what had led to her condition, it must have been as the first sharp pang of the sword which was to pierce her soul, when she told it all to her betrothed. For, however deep his trust in her whom he had chosen for wife, only a direct Divine communication could have chased all questioning from his heart, and given him that assurance, which was needful in the future history of the Messiah. Brief as, with exquisite delicacy, the narrative is, we can read in the thoughts of Joseph the anxious contending of feelings, the scarcely established, and yet delayed, resolve to put her away which could only be done by regular divorce; this one determination only

standing out clearly, that, if it must be, her letter of divorce shall be handed to her privately, only in the presence of two witnesses. The humble Tsaddiq of Nazareth would not willingly have brought the blush to any face, least of all would he make of her a public exhibition of shame. It was a relief that he could legally divorce her either publicly or privately, whether from change of feeling, or because he had found just cause for it, but hesitated to make it known, either from regard for his own character, or because he had not sufficient legal evidence of the charge. He would follow, all unconscious of it, the truer manly feeling of R. Eliezar, R. Jochanan, and R. Zera, according to which a man would not like to put his wife to shame before a Court of Justice, rather than the opposite sentence of R. Meir. The assurance, which Joseph could scarcely dare to hope for, was miraculously conveyed to him in a dream-vision. All would now be clear; even the terms in which he was addressed (thou son of David), so utterly unusual in ordinary circumstances, would prepare him for the Angel's message. The naming of the unborn Messiah would accord with popular notions; the symbolism of such a name was deeply rooted in Jewish belief; while the explanation of Jehoshua or Jeshua (Jesus), as He who would save His people (primarily, as he would understand it, Israel) from their sins, described at least one generally expected aspect of His Mission, although Joseph may not have known that it was the basis of all the rest. And perhaps it was not without deeper meaning and insight into His character, that the Angel laid stress on this very element in His communication to Joseph, and not to Mary.

The fact that such an announcement came to Him in a dream, would dispose Joseph all the more readily to receive it. A good dream was one of the three things popularly regarded as marks of God's favour; and so general was the belief in their significance, as to have passed into this popular saying: If any one sleeps seven days without dreaming (or rather, remembering his dream for interpretation), call him wicked (as being unremembered of God). Thus Divinely set at rest, Joseph could no longer hesitate. The highest duty towards the Virgin Mother and the unborn Jesus demanded an immediate marriage, which would afford not only outward, but moral protection to both.

Viewing events, not as isolated, but as links welded in the golden chain of the history of the Kingdom of God, all this' not only the birth of Jesus from a Virgin, nor even His symbolic Name with its import, but also the unrestful questioning of Joseph, happened in fulfilment of what had been prefigured. 61 The promise of a Virginborn son as a sign of the firmness of God's covenant of old with David and his house; the now unfolded meaning of the former symbolic name Immanuel; even the unbelief of Ahaz, with its counterpart in the questioning of Joseph all this could now be clearly read in the light of the breaking day. Never had the house of David sunk morally lower than when, in the words of Ahaz, it seemed to renounce the very foundation of its claim to continuance; never had the fortunes of the house of David fallen lower, than when a Herod sat on its throne, and its lineal representative was a humble village carpenter, from whose heart doubts of the Virgin Mother had to be Divinely chased. And never, not even when God gave to the doubts of Moses this as the sign of Israel's future deliverance, that in that mountain they should worship had unbelief been answered by more strange evidence. But as, nevertheless, the stability of the Davidic house was ensured by the future advent of Immanuel and with such certainty, that before even such a child could discern between choice of good and evil, the land would be freed of its dangers; so now all that was then prefigured was to become literally true, and Israel to be saved from its real danger by the Advent of Jesus, Immanuel. And so it had all been intended. The golden cup of prophecy which Isaiah had placed empty on the Holy Table, waiting for the time of the end, was now full filled, up to its brim, with the new wine of the Kingdom.

Meanwhile the long-looked-for event had taken place in the home of Zacharias. No domestic solemnity so important or so joyous as that in which, by circumcision, the child had, as it were, laid upon it the yoke of the Law, with all of duty and privilege which this implied. Even the circumstance, that it took place at early morning might indicate this. It was, so tradition has it, as if the father had acted sacrificially as High-Priest, offering his child to God in gratitude and love; and it symbolised this

deeper moral truth, that man must by his own act complete what God had first instituted. To Zacharias and Elisabeth the rite would have even more than this significance, as administered to the child of their old age, so miraculously given, and who was connected with such a future. Besides, the legend which associates circumcision with Elijah, as the restorer of this rite in the apostate period of the Kings of Israel, was probably in circulation at the time. We can scarcely be mistaken in supposing, that then, as now, a benediction was spoken before circumcision, and that the ceremony closed with the usual grace over the cup of wine, when the child received his name in a prayer that probably did not much differ from this at present in use: Our God, and the God of our fathers, raise up this child to his father and mother, and let his name be called in Israel Zacharias, the son of Zacharias. Let his father rejoice in the issue of his loins, and his mother in the fruit of her womb, as it is written in Prov. xxiii. 25, and as it is said in Ezek. xvi. 6, and again in Ps. cv. 8, and Gen. xxi. 4; the passages being, of course, quoted in full. The prayer closed with the hope that the child might grow up and successfully, attain to the Torah, the marriage-baldachino, and good works.

Of all this Zacharias was, though a deeply interested, yet a deaf and dumb witness. This only had he noticed, that, in the benediction in which the child's name was inserted, the mother had interrupted the prayer. Without explaining her reason, she insisted that his name should not be that of his aged father, as in the peculiar circumstances might have been expected, but John (Jochanan). A reference to the father only deepened the general astonishment, when he also gave the same name. But this was not the sole cause for marvel. For, forthwith the tongue of the dumb was loosed, and he, who could not utter the name of the child, now burst into praise of the name of the Lord. His last words had been those of unbelief, his first were those of praise; his last words had been a question of doubt, his first were a hymn of assurance. Strictly Hebrew in its cast, and closely following Old Testament prophecy, it is remarkable and yet almost natural that this hymn of the Priest closely follows, and, if the expression be allowable, spiritualises a great part of the most ancient Jewish prayer: the so-called Eighteen Benedictions; rather perhaps, that it transforms the expectancy of that prayer into praise of its realisation. And if we bear in mind, that a great portion of these prayers was said by the Priests before the lot was cast for incensing, or by the people in the time of incensing, it almost seems as if, during the long period of his enforced solitude, the aged Priest had meditated on, and learned to understand, what so often he had repeated. Opening with the common form of benediction, his hymn struck, one by one, the deepest chords of that prayer, specially this the most significant of all (the fifteenth Eulogy), Speedily make to shoot forth the Branch of David, Thy servant, and exalt Thou his horn by Thy salvation, for in Thy salvation we trust all the day long. Blessed art Thou, Jehovah! Who causeth to spring forth the Horn of Salvation (literally, to branch forth). This analogy between the hymn of Zacharias and the prayers of Israel will best appear from the benedictions with which these eulogies closed. For, when thus examined, their leading thoughts will be found to be as follows: God as the Shield of Abraham; He that raises the dead, and causes salvation to shoot forth; the Holy One; Who graciously giveth knowledge; Who taketh pleasure in repentance; Who multiplieth forgiveness; Who redeemeth Israel; Who healeth their (spiritual) diseases; Who blesseth the years; Who gathereth the outcasts of His people; Who loveth righteousness and judgment; Who is the abode and stay of the righteous; Who buildeth Jerusalem; Who causeth the Horn of Salvation to shoot forth; Who heareth prayer; Who bringeth back His Shekhinah to Zion; God the Gracious One, to Whom praise is due; Who blesseth His people Israel with peace.

It was all most fitting. The question of unbelief had struck the Priest dumb, for most truly unbelief cannot speak; and the answer of faith restored to him speech, for most truly does faith loosen the tongue. The first evidence of his dumbness had been, that his tongue refused to speak the benediction to the people; and the first evidence of his restored power was, that he spoke the benediction of God in a rapturous burst of praise and thanksgiving. The sign of the unbelieving Priest standing before the awe-struck people, vainly essaying to make himself understood by signs, was

most fitting; most fitting also that, when they made signs to him, the believing father should burst in their hearing into a prophetic hymn.

But far and wide, as these marvellous tidings spread throughout the hill-country of Judaea, fear fell on all the fear also of a nameless hope. The silence of a long-clouded day had been broken, and the light which had suddenly riven its gloom, laid itself on their hearts in expectancy: What then shall this Child be? For the Hand of the Lord also was with Him!

Chapter 5 What Messiah did the Jews Expect?

It were an extremely narrow, and, indeed, false view, to regard the difference between Judaism and Christianity as confined to the question of the fulfillment of certain prophecies in Jesus of Nazareth. These predictions could only outline individual features in the Person and history of the Messiah. It is not thus that a likeness is recognised, but rather by the combination of the various features into a unity, and by the expression which gives it meaning. So far as we can gather from the Gospel narratives, no objection was ever taken to the fulfillment of individual prophecies in Jesus. But the general conception which the Rabbis had formed of the Messiah, differed totally from what was presented by the Prophet of Nazareth. Thus, what is the fundamental divergence between the two may be said to have existed long before the events which finally divided them. It is the combination of letters which constitute words, and the same letters may be combined into different words. Similarly, both Rabbinism and what, by anticipation, we designate Christianity might regard the same predictions as Messianic, and look for their fulfillment; while at the same time the Messianic ideal of the Synagogue might be quite other than that, to which the faith and hope of the Church have clung.

1. The most important point here is to keep in mind the organic unity of the Old Testament. Its predictions are not isolated, but features of one grand prophetic picture; its ritual and institutions parts of one great system; its history, not loosely connected events, but an organic development tending towards a definite end. Viewed in its innermost substance, the history of the Old Testament is not different from its typical institutions, nor yet these two from its predictions. The idea, underlying all, is God's gracious manifestation in the world the Kingdom of God ; the meaning of all the establishment of this Kingdom upon earth. That gracious purpose was, so to speak, individualized, and the Kingdom actually established in the Messiah. Both the fundamental and the final relationship in view was that of God towards man, and of man towards God: the former as expressed by the word Father; the latter by that of Servant or rather the combination of the two ideas: Son-Servant. This was already implied in the so-called Protevangel; and in this sense also the words of Jesus hold true: Before Abraham came into being, I am.

But, narrowing our survey to where the history of the Kingdom of God begins with that of Abraham, it was indeed as Jesus said: Your father Abraham rejoiced that he should see My day, and he saw it, and was glad. For, all that followed from Abraham to the Messiah was one, and bore this twofold impress: heavenwards, that of Son; earthwards, that of Servant. Israel was God's Son His first-born; their history that of the children of God; their institutions those of the family of God; their predictions those of the household of God. And Israel was also the Servant of God Jacob My Servant; and its history, institutions, and predictions those of the Servant of the Lord. Yet not merely Servant, but Son-Servant anointed to such service. This idea was, so to speak, crystallised in the three great representative institutions of Israel . The Servant of the Lord in relation to Israel s history was Kingship in Israel'; the Servant of the Lord in relation to Israel s ritual ordinances was the Priesthood in Israel ; the Servant of the Lord in relation to prediction was the Prophetic order. But all sprang from the same fundamental idea: that of the Servant of Jehovah.

One step still remains. The Messiah and His history are not presented in the Old Testament as something separate from, or superadded to, Israel. The history, the institutions, and the predictions of Israel run up into Him. He is the typical Israelite, nay, typical Israel itself alike the crown, the completion, and the representative of Israel. He is the Son of God and the Servant of the Lord; but in that highest and only true sense, which had given its meaning to all the preparatory development. As He was anointed to be the Servant of the Lord not with the typical oil, but by the Spirit of Jehovah upon Him, so was He also the Son in a unique sense. His organic connection with Israel is marked by the designations Seed of Abraham and Son of David while at the same time He was essentially what Israel was subordinately and typically: Thou art My Son this day have I begotten Thee. Hence also, in strictest truthfulness, the Evangelist could apply to the Messiah what referred to Israel, and see it fulfilled in His history: Out of Egypt have I called my Son. And this other correlate idea, of Israel as the Servant of the Lord is also fully concentrated in the Messiah as the Representative Israelite, so that the Book of Isaiah, as the series of predictions in which His picture is most fully outlined, might be summarised as that concerning the Servant of Jehovah. Moreover, the Messiah, as Representative Israelite, combined in Himself as the Servant of the Lord the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, and joined together the two ideas of Son and Servant. And the final combination and full exhibition of these two ideas was the fulfillment of the typical mission of Israel, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God among men.

Thus, in its final, as in its initial, stage it was the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth brought about by the Servant of the Lord, Who was to stricken humanity the God-sent Anointed Comforter (Mashiach ha-Menachem): in this twofold sense of Comforter of individuals (the friend of sinners), and Comforter of Israel and of the world, reconciling the two, and bringing to both eternal salvation. And here the mission of Israel ended. It had passed through three stages. The first, or historical, was the preparation of the Kingdom of God; the second, or ritual, the typical presentation of that Kingdom; while the third, or prophetic, brought that Kingdom into actual contact with the kingdoms of the world. Accordingly, it is during the latter that the designation Son of David (typical Israel) enlarged in the visions of Daniel into that of Son of Man (the Head of redeemed humanity). It were a onesided view to regard the Babylonish exile as only a punishment for Israel's sin. There is, in truth, nothing in all God's dealings in history exclusively punitive. That were a merely negative element. But there is always a positive element also of actual progress; a step forward, even though in the taking of it something should have to be crushed. And this step forward was the development of the idea of the Kingdom of God in its relation to the world.

2. This organic unity of Israel and the Messiah explains how events, institutions, and predictions, which initially were purely Israelitish, could with truth be regarded as finding their full accomplishment in the Messiah. From this point of view the whole Old Testament becomes the perspective in which the figure of the Messiah stands out. And perhaps the most valuable element in Rabbinic excommentation on Messianic times is that in which, as so frequently, it is explained, that all the miracles and deliverances of Israel's past would be re-enacted, only in a much wider manner, in the days of the Messiah. Thus the whole past was symbolic, and typical of the future the Old Testament the glass, through which the universal blessings of the latter days were seen. It is in this sense that we would understand the two sayings of the Talmud: All the prophets prophesied only of the days of the Messiah and The world was created only for the Messiah.

In accordance with all this, the ancient Synagogue found references to the Messiah in many more passages of the Old Testament than those verbal predictions, to which we generally appeal; and the latter formed (as in the New Testament) a proportionately small, and secondary, element in the conception of the Messianic era. This is fully borne out by a detailed analysis of those passages in the Old Testament to which the ancient Synagogue referred as Messianic. Their number amounts to upwards of 456 (75 from the Pentateuch, 243 from the Prophets, and 138 from the Hagiographa), and

their Messianic application is supported by more than 558 references to the most ancient Rabbinic writings. But comparatively few of these are what would be termed verbal predictions. Rather would it seem as if every event were regarded as prophetic, and every prophecy, whether by fact, or by word (prediction), as a light to cast its sheen on the future, until the picture of the Messianic age in the far back-ground stood out in the hundredfold variegated brightness of prophetic events, and prophetic utterances; or, as regarded the then state of Israel, till the darkness of their present night was lit up by a hundred constellations kindling in the sky overhead, and its lonely silence broken by echoes of heavenly voices, and strains of prophetic hymns borne on the breeze.

Of course, there was the danger that, amidst these dazzling lights, or in the crowd of figures, each so attractive, or else in the absorbing interest of the general picture, the grand central Personality should not engage the attention it claimed, and so the meaning of the whole be lost in the contemplation of its details. This danger was the greater from the absence of any deeper spiritual elements. All that Israel needed: study of the Law and good works lay within the reach of every one; and all that Israel hoped for, was national restoration and glory. Everything else was but means to these ends; the Messiah Himself only the grand instrument in attaining them. Thus viewed, the picture presented would be of Israel's exaltation, rather than of the salvation of the world. To this, and to the idea of Israel's exclusive spiritual position in the world, must be traced much, that otherwise would seem utterly irrational in the Rabbinic pictures of the latter days. But in such a picture there would be neither room nor occasion for a Messiah-Saviour, in the only sense in which such a heavenly mission could be rational, or the heart of humanity respond to it. The Rabbinic ideal of the Messiah was not that of a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel; the satisfaction of the wants of humanity, and the completion of Israel's mission but quite different, even to contrariety. Accordingly, there was a fundamental antagonism between the Rabbis and Christ, quite irrespective of the manner in which He carried out His Messianic work. On the other hand, it is equally noteworthy, that the purely national elements, which well nigh formed the sum total of Rabbinic expectation, scarcely entered into the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. And the more we realise, that Jesus so fundamentally separated Himself from all the ideas of His time, the more evidential is it of the fact, that He was not the Messiah of Jewish conception, but derived His mission from a source unknown to, or at least ignored by, the leaders of His people.

3. But still, as the Rabbinic ideas were at least based on the Old Testament, we need not wonder that they also embodied the chief features of the Messianic history. Accordingly, a careful perusal of their Scripture quotations shows that the main postulates of the New Testament concerning the Messiah are fully supported by Rabbinic statements. Thus, such doctrines as the pre-mundane existence of the Messiah; His elevation above Moses, and even above the Angels; His representative character; His cruel sufferings and derision; His violent death, and that for His people; His work on behalf of the living and of the dead; His redemption, and restoration of Israel; the opposition of the Gentiles; their partial judgment and conversion; the prevalence of His Law; the universal blessings of the latter days; and His Kingdom can be clearly deduced from unquestioned passages in ancient Rabbinic writings. Only, as we might expect, all is there indistinct, incoherent, unexplained, and from a much lower standpoint. At best, it is the lower stage of yet unfulfilled prophecy the haze when the sun is about to rise, not the blaze when it has risen. Most painfully is this felt in connection with the one element on which the New Testament most insists. There is, indeed, in Rabbinic writings frequent reference to the sufferings, and even the death of the Messiah, and these are brought into connection with our sins as how could it be otherwise in view of Isaiah liii. and other passages and in one most remarkable comment the Messiah is represented as willingly taking upon Himself all these sufferings, on condition that all Israel the living, the dead, and those yet unborn should be saved, and that, in consequence of His work, God and Israel should be reconciled, and Satan cast into hell. But there is only the most indistinct reference to the removal of sin by the Messiah, in the sense of vicarious

sufferings.

In connection with what has been stated, one most important point must be kept in view. So far as their opinions can be gathered from their writings, the great doctrines of Original Sin, and of the sinfulness of our whole nature, were not held by the ancient Rabbis. Of course, it is not meant that they denied the consequences of sin, either as concerned Adam himself, or his descendants; but the final result is far from that seriousness which attaches to the Fall in the New Testament, where it is presented as the basis of the need of a Redeemer, Who, as the Second Adam, restored what the first had lost. The difference is so fundamental as to render further explanation necessary.

The fall of Adam is ascribed to the envy of the Angels not the fallen ones, for none were fallen, till God cast them down in consequence of their seduction of man. The Angels, having in vain tried to prevent the creation of man, at last conspired to lead him into sin as the only means of his ruin the task being undertaken by Samael (and his Angels), who in many respects was superior to the other Angelic princes. The instrument employed was the serpent, of whose original condition the strangest legends are told, probably to make the Biblical narrative appear more rational. The details of the story of the Fall, as told by the Rabbis, need not be here repeated, save to indicate its consequences. The first of these was the withdrawal of the Shekhinah from earth to the first heaven, while subsequent sins successively led to its further removal to the seventh heaven. This, however, can scarcely be considered a permanent sequel of sin, since the good deeds of seven righteous men, beginning with Abraham, brought it again, in the time of Moses, to earth. Six things Adam is said to have lost by his sin; but even these are to be restored to man by the Messiah. That the physical death of Adam was the consequence of his sin, is certainly taught. Otherwise he would have lived forever, like Enoch and Elijah. But although the fate which overtook Adam was to rest on all the world, and death came not only on our first father but on his descendants, and all creation lost its perfectness, yet even these temporal sequences are not universally admitted. It rather seems taught, that death was intended to be the fate of all, or sent to show the folly of men claiming Divine worship, or to test whether piety was real, the more so that with death the weary struggle with our evil inclination ceased. It was needful to die when our work was done, that others might enter upon it. In each case death was the consequence of our own, not of Adam's sin. In fact, over these six Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam the Angel of Death had had no absolute power. Nay, there was a time when all Israel were not only free from death, but like the Angels, and even higher than they. For, originally God had offered the Law to all Gentile nations, but they had refused to submit to it. But when Israel took on themselves the Law at Mount Sinai, the description in Psalm lxxxii. 6 applied literally to them. They would not have died, and were the sons of God. But all this was lost by the sin of making the golden calf although the Talmud marks that, if Israel had continued in that Angelic state, the nation would have ceased with that generation. Thus there were two divergent opinions the one ascribing death to personal, the other tracing it to Adam's guilt.

When, however, we pass from the physical to the moral sequences of the fall, our Jewish authorities wholly fail us. They teach, that man is created with two inclinations that to evil (the Yetser ha-ra), and that to good; the first working in him from the beginning, the latter coming gradually in the course of time. Yet, so far from guilt attaching to the Yetser ha-ra, its existence is absolutely necessary, if the world is to continue. In fact, as the Talmud expressly teaches, the evil desire or impulse was created by God Himself; while it is also asserted 35 that, on seeing the consequences, God actually repented having done so. This gives quite another character to sin, as due to causes for which no blame attaches to man. On the other hand, as it is in the power of each wholly to overcome sin, and to gain life by study and works; as Israel at Mount Sinai had actually got rid of the Yetser ha-ra; and as there had been those, who were entirely righteous there scarcely remains any moral sequence of Adam's fall to be considered. Similarly, the Apocrypha are silent on the subject, the only exception being the very strong language used in II. Esdras, which dates after the Christian era.

4. In the absence of felt need of deliverance from sin, we can understand, how Rabbinic tradition found no place for the Priestly office of the Messiah, and how even His claims to be the Prophet of His people are almost entirely overshadowed by His appearance as their King and Deliverer. This, indeed, was the ever-present want, pressing the more heavily as Israel's national sufferings seemed almost inexplicable, while they contrasted so sharply with the glory expected by the Rabbis. Whence these sufferings? From sin national sin; the idolatry of former times; the prevalence of crimes and vices; the dereliction of God's ordinances; the neglect of instruction, of study, and of proper practice of His Law; and, in later days, the love of money and party strife. But the seventy years captivity had ceased, why not the present dispersion? Because hypocrisy had been added to all other sins; because there had not been proper repentance; because of the half-heartedness of the Jewish proselytes; because of improper marriages, and other evil customs; and because of the gross dissoluteness of certain cities. The consequences appeared not only in the political condition of Israel, but in the land itself, in the absence of rain and dew, of fruitfulness and of plenty; in the general disorder of society; the cessation of piety and of religious study; and the silence of prophecy. As significantly summed up, Israel was without Priesthood, without law, without God. Nay, the world itself suffered in consequence of the destruction of the Temple. In a very remarkable passage, where it is explained, that the seventy bullocks offered during the Feast of Tabernacles were for the nations of the world, R. Jochanan deplors their fate, since while the Temple had stood the altar had atoned for the Gentiles, but who was now to do so? The light, which had shone from out the Temple windows into the world, had been extinguished. Indeed, but for the intercession of the Angels the world would now be destroyed. In the poetic language of the time, the heavens, sun, moon and stars, trees and mountains, even the Angels, mourned over the desolation of the Temple, and the very Angelic hosts had since been diminished. But, though the Divine Presence had been withdrawn, it still lingered near His own; it had followed them in all their banishments; it had suffered with them in all their sorrows. It is a touching legend, which represents the Shekhinah as still lingering over the western wall of the Temple the only one supposed to be still standing. Nay, in language still bolder, and which cannot be fully reproduced, God Himself is represented as mourning over Jerusalem and the Temple. He has not entered His Palace since then, and His hair is wet with the dew. He weeps over His children and their desolateness, and displays in the heavens tokens of mourning, corresponding to those which an earthly monarch would show.

All this is to be gloriously set right, when the Lord turneth the captivity of Zion, and the Messiah cometh. But when may He be expected, and what are the signs of His coming? Or perhaps the question should thus be put: Why are the redemption of Israel and the coming of the Messiah so unaccountably delayed? It is here that the Synagogue finds itself in presence of an insoluble mystery. The explanations attempted are, confessedly, guesses, or rather attempts to evade the issue. The only course left is, authoritatively to impose silence on all such inquiries the silence, as they would put it, of implicit, mournful submission to the inexplicable, in faith that somehow, when least expected, deliverance would come; or, as we would put it, the silence of ever-recurring disappointment and despair. Thus the grand hope of the Synagogue is, as it were, written in an epitaph on a broken tombstone, to be repeated by the thousands who, for these long centuries, have washed the ruins of the Sanctuary with unavailing tears.

5. Why delayeth the Messiah His coming? Since the brief and broken sunshine of the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the sky overhead has ever grown darker, nor have even the terrible storms, which have burst over Israel, reft the canopy of cloud. The first captivity passed, why not the second? This is the painful question ever and again discussed by the Rabbis. Can they mean it seriously, that the sins of the second, are more grievous than those which caused the first dispersion; or that they of the first captivity repented, but not they of the second? What constitutes this repentance which yet remains to be made? But the reasoning becomes absolutely self-contradictory when, together with

the assertion that, if Israel repented but one day, the Messiah would come, we are told, that Israel will not repent till Elijah comes. Besides, bold as the language is, there is truth in the expostulation, which the Midrash puts into the mouth of the congregation of Israel: Lord of the world, it depends on Thee that we repent. Such truth, that, although at first the Divine reply is a repetition of Zechar. i. 3, yet, when Israel reiterates the words, Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned supporting them by Ps lxxxv. 4, the argument proves unanswerable.

Other conditions of Israel's deliverance are, indeed, mentioned. But we can scarcely regard the Synagogue as seriously making the coming of Messiah dependent on their realisation. Among the most touching of these is a beautiful passage (almost reminding us of Heb. xi.), in which Israel's future deliverance is described as the reward of faith. Similarly beautiful is the thought, that, when God redeems Israel, it will be amidst their weeping. But neither can this be regarded as the condition of Messiah's coming; nor yet such generalities as the observance of the Law, or of some special commandments. The very variety of suggestions shows, how utterly unable the Synagogue felt to indicate any condition to be fulfilled by Israel. Such vague statements, as that the salvation of Israel depended on the merits of the patriarchs, or on that of one of them, cannot help us to a solution; and the long discussion in the Talmud leaves no doubt, that the final and most sober opinion was, that the time of Messiah's coming depended not on repentance, nor any other condition, but on the mercy of God, when the time fixed had arrived. But even so, we are again thrown into doubt by the statement, that it might be either hastened or retarded by Israel's bearing!

In these circumstances, any attempt at determining the date of Messiah's coming would be even more hypothetical than such calculations generally are. Guesses on the subject could only be grounded on imaginary symbolisms. Of such we have examples in the Talmud. Thus, some fixed the date at 4000 years after the Creation curiously enough, about the era of Christ though Israel's sin had blotted out the whole past from the reckoning; others at 4291 from the Creation; others again expected it at the beginning, or end, of the eighty-fifth Jubilee with this proviso, that it would not take place earlier; and so on, through equally groundless conjectures. A comparatively late work speaks of five monarchies Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and Ishmael. During the last of these God would hear the cry of Israel, and the Messiah come, after a terrible war between Rome and Ishmael (the West and the East). But as the rule of these monarchies was to last altogether one day (= 1000 years), less two-thirds of an hour (1 hour = 83 $\frac{1}{2}$ years); it would follow, that their domination would last 944 $\frac{4}{9}$ years. Again, according to Jewish tradition, the rule of Babylon had lasted, that of Medo-Persia, and that of Greece 180 years, leaving 660 $\frac{4}{9}$ years for Rome and Ishmael. Thus the date for the expected Advent of the Messiah would have been about 661 after the destruction of Jerusalem, or about the year 729 of the Christian era.

In the category of guesses we must also place such vague statements, as that the Messiah would come, when all were righteous, or all wicked; or else nine months after the empire of Rome had extended over the whole world; or when all the souls, predestined to inhabit bodies, had been on earth. But as, after years of unrelieved sufferings, the Synagogue had to acknowledge that, one by one, all the terms had passed, and as despair settled on the heart of Israel, it came to be generally thought, that the time of Messiah's Advent could not be known beforehand, 85 and that speculation on the subject was dangerous, sinful, even damnable. The time of the end had, indeed, been revealed to two sons of Adam, Jacob and David; but neither of them had been allowed to make it known. In view of this, it can scarcely be regarded as more than a symbolical, though significant guess, when the future redemption of Israel is expected on the Paschal Day, the 15th of Nisan.

6. We now approach this most difficult and delicate question: What was the expectation of the ancient Synagogue, as regarded the Nature, Person, and qualifications of the Messiah? In answering it not at present from the Old Testament, but from the views expressed in Rabbinic literature, and, so far as we can gather from the Gospel-narratives, from those cherished by the contemporaries of Christ two

inferences seem evident. First, the idea of a Divine Personality, and of the union of the two Natures in the Messiah, seems to have been foreign to the Jewish auditory of Jesus of Nazareth, and even at first to His disciples. Secondly, they appear to have regarded the Messiah as far above the ordinary human, royal, prophetic, and even Angelic type, to such extent, that the boundary-line separating it from Divine Personality is of the narrowest, so that, when the conviction of the reality of the Messianic manifestation in Jesus burst on their minds, this boundary-line was easily, almost naturally, overstepped, and those who would have shrunk from framing their belief in such dogmatic form, readily owned and worshipped Him as the Son of God. Nor need we wonder at this, even taking the highest view of Old Testament prophecy. For here also the principle applies, which underlies one of Paul's most wide-reaching utterance: We prophesy in part (ek merouV profhteuomen). In the nature of it, all prophecy presents but disjecta, membra, and it almost seems, as if we had to take our stand in the prophet's valley of vision (Ezek. xxxvii.), waiting till, at the bidding of the Lord, the scattered bones should be joined into a body, to which the breath of the Spirit would give life.

These two inferences, derived from the Gospel-narratives, are in exact accordance with the whole line of ancient Jewish teaching. Beginning with the LXX. rendering of Genesis xlix., and especially of Numbers xxiv. 7, we gather, that the Kingdom of the Messiah was higher than any that is earthly, and destined to subdue them all. But the rendering of Psalm lxxii. 5, 7; Psalm cx. 3; and especially of Isaiah ix., carries us much farther. They convey the idea, that the existence of this Messiah was regarded as premundane (before the moon, before the morning-star), and eternal, and His Person and dignity as superior to that of men and Angels: the Angel of the Great Council probably the Angel of the Face' a view fully confirmed by the rendering of the Targum. The silence of the Apocrypha about the Person of the Messiah is so strange, as to be scarcely explained by the consideration, that those books were composed when the need of a Messiah for the deliverance of Israel was not painfully felt. All the more striking are the allusions in the Pseudepigraphic Writings, although these also do not carry us beyond our two inferences. Thus, the third book of the Sibylline Oracles which, with few exceptions, dates from more than a century and a half before Christ presents a picture of Messianic times, 100 generally admitted to have formed the basis of Virgil's description of the Golden Age, and of similar heathen expectations. In these Oracles, 170 years before Christ, the Messiah is the King sent from heaven who would judge every man in blood and splendour of fire. Similarly, the vision of Messianic times opens with a reference to the King Whom God will send from the sun. That a superhuman Kingdom of eternal duration, such as this vision paints, should have a superhuman King, seems almost a necessary corollary.

Even more distinct are the statements in the so-called Book of Enoch. Critics are substantially agreed, that the oldest part of it dates from between 150 and 130 b.c. The part next in date is full of Messianic allusions; but, as a certain class of modern writers has ascribed to it a post-Christian date, and, however ungrounded, to Christian authorship, it may be better not to refer to it in the present argument, the more so as we have other testimony from the time of Herod. Not to speak, therefore, of such peculiar designations of the Messiah as the Woman's Son the Son of Man the Elect and the Just One we mark that the Messiah is expressly designed in the oldest portion as the Son of God (I and My Son). That this implies, not, indeed, essential Sonship, but infinite superiority over all other servants of God, and rule over them, appears from the mystic description of the Messiah as the first of the [now changed] white bulls the great Animal among them, having great and black horns on His head Whom all the beasts of the field and all the fowls of heaven dread, and to Whom they cry at all times.

Still more explicit is that beautiful collection of eighteen Psalms, dating from about half a century before Christ, which bears the name of the Psalter of Solomon. A chaste anticipation of the Messianic Kingdom is followed by a full description of its need and its blessings, to which the concluding Psalm forms an apt epilogue. The King Who reigns is of the house of David. He is the Son of David, Who

comes at the time known to God only, to reign over Israel. He is a righteous King, taught of God. He is Christ the Lord. (CristoV KurioV, exactly as in the LXX. translations of Lamentations iv. 20). He is pure from sin which qualifies Him for ruling His people, and banishing sinners by His word. Never in His days will He be infirm towards His God, since God renders Him strong in the Holy Ghost wise in counsel, with might and righteousness (mighty in deed and word). The blessing of the Lord being upon Him, He does not fail. This is the beauty of the King of Israel, Whom God hath chosen, to set Him over the house of Israel to rule it. Thus invincible, not by outward might, but in His God, He will bring His people the blessings of restoration to their tribal possessions, and of righteousness, but break in pieces His enemies, not by outward weapons, but by the word of His mouth; purify Jerusalem, and judge the nations, who will be subject to His rule, and behold and own His glory. Manifestly, this is not an earthly Kingdom, nor yet an earthly King.

If we now turn to works dating after the Christian era, we would naturally expect them, either simply to reproduce earlier opinions, or, from opposition to Christ, to present the Messiah in a less exalted manner. But since, strange to say, they even more strongly assert the high dignity of the Messiah, we are warranted in regarding this as the rooted belief of the Synagogue. This estimate of the Messiah may be gathered from IV Esdras, with which the kindred picture of the Messiah and His reign in the Apocalypse of Baruch may be compared. But even in strictly Rabbinic documents, the premundane, if not the eternal existence of the Messiah appears as matter of common belief. Such is the view expressed in the Targum on Is. ix. 6, and in that on Micah v. 2. But the Midrash on Prov. viii. 9 expressly mentions the Messiah among the seven things created before the world. The passage is the more important, as it throws light on quite a series of others, in which the Name of the Messiah is said to have been created before the world. Even if this were an ideal conception, it would prove the Messiah to be elevated above the ordinary conditions of humanity. But it means much more than this, since not only the existence of the Messiah long before His actual appearance, but His premundane state are clearly taught in other places. In the Talmud it is not only implied, that the Messiah may already be among the living, but a strange story is related, according to which He had actually been born in the royal palace at Bethlehem, bore the name Menachem (Comforter), was discovered by one R. Judan through a peculiar device, but had been carried away by a storm. Similarly, the Babylon Talmud represents Him as sitting at the gate of Imperial Rome. In general, the idea of the Messiah's appearance and concealment is familiar to Jewish tradition. But the Rabbis go much farther back, and declare that from the time of Judah's marriage, God busied Himself with creating the light of the Messiah it being significantly added that, before the first oppressor [Pharaoh] was born, the final deliverer [Messiah, the son of David] was already born. In another passage the Messiah is expressly identified with Anani, and therefore represented as pre-existent long before his actual manifestation. The same inference may be drawn from His emphatic designation as the Fir Lastly, in Yalkut on Is. lx., the words In Thy light shall we see light (Ps. xxxvi. 9) are explained as meaning, that this is the light of the Messiah, the same which God had at the first pronounced to be very good, and which, before the world was created, He had hid beneath the throne of His glory for the Messiah and His age. When Satan asked for whom it was reserved, he was told that it was destined for Him Who would put him to shame, and destroy him. And when, at his request, he was shown the Messiah, he fell on his face and owned, that the Messiah would in the future cast him and the Gentiles into Gehenna Whatever else may be inferred from it, this passage clearly implies not only the pre-existence, but the premundane existence of the Messiah.

But, indeed, it carries us much farther. For, a Messiah, preexistent, in the Presence of God, and destined to subdue Satan and cast him into hell, could not have been regarded as an ordinary man. It is indeed true that, as the history of Elijah, so that of the Messiah is throughout compared with that of Moses, the first with the last Redeemer. As Moses was educated at the court of Pharaoh, so the Messiah dwells in Rome (or Edom) among His enemies. Like Moses He comes, withdraws, and

comes again. Like Moses He works deliverance. But here the analogy ceases, for, whereas the redemption by Moses was temporary and comparatively small, that of the Messiah would be eternal and absolute. All the marvels connected with Moses were to be intensified in the Messiah. The ass on which the Messiah would ride and this humble estate was only caused by Israel's sin would be not only that on which Moses had come back to Egypt, but also that which Abraham had used when he went to offer up Isaac, and which had been specially created on the eve of the world's first Sabbath. Similarly, the horns of the ram caught in the thicket, which was offered instead of Isaac, were destined for blowing the left one by the Almighty on Mount Sinai, the right and larger one by the Messiah, when He would gather the outcasts of Israel (Is. xxvii. 13). Again, the rod of the Messiah was that of Aaron, which had budded, blossomed, and burst into fruit; as also that on which Jacob had leaned, and which, through Judah, had passed to all the kings of Israel, till the destruction of the Temple. And so the principle that the later Deliverer would be like the first was carried into every detail. As the first Deliverer brought down the Manna, so the Messiah; as the first Deliverer had made a spring of water to rise, so would the second.

But even this is not all. That the Messiah had, without any instruction, attained to knowledge of God; and that He had received, directly from Him, all wisdom, knowledge, counsel, and grace, is comparatively little, since the same was claimed for Abraham, Job, and Hezekiah. But we are told that, when God showed Moses all his successors, the spirit of wisdom and knowledge in the Messiah equalled that of all the others together. The Messiah would be greater than the Patriarchs higher than Moses, and even loftier than the ministering Angels. In view of this we can understand, how the Midrash on Psalm xxi. 3 should apply to the Messiah, in all its literality, that God would set His own crown on His head and clothe Him with His honour and majesty. It is only consistent that the same Midrash should assign to the Messiah the Divine designations: Jehovah is a Man of War and Jehovah our Righteousness. One other quotation, from perhaps the most spiritual Jewish commentary, must be added, reminding us of that outburst of adoring wonder which once greeted Jesus of Nazareth. The passage first refers to the seven garments with which God successively robed Himself the first of honour and glory at creation; the second of majesty at the Red Sea; the third of strength at the giving of the Law; the fourth white when He blotteth out the sins of Israel; the fifth of zeal when He avengeth them of their enemies; the sixth of righteousness at the time when the Messiah should be revealed; and the seventh red when He would take vengeance on Edom (Rome). But continues the commentary, the garment with which in the future He will clothe the Messiah, its splendour will extend from one end of the world to the other, as it is written: "As a bridegroom priestly in headgear." And Israel are astounded at His light, and say: Blessed the hour in which the Messiah was created; blessed the womb whence He issued; blessed the generation that sees Him; blessed the eye that is worthy to behold Him; because the opening of His lips is blessing and peace, and His speech quieting of the spirit. Glory and majesty are in His appearance (vesture), and confidence and tranquillity in His words; and on His tongue compassion and forgiveness; His prayer is a sweet-smelling odour, and His supplication holiness and purity. Happy Israel, what is reserved for you! Thus it is written: 169 "How manifold is Thy goodness, which Thou hast reserved to them that fear Thee." Such a King Messiah might well be represented as sitting at the Right Hand of God, while Abraham was only at His left; nay, as throwing forth His Right Hand, while God stood up to war for Him.

It is not without hesitation, that we make reference to Jewish allusions to the miraculous birth of the Saviour. Yet there are two expressions, which convey the idea, if not of superhuman origin, yet of some great mystery attaching to His birth. The first occurs in connection with the birth of Seth. Rabbi Tanchuma said, in the name of Rabbi Samuel: Eve had respect [had regard, looked forward] to that Seed which is to come from another place. And who is this? This is Messiah the King. The second appears in the narrative of the crime of Lot's daughters: It is not written "that we may preserve a son from our father," but "seed from our father." This is that seed which is coming from another place. And

who is this? This is the King Messiah.

That a superhuman character attached, if not to the Personality, yet to the Mission of the Messiah, appears from three passages, in which the expression, The Spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the deep is thus paraphrased: This is the Spirit of the King Messiah. Whether this implies some activity of the Messiah in connection with creation, or only that, from the first, His Mission was to have a bearing on all creation, it elevates His character and work above every other agency, human or Angelic. And, without pressing the argument, it is at least very remarkable that even the Ineffable Name Jehovah is expressly attributed to the Messiah. The whole of this passage, beginning at p. 147 b, is very curious and deeply interesting. It would lead too far to quote fact becomes the more significant, when we recall that one of the most familiar names of the Messiah was Anani He Who cometh in the clouds of heaven.

In what has been stated, no reference has been made to the final conquests of Messiah, to His reign with all its wonders, or to the subdual of all nation in short, to what are commonly called the last things. This will be treated in another connection. Nor is it contented that, whatever individuals may have expected, the Synagogue taught the doctrine of the Divine Personality of the Messiah, as held by the Christian Church. On the other hand, the cumulative evidence just presented must leave on the mind at least this conviction, that the Messiah expected was far above the conditions of the most exalted of God's servants, even His Angels; in short, so closely bordering on the Divine, that it was almost impossible to distinguish Him therefrom. In such circumstances, it only needed the personal conviction, that He, Who taught and wrought as none other, was really the Messiah, to kindle at His word into the adoring confession, that He was indeed the Son of the Living God. And once that point reached, the mind, looking back through the teaching of the Synagogue, would, with increasing clearness, perceive that, however ill-understood in the past, this had been all along the sum of the whole Old Testament. Thus, we can understand alike the preparedness for, and yet the gradualness of conviction on this point; then, the increasing clearness with which it emerged in the consciousness of the disciples; and, finally, the unhesitating distinctness with which it was put forward in Apostolic teaching as the fundamental article of belief to the Church Catholic.

Chapter 6 The Nativity of Jesus the Messiah

(Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:1-20.)

Such then was the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers for which the twelve tribes, instantly serving (God) night and day longed with such vividness, that they read it in almost every event and promise; with such earnestness, that it ever was the burden of their prayers; with such intensity, that many and long centuries of disappointment have not quenched it. Its light, comparatively dim in days of sunshine and calm, seemed to burn brightest in the dark and lonely nights of suffering, as if each gust that swept over Israel only kindled it into fresh flame.

To the question, whether this hope has ever been realised or rather, whether One has appeared Whose claims to the Messiahship have stood the test of investigation and of time impartial history can make only one answer. It points to Bethlehem and to Nazareth . If the claims of Jesus have been rejected by the Jewish Nation, He has at least, undoubtedly, fulfilled one part of the Mission prophetically assigned to the Messiah. Whether or not He be the Lion of the tribe of Judah , to Him, assuredly, has been the gathering of the nations, and the isles have waited for His law. Passing the narrow bounds of obscure Judaea, and breaking down the walls of national prejudice and isolation, He has made the sublimer teaching of the Old Testament the common possession of the world, and

founded a great Brotherhood, of which the God of Israel is the Father. He alone also has exhibited a life, in which absolutely no fault could be found; and promulgated a teaching, to which absolutely no exception can be taken. Admittedly, He was the One perfect Man the ideal of humanity, His doctrine the one absolute teaching. The world has known none other, none equal. And the world has owned it, if not by the testimony of words, yet by the evidence of facts. Springing from such a people; born, living, and dying in circumstances, and using means, the most unlikely of such results the Man of Nazareth has, by universal consent, been the mightiest Factor in our world's history: alike politically, socially, intellectually, and morally. If He be not the Messiah, He has at least thus far done the Messiah's work. If He be not the Messiah, there has at least been none other, before or after Him. If He be not the Messiah, the world has not, and never can have, a Messiah.

To Bethlehem as the birthplace of Messiah, not only Old Testament prediction, but the testimony of Rabbinic teaching, unhesitatingly pointed. Yet nothing could be imagined more directly contrary to Jewish thoughts and feelings and hence nothing less likely to suggest itself to Jewish invention than the circumstances which, according to the Gospel-narrative, brought about the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem. A counting of the people, of Census; and that Census taken at the bidding of a heathen Emperor, and executed by one so universally hated as Herod, would represent the ne plus ultra of all that was most repugnant to Jewish feeling. If the account of the circumstances, which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, has no basis in fact, but is a legend invented to locate the birth of the Nazarene in the royal City of David, it must be pronounced most clumsily devised. There is absolutely nothing to account for its origination either from parallel events in the past, or from contemporary expectancy. Why then connect the birth of their Messiah with what was most repugnant to Israel, especially if, as the advocates of the legendary hypothesis contend, it did not occur at a time when any Jewish Census was taken, but ten years previously?

But if it be impossible rationally to account for any legendary origin of the narrative of Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem, the historical grounds, on which its accuracy has been impugned, are equally insufficient. They resolve themselves into this: that (beyond the Gospel-narrative) we have no solid evidence that Cyrenius was at that time occupying the needful official position in the East, to order such a registration for Herod to carry out. But even this feeble contention is by no means historically unassailable. At any rate, there are two facts, which render any historical mistake by Luke on this point extremely difficult to believe. First, he was evidently aware of a Census under Cyrenius, ten years later; secondly, whatever rendering of Luke ii. 2 may be adopted, it will at least be admitted, that the intercalated sentence about Cyrenius was not necessary for the narrative, and that the writer must have intended thereby emphatically to mark a certain event. But an author would not be likely to call special attention to a fact, of which he had only indistinct knowledge; rather, if it must be mentioned, would he do so in the most indefinite terms. This presumption in favour of Luke's statement is strengthened by the consideration, that such an event as the taxing of Judaea must have been so easily ascertainable by him.

We are, however, not left to the presumptive reasoning just set forth. That the Emperor Augustus made registers of the Roman Empire, and of subject and tributary states, is now generally admitted. This registration for the purpose of future taxation would also embrace Palestine. Even if no actual order to that effect had been issued during the lifetime of Herod, we can understand that he would deem it most expedient, both on account of his relations to the Emperor, and in view of the probable excitement which a heathen Census would cause in Palestine, to take steps for making a registration, and that rather according to the Jewish than the Roman manner. This Census, then, arranged by Augustus, and taken by Herod in his own manner, was, according to Luke, first [really] carried out when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria some years after Herod's death and when Judaea had become a Roman province.

We are now prepared to follow the course of the Gospel-narrative. In consequence of the decree of

Caesar Augustus Herod directed a general registration to be made after the Jewish, rather than the Roman, manner. Practically the two would, indeed, in this instance, be very similar. According to the Roman law, all country-people were to be registered in their own city' meaning thereby the town to which the village or place, where they were born, was attached. In so doing, the house and lineage (the nomen and cognomen) of each were marked. According to the Jewish mode of registration, the people would have been enrolled according to tribes (ty+m), families or clans (twxp#m????), and the house of their fathers (twb) tyk). But as the ten tribes had not returned to Palestine, this could only take place to a very limited extent, while it would be easy for each to be registered in his own city. In the case of Joseph and Mary, whose descent from David was not only known, but where, for the sake of the unborn Messiah, it was most important that this should be distinctly noted, it was natural that, in accordance with Jewish law, they should have gone to Bethlehem . Perhaps also, for many reasons which will readily suggest themselves, Joseph and Mary might be glad to leave Nazareth', and seek, if possible, a home in Bethlehem . Indeed, so strong was this feeling, that it afterwards required special Divine direction to induce Joseph to relinquish this chosen place of residence, and to return into Galilee'. In these circumstances, Mary, now the wife of Joseph, though standing to him only in the actual relationship of betrothed would, of course, accompany her husband to Bethlehem. Irrespective of this, every feeling and hope in her must have prompted such a course, and there is no need to discuss whether Roman or Jewish Census-usage required her presence a question which, if put, would have to be answered in the negative.

The short winter's day was probably closing in, as the two travellers from Nazareth, bringing with them the few necessities of a poor Eastern household, neared their journey's end. If we think of Jesus as the Messiah from heaven, the surroundings of outward poverty, so far from detracting, seem most congruous to His Divine character. Earthly splendor would here seem like tawdry tinsel, and the utmost simplicity like that clothing of the lilies, which far surpassed all the glory of Solomon's court. But only in the East would the most absolute simplicity be possible, and yet neither it, nor the poverty from which it sprang, necessarily imply even the slightest taint of social inferiority. The way had been long and weary at the very least, three days journey, whatever route had been taken from Galilee'. Most probably it would be that so commonly followed, from a desire to avoid Samaria', along the eastern banks of the Jordan', and by the fords of Jericho . Although passing through one of the warmest parts of the country, the season of the year must, even in most favorable circumstances, have greatly increased the difficulties of such a journey. A sense of rest and peace must, almost unconsciously, have crept over the travellers when at last they reached the rich fields that surrounded the ancient House of Bread and, passing through the valley which, like an amphitheatre, sweeps up to the twain heights along which Bethlehem stretches (2,704 feet above the sea), ascended through the terraced vineyards and gardens. Winter though it was, the green and silvery foliage of the olive might, even at that season, mingle with the pale pink of the almond nature's early waker and with the darker coloring of the opening peach-buds. The chaste beauty and sweet quiet of the place would recall memories of Boaz, of Jesse, and of David. All the more would such thoughts suggest themselves, from the contrast between the past and the present. For, as the travellers reached the heights of Bethlehem , and, indeed, long before, the most prominent object in view must have been the great castle which Herod had built, and called after his own name. Perched on the highest hill south-east of Bethlehem , it was, at the same time magnificent palace, strongest fortress, and almost courtier-city. With a sense of relief the travellers would turn from this, to mark the undulating outlines of the highland wilderness of Judaea, till the horizon was bounded by the mountain-ridges of Tekoa. Through the break of the hills eastward the heavy molten surface of the Sea of Judgement would appear in view; westward wound the road to Hebron; behind them lay the valleys and hills which separated Bethlehem from Jerusalem, and concealed the Holy City.

But for the present such thoughts would give way to the pressing necessity of finding shelter and re

The little town of Bethlehem was crowded with those who had come from all the outlying district to register their names. Even if the strangers from far-off Galilee had been personally acquainted with any one in Bethlehem, who could have shown them hospitality, they would have found every house fully occupied. The very inn was filled, and the only available space was, where ordinarily the cattle were stabled. Bearing in mind the simple habits of the East, this scarcely implies, what it would in the West; and perhaps the seclusion and privacy from the noisy, chattering crowd, which thronged the khan, would be all the more welcome. Scanty as these particulars are, even thus much is gathered rather by inference than from the narrative itself. Thus early in this history does the absence of details, which painfully increases as we proceed, remind us, that the Gospels were not intended to furnish a biography of Jesus, nor even the materials for it; but had only this twofold object: that those who read them might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing they might have life through His Name. The Christian heart and imagination, indeed, long to be able to localise the scene of such surpassing importance, and linger with fond reverence over that Cave, which is now covered by the Church of the Nativity. It may be nay, it seems likely that this, to which the most venerable tradition points, was the sacred spot of the world's greatest event. But certainly we have not. It is better, that it should be so. As to all that passed in the seclusion of that stable' the circumstances of the Nativity even its exact time after the arrival of Mary (brief as it must have been) the Gospel-narrative is silent. This only is told, that then and there the Virgin Mother brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger. Beyond this announcement of the bare fact, Holy Scripture, with indescribable appropriateness and delicacy, draws a veil over that most sacred mystery. Two impressions only are left on the mind: that of utmost earthly humility, in the surrounding circumstances; and that of inward fitness, in the contrast suggested by them. Instinctively, reverently, we feel that it is well it should have been so. It best befits the birth of the Christ if He be what the New Testament declares Him.

On the other hand, the circumstances just noted afford the strongest indirect evidence of the truth of this narrative. For, if it were the outcome of Jewish imagination, where is the basis for it in contemporary expectation? Would Jewish legend have ever presented its Messiah as born in a stable, to which chance circumstances had consigned His Mother? The whole current of Jewish opinion would run in the contrary direction. The opponents of the authenticity of this narrative are bound to face this. Further, it may safely be asserted, that no Apocryphal or legendary narrative of such a (legendary) event would have been characterised by such scantiness, or rather absence, of details. For, the two essential features, alike of legend and of tradition, are, that they ever seek to surround their heroes with a halo of glory, and that they attempt to supply details, which are otherwise wanting. And in both these respects a more sharply-marked contrast could scarcely be presented, than in the Gospel-narrative.

But as we pass from the sacred gloom of the cave out into the night, its sky all aglow with starry brightness, its loneliness is peopled, and its silence made vocal from heaven. There is nothing now to conceal, but much to reveal, though the manner of it would seem strangely incongruous to Jewish thinking. And yet Jewish tradition may here prove both illustrative and helpful. That the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, 18 was a settled conviction. Equally so was the belief, that He was to be revealed from Migdal Eder, the tower of the flock. This Migdal Eder was not the watchtower for the ordinary flocks which pastured on the barren sheepground beyond Bethlehem, but lay close to the town, on the road to Jerusalem. A passage in the Mishnah leads to the conclusion, that the flocks, which pastured there, were destined for Temple-sacrifices, and, accordingly, that the shepherds, who watched over them, were not ordinary shepherds. The latter were under the ban of Rabbinism, on account of their necessary isolation from religious ordinances, and their manner of life, which rendered strict legal observance unlikely, if not absolutely impossible. The same Mishnic passage also leads us to infer, that these flocks lay out all the year round, since they are spoken of as in the

fields thirty days before the Passover that is, in the month of February, when in Palestine the average rainfall is nearly greater. Thus, Jewish tradition in some dim manner apprehended the first revelation of the Messiah from that Migdal Eder, where shepherds watched the Temple-flocks all the year round. Of the deep symbolic significance of such a coincidence, it is needless to speak. It was, then, on that wintry night of the 25th of December, that shepherds watched the flocks destined for sacrificial services, in the very place consecrated by tradition as that where the Messiah was to be first revealed. Of a sudden came the long-delayed, unthought-of announcement. Heaven and earth seemed to mingle, as suddenly an Angel stood before their dazzled eyes, while the outstreaming glory of the Lord seemed to enwrap them, as in a mantle of light. Surprise, awe, fear would be hushed into calm and expectancy, as from the Angel they heard, that what they saw boded not judgment, but ushered in to waiting Israel the great joy of those good tidings which he brought: that the long-promised Saviour, Messiah, Lord, was born in the City of David, and that they themselves might go and see, and recognise Him by the humbleness of the circumstances surrounding His Nativity.

It was, as if attendant angels had only waited the signal. As, when the sacrifice was laid on the altar, the Temple-music burst forth in three sections, each marked by the blast of the priests' silver trumpets, as if each Psalm were to be a Tris-Hagion; so, when the Herald-Angel had spoken, a multitude of heaven's host stood forth to hymn the good tidings he had brought. What they sang was but the reflex of what had been announced. It told in the language of praise the character, the meaning, the result, of what had taken place. Heaven took up the strain of glory; earth echoed it as peace; it fell on the ears and hearts of men as good pleasure:

Glory to God in the highest

And upon earth peace

Among men good pleasure!

Only once before had the words of the Angels' hymn fallen upon mortal's ears, when, to Isaiah's rapt vision, Heaven's high Temple had opened, and the glory of Jehovah swept its courts, almost breaking down the trembling posts that bore its boundary gates. Now the same glory enwrapped the shepherds on Bethlehem's plains. Then the Angels' hymn had heralded the announcement of the Kingdom coming; now that of the King come. Then it had been the Tris-Hagion of prophetic anticipation; now that of Evangelic fulfilment.

The hymn had ceased; the light faded out of the sky; and the shepherds were alone. But the Angelic message remained with them; and the sign, which was to guide them to the Infant Christ, lighted their rapid way up the terraced height to where, at the entering of Bethlehem, the lamp swinging over the hostelry directed them to the strangers of the house of David, who had come from Nazareth. Though it seems as if, in the hour of her utmost need, the Virgin Mother had not been ministered to by loving hands, yet what had happened in the stable must soon have become known in the Khan. Perhaps friendly women were still passing to and fro on errands of mercy, when the shepherds reached the stable. There they found, perhaps not what they had expected, but as they had been told. The holy group only consisted of the humble Virgin Mother, the lowly carpenter of Nazareth, and the Babe laid in the manger. What further passed we know not, save that, having seen it for themselves, the shepherds told what had been spoken to them about this Child, to all around in the stable in the fields, probably also in the Temple, to which they would bring their flocks, thereby preparing the minds of a Simeon, of an Anna, and of all them that looked for salvation in Israel.

And now the hush of wondering expectancy fell once more on all, who heard what was told by the shepherds this time not only in the hill-country of Judaea, but within the wider circle that embraced Bethlehem and the Holy City. And yet it seemed all so sudden, so strange. That such slender thread, as the feeble throb of an Infant-life, the salvation of the world should hang and no special care watch over its safety, no better shelter be provided it than a stable no other cradle than a manger! And still it

is ever so. On what slender thread has the continued life of the Church often seemed to hang; on what feeble throbbing that of every child of God with no visible outward means to ward off danger, no home of comfort, no rest of ease. But, Lo, children are Jehovah's heritage!' and: So giveth He to His beloved in his sleep!

Chapter 7 The Purification of the Virgin and the Presentation in the Temple

(Luke ii. 21-38.)

Foremost amongst those who, wondering, had heard what the shepherds told, was she whom most it concerned, who laid it up deepest in her heart, and brought to it treasured stores of memory. It was the Mother of Jesus. These many months, all connected with this Child could never have been far away from her thoughts. And now that He was hers yet not hers belonged, yet did not seem to belong, to her He would be the more dear to her Mother-heart for what made Him so near, and yet parted Him so far from her. And upon all His history seemed to lie such wondrous light, that she could only see the path behind, so far as she had trodden it; while upon that on which she was to move, was such dazzling brightness, that she could scarce look upon the present, and dared not gaze towards the future.

At the very outset of this history, and increasingly in its course, the question meets us, how, if the Angelic message to the Virgin was a reality, and her motherhood so supernatural, she could have been apparently so ignorant of what was to come nay, so often have even misunderstood it? Strange, that she should have pondered in her heart the shepherd's account; stranger, that afterwards she should have wondered at His lingering in the Temple among Israel's teachers; strangest, that, at the very first of His miracles, a mother's fond pride should have so harshly broken in upon the Divine melody of His work, by striking a keynote so different from that, to which His life had been set; or that afterwards, in the height of his activity, loving fears, if not doubts, should have prompted her to interrupt, what evidently she had not as yet comprehended in the fulness of its meaning. Might we not rather have expected, that the Virgin Mother from the inception of this Child's life would have understood, that He was truly the Son of God? The question, like so many others, requires only to be clearly stated, to find its emphatic answer. For, had it been so His history, His human life, of which every step is of such importance to mankind, would not have been possible. Apart from all thoughts of the deeper necessity, both as regarded His Mission and all the salvation of the world, of a true human development of gradual consciousness and personal life, Christ could not, in any true sense, have been subject to His Parents, if they had fully understood that He was Divine; nor could He, in that case, have been watched, as He grew in wisdom and in favour with God and men. Such knowledge would have broken the bond of His Humanity to ours, by severing that which bound Him as a child to His mother. We could not have become His brethren, had He not been truly the Virgin's Son. The mystery of the Incarnation would have been needless and fruitless, had His humanity not been subject to all its right and ordinary conditions. And, applying the same principle more widely, we can thus, in some measure, understand why the mystery of His Divinity had to be kept while He was on earth. Had it been otherwise, the thought of His Divinity would have proved so all-absorbing, as to render impossible that of His Humanity, with all its lessons. The Son of God Most High, Whom they worshipped, could never have been the loving Man, with Whom they could hold such close converse. The bond which bound the Master to His disciples the Son of Man to humanity would have been dissolved; His teaching as a Man, the Incarnation, and the Tabernacling among men, in place of the

former Old Testament Revelation from heaven, would have become wholly impossible. In short, one, and that the distinctive New Testament, element in our salvation would have been taken away. At the beginning of His life He would have anticipated the lessons of its end nay, not those of His Death only, but of His Resurrection and Ascension, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost.

In all this we have only been taking the subjective, not the objective, view of the question; considered the earthward, not the heavenward, aspect of His life. The latter, though very real, lies beyond our present horizon. Not so the question as to the development of the Virgin Mother's spiritual knowledge. Assuming her to have occupied, in the fullest sense, the standpoint of Jewish Messianic expectancy, and remembering, also, that she was so highly favoured of God, still, there was not as yet anything, nor could there be for many years, to lead her beyond what might be called the utmost height of Jewish belief. On the contrary, there was much connected with His true Humanity to keep her back. For narrow as, to our retrospective thinking, the boundary-line seems between Jewish belief and that in the hypostatic union of the two Natures, the passage from the one to the other represented such tremendous mental revolution, as to imply direct Divine teaching. 1 An illustrative instance will prove this better than argument. We read, in a commentary on the opening words of Gen. xv. 18, that when God made the covenant with Abram, He revealed to him both this Olam (dispensation) and the Olam to come which latter expression is correctly explained as referring to the days of the Messiah. Jewish tradition, therefore, here asserts exactly what Jesus stated in these words: Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad. Yet we know what storm of indignation the enunciation of it called forth among the Jews!

Thus it was, that every event connected with the Messianic manifestation of Jesus would come to the Virgin Mother as a fresh discovery and a new surprise. Each event, as it took place, stood isolated in her mind; not as part of a whole which she would anticipate, nor as only one link in a chain; but as something quite by itself. She knew the beginning, and she knew the end; but she knew not the path which led from the one to the other; and each step in it was a new revelation. Hence it was, that she so carefully treasured in her heart every new fact, piecing each to the other, till she could read from it the great mystery that He, Whom Incarnate she had borne, was, indeed, the Son of the living God. And as it was natural, so it was well that it should be so. For, thus only could she truly, because self-unconsciously, as a Jewish woman and mother, fulfil all the requirements of the Law, alike as regarded herself and her Child.

The first of these was Circumcision, representing voluntary subjection to the conditions of the Law, and acceptance of the obligations, but also of the privileges, of the Covenant between God and Abraham and his seed. Any attempt to show the deep significance of such a rite in the case of Jesus, could only weaken the impression which the fact itself conveys. The ceremony took place, as in all ordinary circumstances, on the eighth day, when the Child received the Angel-given name Jeshua (Jesus). Two other legal ordinances still remained to be observed. The firstborn son of every household was, according to the Law, to be redeemed of the priest at the price of five shekels of the Sanctuary. Rabbinic casuistry here added many needless, and even repulsive, details. The following, however, are of practical interest. The earliest period of presentation was thirty-one days after birth so as to make the legal month quite complete. The child must have been the firstborn of his mother (according to some writers, of his father also); neither father nor mother must be of Levitic descent; and the child must be free from all such bodily blemishes as would have disqualified him for the priesthood or, as it was expressed: the firstborn for the priesthood. It was a thing much dreaded, that the child should die before his redemption; but if his father died in the interval, the child had to redeem himself when of age. As the Rabbinic law expressly states, that the shekels were to be of Tyrian weight 8 the value of the redemption money would amount to about ten or twelve shillings. The redemption could be made from any priest, and attendance in the Temple was not requisite. It was otherwise with the purification of the mother. The Rabbinic law fixed this at forty-one days after the

birth of a son, and eighty-one after that of a daughter, so as to make the Biblical terms quite complete. 11 But it might take place any time later notably, when attendance on any of the great feasts brought a family to Jerusalem. Thus, we read of cases when a mother would offer several sacrifices of purification at the same time. But, indeed, the woman was not required to be personally present at all, when her offering was presented, or, rather (as we shall see), provided for say, by the representatives of the laity, who daily took part in the services for the various districts from which they came. This also is specially provided for in the Talmud. But mothers who were within convenient distance of the Temple, and especially the more earnest among them, would naturally attend personally in the Temple; and in such cases, when practicable, the redemption of the firstborn, and the purification of his mother, would be combined. Such was undoubtedly the case with the Virgin Mother and her Son.

For this twofold purpose the Holy Family went up to the Temple, when the prescribed days were completed. The ceremony at the redemption of a firstborn son was, no doubt, more simple than that at present in use. It consisted of the formal presentation of the child to the priest, accompanied by two short benedictions the one for the law of redemption money was paid. Most solemn, as in such a place, and remembering its symbolic significance as the expression of God's claim over each family in Israel, must this rite have been.

As regards the rite at the purification of the mother, the scantiness of information has led to serious misstatements. Any comparison with our modern churching of women is inapplicable, since the latter consists of thanksgiving, and the former primarily of a sin-offering for the Levitical defilement symbolically attaching to the beginning of life, and a burnt-offering, that marked the restoration of communion with God. Besides, as already stated, the sacrifice for purification might be brought in the absence of the mother. Similar mistakes prevail as to the rubric. It is not case, as generally stated, that the woman was sprinkled with blood, and then pronounced clean by the priest, or that prayers were offered on the occasion. The service simply consisted of the statutory sacrifice. This was what, in ecclesiastical language, was termed an offering *oleh veyored*, that is, ascending and descending according to the means of the offerer. The sin-offering was, in all cases, a turtle-dove or a young pigeon. But, while the more wealthy brought a lamb for a burnt-offering the poor might substitute for it a turtle-dove, or a young pigeon. The rubric directed that the neck of the sin-offering was to be broken, but the head not wholly severed; that some of the blood should be sprinkled at the south-western angle of the altar, below the red line, which ran round the middle of the altar, and that the rest should be poured out at the base of the altar. The whole of the flesh belonged to the priests, and had to be eaten within the enclosure of the Sanctuary. The rubric for the burnt-offering of a turtle-dove or a young pigeon was somewhat more intricate. The substitution of the latter for a young lamb was expressly designated the poor's offering. And rightly so, since, while a lamb would probably cost about three shillings, the average value of a pair of turtle doves, for both the sin-and burnt-offering, would be about eightpence, and on one occasion fell so low as twopence. The Temple-price of the meat-and drink-offerings was fixed once a month; and special officials instructed the intending offerers, and provided them with what was needed. There was also a special superintendent of turtle doves and pigeons required for certain purifications, and the holder of that office is mentioned with praise in the Mishnah. Much, indeed, depended upon his uprightness. For, at any rate as regarded those who brought the poor's offering, the purchasers of pigeons or turtle doves would, as a rule, have to deal with him. In the Court of the Women there were thirteen trumpet-shaped chests for pecuniary contributions, called trumpets. 26 Into the third of these they who brought the poor's offering, like the Virgin Mother, were to drop the price of the sacrifices which were needed for their purification. As we infer, the superintending priest must have been stationed here, alike to inform the offerer of the price of the turtle doves, and to see that all was in order. For, the offerer of the poor's offering would not require to deal directly with the sacrificing priest. At a certain time in the day this third

chest was opened, and half of its contents applied to burnt, the other half to sin-offerings. Thus sacrifices were provided for a corresponding number of those who were to be purified, without either shaming the poor, needlessly disclosing the character of impurity, or causing unnecessary bustle and work. Though this mode of procedure could, of course, not be obligatory, it would, no doubt, be that generally followed.

We can now, in imagination, follow the Virgin Mother in the Temple. Her child had been given up to the Lord, and received back from Him. She had entered the Court of the Women, probably by the Gate of the Women on the north side, and deposited the price of her sacrifices in Trumpet No. 3, which was close to the raised dais or gallery where the women worshipped, apart from the men. And now the sound of the organ, which announced throughout the vast Temple-buildings that the incense was about to be kindled on the Golden Altar, summoned those who were to be purified. The chief of the ministrant lay-representatives of Israel on duty (the so-called station-men) ranged those, who presented themselves before the Lord as offerers of special sacrifices, within the wickets on either side the great Nicanor Gate, at the top of the fifteen steps which led up from the Court of the Women to that of Israel. It was, as if they were to be brought nearest to the Sanctuary; as if theirs were to be specially the prayers that rose in the cloud of incense from the Golden Altar; as if for them specially the sacrifices were laid on the Altar of Burnt-offering; as if theirs was a larger share of the benediction which, spoken by the lips of the priests, seemed like Jehovah's answer to the prayers of the people; theirs especially the expression of joy symbolised in the drink-offering, and the hymn of praise whose Tris-Hagion filled the Temple. From where they stood they could see it all, share in it, rejoice in it. And now the general service was over, and only those remained who brought special sacrifices, or who lingered near them that had such, or whose loved abode was ever in the Temple. The purification-service, with such unspoken prayer and praise as would be the outcome of a grateful heart, was soon ended, and they who had shared in it were Levitically clean. Now all stain was removed, and, as the Law put it, they might again partake of sacred offerings.

And in such sacred offering, better than any of which priest's family had ever partaken, was the Virgin Mother immediately to share. It has been observed, that by the side of every humiliation connected with the Humanity of the Messiah, the glory of His Divinity was also made to shine forth. The coincidences are manifestly undesigned on the part of the Evangelic writers, and hence all the more striking. Thus, if he was born of the humble Maiden of Nazareth, an Angel announced His birth; if the Infant-Saviour was cradled in a manger, the shining host of heaven hymned His Advent. And so afterwards if He hungered and was tempted in the wilderness, Angels ministered to Him, even as an Angel strengthened Him in the agony of the garden. If He submitted to baptism, the Voice and vision from heaven attested His Sonship; if enemies threatened. He could miraculously pass through them; if the Jews assailed, there was the Voice of God to glorify Him; if He was nailed to the cross, the sun draped his brightness, and earth quaked; if He was laid in the tomb, Angels kept its watches, and heralded His rising. And so, when now the Mother of Jesus, in her humbleness, could only bring the poor's offering the witness to the greatness of Him Whom she had borne was not wanting. A eucharistic offering' so to speak was brought, the record of which is the more precious that Rabbinic writings make no allusion to the existence of the party, whose representatives we here meet. Yet they were the true outcome of the spirit of the Old Testament, and, as such, at this time, the special recipients of the Spirit of the Old Testament.

The parents of Jesus had brought Him into the Temple for presentation and redemption, when they were met by one, whose venerable figure must have been well known in the city and the Sanctuary. Simeon combined the three characteristics of Old Testament piety: Justice as regarded his relation and bearing to God and man; fear of God in opposition to the boastful self-righteousness of Pharisaism; and, above all, longing expectancy of the near fulfilment of the great promises, and that in their spiritual import as the Consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him; and by that same

Spirit the gracious Divine answer to his heart's longing had been communicated him. And now it was as had been promised him. Coming in the Spirit into the Temple, just as His parents were bringing the Infant Jesus, he took Him into his arms, and burst into rapt thanksgiving. Now, indeed, had God fulfilled His word. He was not to see death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ. Now did his Lord dismiss him in peace release him in blessed comfort from work and watch since he had actually seen that salvation, so long preparing for a waiting weary world: a glorious light, Whose rising would light up heathen darkness, and be the outshining glory around Israel's mission. With this Infant in his arms, it was as if he stood on the mountain-height of prophetic vision, and watched the golden beams of sunrise far away over the isles of the Gentiles, and then gathering their full glow over his own beloved land and people. There was nothing Judiac quite the contrary: only what was of the Old Testament in what he first said.

But his unexpected appearance, the more unexpected deed and words, and that most unexpected form in which what was said of the Infant Christ was presented to their minds, filled the hearts of His parents with wonderment. And it was, as if their silent wonderment had been an unspoken question, to which the answer now came in words of blessing from the aged watcher. Mystic they seemed, yet prophetic. But now it was the personal, or rather the Judaic, aspect which, in broken utterances, was set before the Virgin Mother as if the whole history of the Christ upon earth were passing in rapid vision before Simeon. That Infant, now again in the Virgin Mother's arms: It was to be a stone of decision; a foundation and corner-stone, for fall or for uprising; a sign spoken against; the sword of deep personal sorrow would pierce the Mother's heart; and so to the terrible end, when the veil of externalism which had so long covered the hearts of Israel's leaders would be rent, and the deep evil of their thoughts laid bare. Such, as regarded Israel, was the history of Jesus, from His Baptism to the Cross; and such is still the history of Jesus, as ever present to the heart of the believing, loving Church.

Nor was Simeon's the only hymn of praise on that day. A special interest attaches to her who, coming that very moment, responded in praise to God for the pledge she saw of the near redemption. A kind of mystery seems to invest this Anna (Channah). A widow, whose early desolateness had been followed by a long life of solitary mourning; one of those in whose home the tribal genealogy had been preserved. We infer from this, and from the fact that it was that of a tribe which had not returned to Palestine, that hers was a family of some distinction. Curiously enough, the tribe of Asher alone is celebrated in tradition for the beauty of its women, and their fitness to be wedded to High-Priest or King.

But Anna had better claim to distinction than family-descent, or long, faithful memory of brief home-joys. These many years she had spent in the Sanctuary, and spent in fasting and prayer yet not of that self-righteous, self-satisfied kind which was of the essence of popular religion. Nor, as to the Pharisees around, was it the Synagogue which was her constant and loved resort; but the Temple, with its symbolic and unspoken worship, which Rabbinic self-assertion and rationalism were rapidly superseding, and for whose services, indeed, Rabbinism could find no real basis. Nor yet were fasting and prayer to her the all-in-all of religion, sufficient in themselves; sufficient also before God. Deepest in her soul was longing waiting for the redemption promised, and now surely nigh. To her widowed heart the great hope of Israel appeared not so much, as to Simeon, in the light of consolation as rather in that of redemption. The seemingly hopeless exile of her own tribe, the political state of Judaea, the condition social, moral, and religious of her own Jerusalem: all kindled in her, as in those who were like-minded, deep, earnest longing for the time of promised redemption. No place so suited to such an one as the Temple, with its services, the only thing free, pure, undefiled, and pointing forward and upward; no occupation so befitting as fasting and prayer. And, blessed be God, there were others, perhaps many such, in Jerusalem. Though Rabbinic tradition ignored them, they were the salt which preserved the mass from festering corruption. To her as the

representative, the example, friend, and adviser of such, was it granted as prophetess to recognise Him, Whose Advent had been the burden of Simeon's praise. And, day by day, to those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, would she speak of Him Whom her eyes had seen, though it must be in whispers and with bated breath. For they were in the city of Herod, and the stronghold of Pharisaism.

Chapter 8 The Visit and Homage of the Magi, and the Flight into Egypt

(Matthew 2:1-18.)

With the Presentation of the Infant Saviour in the Temple, and His acknowledgment not indeed by the leaders of Israel, but, characteristically, by the representatives of those earnest men and women who looked for His Advent the Prologue, if such it may be called, to the third Gospel closes. From whatever source its information was derived perhaps, as has been suggested, its earlier portion from the Virgin Mother, the later from Anna; or else both alike from her, who with loving reverence and wonderment treasured it all in her heart its marvellous details could not have been told with greater simplicity, nor yet with more exquisitely delicate grace. On the other hand, the Prologue to the first Gospel, while omitting these, records other incidents of the infancy of the Saviour. The plan of these narratives, or the sources whence they may originally have been derived, may account for the omissions in either case. At first sight it may seem strange, that the cosmopolitan Gospel by Luke should have described what took place in the Temple, and the homage of the Jews, while the Gospel by Matthew, which was primarily intended for Hebrews, records only the homage of the Gentiles, and the circumstances which led to the flight into Egypt. But of such seeming contrasts there are not a few in the Gospel history discords, which soon resolve themselves into glorious harmony.

The story of the homage to the Infant Saviour by the Magi is told by Matthew, in language of which the brevity constitutes the chief difficulty. Even their designation is not free from ambiguity. The term Magi is used in the LXX., by Philo, Josephus, and by profane writers, alike in an evil and, so to speak, in a good sense in the former case as implying the practice of magical arts; in the latter, as referring to the those Eastern (especially Chaldee) priest-sages, whose researches, in great measure as yet mysterious and unknown to us, seem to have embraced much deep knowledge, though not untinged with superstition. It is to these latter, that the Magi spoken of by Matthew must have belonged. Their number to which, however, no importance attaches cannot be ascertained. Various suggestions have been made as to the country of the East whence they came. At the period in question the sacerdotal caste of the Medes and Persians was dispersed over various parts of the East, and the presence in those lands of a large Jewish diaspora, through which they might, and probably would, gain knowledge of the great hope of Israel, is sufficiently attested by Jewish history. The oldest opinion traces the Magi though partially on insufficient grounds to Arabia. And there is this in favor of it, that not only the closest intercourse existed between Palestine and Arabia, but that from about 120 b.c. to the sixth century of our era, the kings of Yemen professed the Jewish faith. For if, on the one hand, it seems unlikely, that Eastern Magi would spontaneously connect a celestial phenomenon with the birth of a Jewish king, evidence will, on the other hand, be presented to connect the meaning attached to the appearance of the star at that particular time with Jewish expectancy of the Messiah. But we are anticipating.

Shortly after the Presentation of the Infant Saviour in the Temple, certain Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem with strange tidings. They had seen at its rising a sidereal appearance, which they regarded as betokening the birth of the Messiah King of the Jews, in the sense which at the time attached to that designation. Accordingly, they had come to Jerusalem to pay homage to Him,

probably not because they imagined He must be born in the Jewish capital but because they would naturally expect there to obtain authentic information, where He might be found. In their simplicity of heart, the Magi addressed themselves in the first place to the official head of the nation. The rumor of such an inquiry, and by such persons, would rapidly spread throughout the city. But it produced on King Herod, and in the capital, a far different impression from the feeling of the Magi. Unscrupulously cruel as Herod had always proved, even the slightest suspicion of danger to his rule the bare possibility of the Advent of One, Who had such claims upon the allegiance of Israel, and Who, if acknowledged, would evoke the most intense movement on their part must have struck terror to his heart. Not that he could believe the tidings, though a dread of their possibility might creep over a nature such as Herod's; but the bare thought of a Pretender, with such claims, would fill him with suspicion, apprehension, and impotent rage. Nor is it difficult to understand, that the whole city should, although on different grounds, have shared the trouble of the king. It was certainly not, as some have suggested, from apprehension of the woes which, according to popular notions, were to accompany the Advent of Messiah. Throughout the history of Christ the absence of such woes was never made a ground of objection to His Messianic claims; and this, because these woes were not associated with the first Advent of the Messiah, but with His final manifestation in power. And between these two periods a more or less long interval was supposed to intervene, during which the Messiah would be hidden either in the literal sense, or perhaps as to His power, or else in both respects. This enables us to understand the question of the disciples, as to the sign of His coming and the end of the world, and the answer of the Master. But the people of Jerusalem had far other reason to fear. They knew only too well the character of Herod, and what the consequences would be to them, or to any one who might be suspected, however unjustly, of sympathy with any claimant to the royal throne of David.

Herod took immediate measures, characterised by his usual cunning. He called together all the High-Priests past and present and all the learned Rabbis, and, without committing himself as to whether the Messiah was already born, or only expected, simply propounded to them the question of His birthplace. This would show him where Jewish expectancy looked for the appearance of his rival, and thus enable him to watch alike that place and the people generally, while it might possibly bring to light the feelings of the leaders of Israel. At the same time he took care diligently to inquire the precise time, when the sidereal appearance had first attracted the attention of the Magi. This would enable him to judge, how far back he would have to make his own inquiries, since the birth of the Pretender might be made to synchronise with the earliest appearance of the sidereal phenomenon. So long as any one lived, who was born in Bethlehem between the earliest appearance of this star and the time of the arrival of the Magi, he was not safe. The subsequent conduct of Herod shows, that the Magi must have told him, that their earliest observation of the sidereal phenomenon had taken place two years before their arrival in Jerusalem.

The assembled authorities of Israel could only return one answer to the question submitted by Herod. As shown by the rendering of the Targum Jonathan, the prediction in Micah v. 2 was at the time universally understood as pointing to Bethlehem, as the birthplace of the Messiah. That such was the general expectation, appears from the Talmud, where, in an imaginary conversation between an Arab and a Jew, Bethlehem is authoritatively named as Messiah's birthplace. Matthew reproduces the prophetic utterance of Micah, exactly as such quotations were popularly made at that time. It will be remembered that, Hebrew being a dead language so far as the people were concerned, the Holy Scriptures were always translated into the popular dialect, the person so doing being designated Methurgeman (dragoman) or interpreter. These renderings, which at the time of Matthew were not yet allowed to be written down, formed the precedent for, if not the basis of, our later Targum. In short, at that time each one Targumed for himself, and these Targumim (as our existing one on the Prophets shows) were neither literal versions, nor yet paraphrases, but something between them, a sort of

interpreting translation. That, when Targuming, the New Testament writers should in preference make use of such a well-known and widely-spread version as the Translation of the LXX. needs no explanation. That they did not confine themselves to it, but, when it seemed necessary, literally or Targumically rendered a verse, appears from the actual quotations in the New Testament. Such Targuming of the Old Testament was entirely in accordance with the then universal method of setting Holy Scripture before a popular audience. It is needless to remark, that the New Testament writers would Targum as Christians. These remarks apply not only to the case under immediate consideration, but generally to the quotations from the Old Testament in the New.

The further conduct of Herod was in keeping with his plans. He sent for the Magi for various reasons, secretly. After ascertaining the precise time, when they had first observed the star he directed them to Bethlehem, with the request to inform him when they had found the Child; on pretence, that he was equally desirous with them to pay Him homage. As they left Jerusalem for the goal of their pilgrimage, to their surprise and joy, the star which had attracted their attention at its rising and which, as seems implied in the narrative, they had not seen of late, once more appeared on the horizon, and seemed to move before them, till it stood over where the young child was; that is, of course, over Bethlehem, not over any special house in it. Whether at a turn of the road, close to Bethlehem, they lost sight of it, or they no longer heeded its position, since it had seemed to go before them to the goal that had been pointed out for, surely, they needed not the star to guide them to Bethlehem or whether the celestial phenomenon now disappeared, is neither stated in the Gospel-narrative, nor is indeed of any importance. Sufficient for them, and for us: they had been authoritatively directed to Bethlehem; as they had set out for it, the sidereal phenomenon had once more appeared; and it had seemed to go before them, till it actually stood over Bethlehem. And, since in ancient times such extraordinary guidance by a star was matter of belief and expectancy, the Magi would, from their standpoint, regard it as the fullest confirmation that they had been rightly directed to Bethlehem, and they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. It could not be difficult to learn in Bethlehem, where the Infant, around Whose Birth marvels had gathered, might be found. It appears that the temporary shelter of the stable had been exchanged by the Holy Family for the more permanent abode of a house; and there the Magi found the Infant-Saviour with His Mother. With exquisite tact and reverence the narrative attempts not the faintest description of the scene. It is as if the sacred writer had fully entered into the spirit of Paul, Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. And thus it should ever be. It is the great fact of the manifestation of Christ not its outward surroundings, however precious or touching they might be in connection with any ordinary earthly being to which our gaze must be directed. The externals may, indeed, attract our sensuous nature; but they detract from the unmatched glory of the great supersensuous Reality. Around the Person of the God-Man, in the hour when the homage of the heathen world was first offered Him, we need not, and want not, the drapery of outward circumstances. That scene is best realised, not by description, but by silently joining in the silent homage and the silent offerings of the wise men from the East. Before proceeding further, we must ask ourselves two questions: What relationship does this narrative bear to Jewish expectancy? and, Is there any astronomical confirmation of this account? Besides their intrinsic interest, the answer to the first question will determine, whether any legendary basis could be assigned to the narrative; while on the second will depend, whether the account can be truthfully charged with an accommodation on the part of God to the superstitions and errors of astrology. For, if the whole was extranatural, and the sidereal appearance specially produced in order to meet the astrological views of the Magi, it would not be a sufficient answer to the difficulty, that great catastrophes and unusual phenomena in nature have synchronised in a remarkable manner with great events in human history. On the other hand, if the sidereal appearance was not of supernatural origin, and would equally have taken place whether or not there had been Magi to direct to Bethlehem, the difficulty is not only entirely removed, but the narrative affords another instance,

alike of the condescension of God to the lower standpoint of the Magi, and of His wisdom and goodness in the combination of circumstances.

As regards the question of Jewish expectancy, sufficient has been said in the preceding pages, to show that Rabbinism looked for a very different kind and manner of the world's homage to the Messiah than that of a few Magi, guided by a star to His Infant-Home. Indeed, so far from serving as historical basis for the origin of such a legend a more gross caricature of Jewish Messianic anticipation could scarcely be imagined. Similarly futile would it be to seek a background for this narrative in Balaam's prediction, since it is incredible that any one could have understood it as referring to a brief sidereal apparition to a few Magi, in order to bring them to look for the Messiah. Nor can it be represented as intended to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah, that they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. For, supposing this figurative language to have been grossly literalised, what would become of the other part of that prophecy, which must, of course, have been treated in the same manner; not to speak of the fact, that the whole evidently refers not to the Messiah (least of all in His Infancy), but to Jerusalem in her latter-day glory. Thus, we fail to perceive any historical basis for a legendary origin of Matthew's narrative, either in the Old Testament or, still less, in Jewish tradition. And we are warranted in asking: If the account be not true, what rational explanation can be given of its origin, since its invention would never have occurred to any contemporary Jew?

But this is not all. There seems, indeed, no logical connection between this astrological interpretation of the Magi, and any supposed practice of astrology among the Jews. Yet, strange to say, writers have largely insisted on this. The charge is, to say the least, grossly exaggerated. That Jewish as other Eastern impostors pretended to astrological knowledge, and that such investigations may have been secretly carried on by certain Jewish students, is readily admitted. But the language of disapproval in which these pursuits are referred to such as that knowledge of the Law is not found with astrologers and the emphatic statement, that he who learned even one thing from a Mage deserved death, show what views were authoritatively held. Of course, the Jews (or many of them), like most ancients, believed in the influence of the planets upon the destiny of man. But it was a principle strongly expressed, and frequently illustrated in the Talmud, that such planetary influence did not extend to Israel. It must be admitted, that this was not always consistently carried out; and there were Rabbis who computed a man's future from the constellation (the Mazzal), either of the day, or the hour, under which he was born. It was supposed, that some persons had a star of their own, and the (representative) stars of all proselytes were said to have been present at Mount Sinai.

Accordingly, they also, like Israel, had lost the defilement of the serpent (sin). One Rabbi even had it, that success, wisdom, the duration of life, and a posterity, depended upon the constellation. Such views were carried out till they merged in a kind of fatalism, or else in the idea of a natal affinity by which persons born under the same constellation were thought to stand in sympathetic rapport. The further statement, that conjunctions of the planets affected the products of the earth is scarcely astrological; nor perhaps this, that an eclipse of the sun betokened evil to the nations, an eclipse of the moon to Israel, because the former calculated time by the sun, the latter by the moon.

But there is one illustrative Jewish statement which, though not astrological, is of the greatest importance, although it seems to have been hitherto overlooked. Since the appearance of Münter's well known tractate on the Star of the Magi, writers have endeavoured to show, that Jewish expectancy of a Messiah was connected with a peculiar sidereal conjunction, such as that which occurred two years before the birth of our Lord, and this on the ground of a quotation from the well-known Jewish commentator Abarbanel (or rather Abrabanel). In his Commentary on Daniel that Rabbi laid it down, that the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation Pisces betokened not only the most important events, but referred especially to Israel (for which he gives five mystic reasons). He further argues that, as that conjunction had taken place three years before the birth of Moses,

which heralded the first deliverance of Israel, so it would also precede the birth of the Messiah, and the final deliverance of Israel. But the argument fails, not only because Abarbanel's calculations are inconclusive and even erroneous, but because it is manifestly unfair to infer the state of Jewish belief at the time of Christ from a haphazard astrological conceit of a Rabbi of the fifteenth century. There is, however, testimony which seems to us not only reliable, but embodies most ancient Jewish tradition. It is contained in one of the smaller Midrashim, of which a collection has lately been published. On account of its importance, one quotation at least from it should be made in full. The so-called Messiah-Haggadah (Aggadoth Mashiach) opens as follows: A star shall come out of Jacob. There is a Boraita in the name of the Rabbis: The heptad in which the Son of David cometh in the first year, there will not be sufficient nourishment; in the second year the arrows of famine are launched; in the third, a great famine; in the fourth, neither famine nor plenty; in the fifth, great abundance, and the Star shall shine forth from the East, and this is the Star of the Messiah. And it will shine from the East for fifteen days, and if it be prolonged, it will be for the good of Israel; in the sixth, sayings (voices), and announcements (hearings); in the seventh, wars, and at the close of the seventh the Messiah is to be expected. A similar statement occurs at the close of a collection of three Midrashim respectively entitled, The Book of Elijah Chapters about the Messiah and The Mysteries of R. Simon, the son of Jochai where we read that a Star in the East was to appear two years before the birth of the Messiah. The statement is almost equally remarkable, whether it represents a tradition previous to the birth of Jesus, or originated after that event. But two years before the birth of Christ, which, as we have calculated, took place in December 749 a.u.c., or 5 before the Christian era, brings us to the year 747 a.u.c., or 7 before Christ, in which such a Star should appear in the East.

Did such a Star, then, really appear in the East seven years before the Christian era? Astronomically speaking, and without any reference to controversy, there can be no doubt that the most remarkable conjunction of planets that of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces, which occurs only once in 800 years did take place no less than three times in the year 747 a.u.c., or two years before the birth of Christ (in May, October and December). This conjunction is admitted by all astronomers. It was not only extraordinary, but presented the most brilliant spectacle in the night-sky, such as could not but attract the attention of all who watched the sidereal heavens, but especially of those who busied themselves with astrology. In the year following, that is, in 748 a.u.c., another planet, Mars, joined this conjunction. The merit of first discovering these facts of which it is unnecessary here to present the literary history belongs to the great Kepler, who, accordingly, placed the Nativity of Christ in the year 748 a.u.c. This date, however, is not only well nigh impossible; but it has also been shown that such a conjunction would, for various reasons, not answer the requirements of the Evangelical narrative, so far as the guidance to Bethlehem is concerned. But it does fully account for the attention of the Magi being aroused, and even if they had not possessed knowledge of the Jewish expectancy above described for their making inquiry of all around, and certainly, among others, of the Jews. Here we leave the domain of the certain, and enter upon that of the probable. Kepler, who was led to the discovery by observing a similar conjunction in 1603-4, also noticed, that when the three planets came into conjunction, a new, extraordinary, brilliant, and peculiarly colored evanescent star was visible between Jupiter and Saturn, and he suggested that a similar star had appeared under the same circumstances in the conjunction preceding the Nativity. Of this, of course, there is not, and cannot be, absolute certainty. But, if so, this would be the star of the Magi, in its rising. There is yet another remarkable statement, which, however, must also be assigned only to the domain of the probable. In the astronomical tables of the Chinese to whose general trustworthiness so high an authority as Humboldt bears testimony the appearance of an evanescent star was noted. Pingre and others have designated it as a comet, and calculated its first appearance in February 750 a.u.c., which is just the time when the Magi would, in all probability, leave Jerusalem for Bethlehem, since this must have preceded the death of Herod, which took place in March 750. Moreover, it has been

astronomically ascertained, that such a sidereal apparition would be visible to those who left Jerusalem, and that it would point almost seem to go before in the direction of, and stand over, Bethlehem. Such, impartially stated, are the facts of the case and here the subject must, in the present state of our information, be left.

Only two things are recorded of this visit of the Magi to Bethlehem: their humblest Eastern homage, and their offerings. 63 Viewed as gifts, the incense and the myrrh would, indeed, have been strangely inappropriate. But their offerings were evidently intended as specimens of the products of their country, and their presentation was, even as in our own days, expressive of the homage of their country to the new-found King. In this sense, then, the Magi may truly be regarded as the representatives of the Gentile world; their homage as the first and typical acknowledgment of Christ by those who hitherto had been far off; and their offerings as symbolic of the world's tribute. This deeper significance the ancient Church has rightly apprehended, though, perhaps, mistaking its grounds. Its symbolism, twining, like the convolvulus, around the Divine Plant, has traced in the gold the emblem of His Royalty; in the myrrh, of His Humanity, and that in the fullest evidence of it, in His burying; and in the incense, that of His Divinity.

As always in the history of Christ, so here also, glory and suffering appear in juxtaposition. It could not be, that these Magi should become the innocent instruments of Herod's murderous designs; nor yet that the Infant-Saviour should fall a victim to the tyrant. Warned of God in a dream, the wise men returned into their own country another way; and, warned by the angel of the Lord in a dream, the Holy Family sought temporary shelter in Egypt. Baffled in the hope of attaining his object through the Magi, the reckless tyrant sought to secure it by an indiscriminate slaughter of all the children in Bethlehem and its immediate neighborhood, from two years and under. True, considering the population of Bethlehem, their number could only have been small, probably twenty at most. But the deed was none the less atrocious; and these infants may justly be regarded as the protomartyrs the first witnesses, of Christ, the blossom of martyrdom (*flores martyrum* as Prudentius calls them). The slaughter was entirely in accordance with the character and former measures of Herod. 66 Nor do we wonder, that it remained unrecorded by Josephus, since on other occasions also he has omitted events which to us seem important. The murder of a few infants in an insignificant village might appear scarcely worth notice in a reign stained by so much bloodshed. Besides, he had, perhaps, a special motive for this silence. Josephus always carefully suppresses, so far as possible, all that refers to the Christ probably not only in accordance with his own religious views, but because mention of a Christ might have been dangerous, certainly would have been inconvenient, in a work written by an intense self-seeker, mainly for readers in Rome.

Of two passages in his own Old Testament Scriptures the Evangelist sees a fulfilment in these events. The flight into Egypt is to him the fulfilment of this expression by Hosea, Out of Egypt have I called My Son. In the murder of the Innocents he sees the fulfilment of Rachel's lament (who died and was buried in Ramah) over her children, the men of Benjamin, when the exiles to Babylon met in Ramah, and there was bitter wailing at the prospect of parting for hopeless captivity, and yet bitterer lament, as they who might have encumbered the onward march were pitilessly slaughtered. Those who have attentively followed the course of Jewish thinking, and marked how the ancient Synagogue, and that rightly, read the Old Testament in its unity, as ever pointing to the Messiah as the fulfilment of Israel's history, will not wonder at, but fully accord with, Matthew's retrospective view. The words of Hosea were in the highest sense fulfilled in the flight to, and return of, the Saviour from Egypt. To an inspired writer, nay, to a true Jewish reader of the Old Testament, the question in regard to any prophecy could not be: What did the prophet but, What did the prophecy mean? And this could only be unfolded in the course of Israel's history. Similarly, those who ever saw in the past the prototype of the future, and recognised in events, not only the principle, but the very features, of that which was to come, could not fail to perceive, in the bitter wail of the mothers of Bethlehem over their slaughtered

children, the full realisation of the prophetic description of the scene enacted in Jeremiah's days. Had not the prophet himself heard, in the lament of the captives to Babylon, the echoes of Rachel's voice in the past? In neither one nor the other case had the utterances of the prophets (Hosea and Jeremiah) been predictions: they were prophetic. In neither one nor the other case was the fulfilment literal: it was Scriptural, and that in the truest Old Testament sense.

Chapter 9 The Child-Life in Nazareth

(Matthew 2:19-23; Luke 2:39, 40.)

The stay of the Holy Family in Egypt must have been of brief duration. The cup of Herod's misdeeds, but also of his misery, was full. During the whole latter part of his life, the dread of a rival to the throne had haunted him, and he had sacrificed thousands, among them those nearest and dearest to him, to lay that ghost. And still the tyrant was not at rest. A more terrible scene is not presented in history than that of the closing days of Herod. Tormented by nameless fears; ever and again a prey to vain remorse, when he would frantically call for his passionately-loved, murdered wife Mariamme, and her sons; even making attempts on his own life; the delirium of tyranny, the passion for blood, drove him to the verge of madness. The most loathsome disease, such as can scarcely be described, had fastened on his body, and his sufferings were at times agonising. By the advice of his physicians, he had himself carried to the baths of Callirhoe (east of the Jordan), trying all remedies with the determination of one who will do hard battle for life. It was in vain. The namelessly horrible distemper, which had seized the old man of seventy, held him fast in its grasp, and, so to speak, played death on the living. He knew it, that his hour was come, and had himself conveyed back to his palace under the palm-trees of Jericho. They had known it also in Jerusalem, and, even before the last stage of his disease, two of the most honored and loved Rabbis Judas and Matthias had headed the wild band, which would sweep away all traces of Herod's idolatrous rule. They began by pulling down the immense golden eagle, which hung over the great gate of the Temple. The two ringleaders, and forty of their followers, allowed themselves to be taken by Herod's guards. A mock public trial in the theatre at Jericho followed. Herod, carried out on a couch, was both accuser and judge. The zealots, who had made noble answer to the tyrant, were burnt alive; and the High-Priest, who was suspected of connivance, deposed.

After that the end came rapidly. On his return from Callirhoe, feeling his death approaching, the King had summoned the noblest of Israel throughout the land of Jericho, and shut them up in the Hippodrome, with orders to his sister to have them slain immediately upon his death, in the grim hope that the joy of the people at his decease would thus be changed into mourning. Five days before his death one ray of passing joy lighted his couch. Terrible to say, it was caused by a letter from Augustus allowing Herod to execute his son Antipater the false accuser and real murderer of his half-brothers Alexander and Aristobulus. The death of the wretched prince was hastened by his attempt to bribe the jailer, as the noise in the palace, caused by an attempted suicide of Herod, led him to suppose his father was actually dead. And now the terrible drama was hastening to a close. The fresh access of rage shortened the life which was already running out. Five days more, and the terror of Judaea lay dead. He had reigned thirty-seven years thirty-four since his conquest of Jerusalem. Soon the rule for which he had so long plotted, striven, and stained himself with untold crimes, passed from his descendants. A century more, and the whole race of Herod had been swept away.

We pass by the empty pageant and barbaric splendor of his burying in the Castle of Herodium, close to Bethlehem. The events of the last few weeks formed a lurid back-ground to the murder of the

Innocents. As we have reckoned it, the visit of the Magi took place in February 750 a.u.c. On the 12th of March the Rabbis and their adherents suffered. On the following night (or rather early morning) there was a lunar eclipse; the execution of Antipater preceded the death of his father by five days, and the latter occurred from seven to fourteen days before the Passover, which in 750 took place on the 12th of April.

It need scarcely be said, that Salome (Herod's sister) and her husband were too wise to execute Herod's direction in regard to the noble Jews shut up in the Hippodrome. Their liberation, and the death of Herod, were marked by the leaders of the people as joyous events in the so-called Megillath Taanith, or Roll of Fasts, although the date is not exactly marked. Henceforth this was to be a Yom Tobh (feast-day), on which mourning was interdicted.

Herod had three times before changed his testament. By the first will Antipater, the successful calumniator of Alexander and Aristobulus, had been appointed his successor, while the latter two were named kings, though we know not of what districts. After the execution of the two sons of Mariamme, Antipater was named king, and, in case of his death, Herod, the son of Mariamme II. When the treachery of Antipater was proved, Herod made a third will, in which Antipas (the Herod Antipas of the New Testament) was named his successor. But a few days before his death he made yet another disposition, by which Archelaus, the elder brother of Antipas (both sons of Malthake, a Samaritan), was appointed king; Antipas tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea; and Philip (the son of Cleopatra, of Jerusalem 8), tetrarch of the territory east of the Jordan. These testaments reflected the varying phases of suspicion and family-hatred through which Herod had passed. Although the Emperor seems to have authorised him to appoint his successor, Herod wisely made his disposition dependent on the approval of Augustus. But the latter was not by any means to be taken for granted. Archelaus had, indeed, been immediately proclaimed King by the army; but he prudently declined the title, till it had been confirmed by the Emperor. The night of his father's death, and those that followed, were characteristically spent by Archelaus in rioting with his friends. But the people of Jerusalem were not easily satisfied. At first liberal promises of amnesty and reforms had assuaged the populace. 13 But the indignation excited by the late murder of the Rabbis soon burst into a storm of lamentation, and then of rebellion, which Archelaus silenced by the slaughter of not less than three thousand, and that within the sacred precincts of the Temple itself.

Other and more serious difficulties awaited him in Rome, whither he went in company with his mother, his aunt Salome, and other relatives. These, however, presently deserted him to espouse the claims of Antipas, who likewise appeared before Augustus to plead for the royal succession, assigned to him in a former testament. The Herodian family, while intriguing and clamouring each on his own account, were, for reasons easily understood, agreed that they would rather not have a king at all, but be under the suzerainty of Rome; though, if king there must be, they preferred Antipas to Archelaus. Meanwhile, fresh troubles broke out in Palestine, which were suppressed by fire, sword, and crucifixions. And now two other deputations arrived in the Imperial City. Philip, the step-brother of Archelaus, to whom the latter had left the administration of his kingdom, came to look after his own interests, as well as to support Archelaus. At the same time, a Jewish deputation of fifty, from Palestine, accompanied by eight thousand Roman Jews, clamoured for the deposition of the entire Herodian race, on account of their crimes, and the incorporation of Palestine with Syria no doubt in hope of the same semi-independence under their own authorities, enjoyed by their fellow-religionists in the Grecian cities. Augustus decided to confirm the last testament of Herod, with certain slight modifications, of which the most important was that Archelaus should bear the title of Ethnarch, which, if he deserved it, would by-and-by be exchanged for that of King. His dominions were to be Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria, with a revenue of 600 talents (about 230,000l. to 240,000l). It is needless to follow the fortunes of the new Ethnarch. He began his rule by crushing all resistance by the wholesale slaughter of his opponents. Of the High-Priestly office he disposed after the manner of

his father. But he far surpassed him in cruelty, oppression, luxury, the grossest egotism, and the lowest sensuality, and that, without possessing the talent or the energy of Herod. His brief reign ceased in the year 6 of our era, when the Emperor banished him, on account of his crimes to Gaul. It must have been soon after the accession of Archelaus, but before tidings of it had actually reached Joseph in Egypt, that the Holy Family returned to Palestine. The first intention of Joseph seems to have been to settle in Bethlehem, where he had lived since the birth of Jesus. Obvious reasons would incline him to choose this, and, if possible, to avoid Nazareth as the place of his residence. His trade, even had he been unknown in Bethlehem, would have easily supplied the modest wants of his household. But when, on reaching Palestine, he learned who the successor of Herod was, and also, no doubt, in what manner he had inaugurated his reign, common prudence would have dictated the withdrawal of the Infant-Saviour from the dominions of Archelaus. But it needed Divine direction to determine his return to Nazareth.

Of the many years spent in Nazareth, during which Jesus passed from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, the Evangelic narrative has left us but briefest notice. Of His childhood: that He grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him; of His youth: besides the account of His questioning the Rabbis in the Temple, the year before he attained Jewish majority that He was subject to His parents and that He increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man. Considering what loving care watched over Jewish child-life, tenderly marking by not fewer than eight designations the various stages of its development, and the deep interest naturally attaching to the early life of the Messiah, that silence, in contrast to the almost blasphemous absurdities of the Apocryphal Gospels, teaches us once more, and most impressively, that the Gospels furnish a history of the Saviour, not a biography of Jesus of Nazareth.

Matthew, indeed, summarises the whole outward history of the life in Nazareth in one sentence. Henceforth Jesus would stand out before the Jews of His time and, as we know, of all times, by the distinctive designation: of Nazareth *yrca* (Notsri), *NazwraioV*, the Nazarene. In the mind of a Palestinian a peculiar significance would attach to the by-Name of the Messiah, especially in its connection with the general teaching of prophetic Scripture. And here we must remember, that Matthew primarily addressed his Gospel to Palestinian readers, and that it is the Jewish presentation of the Messiah as meeting Jewish expectancy. In this there is nothing derogatory to the character of the Gospel, no accommodation in the sense of adaptation, since Jesus was not only the Saviour of the world, but especially also the King of the Jews, and we are now considering how He would stand out before the Jewish mind. On one point all were agreed: His Name was Notsri (of Nazareth). Matthew proceeds to point out, how entirely this accorded with prophetic Scripture not, indeed, with any single prediction, but with the whole language of the prophets. From this the Jews derived not fewer than eight designations or Names by which the Messiah was to be called. The most prominent among them was that of Tsemach, or Branch. We call it the most prominent, not only because it is based upon the clearest Scripture-testimony, but because it evidently occupied the foremost rank in Jewish thinking, being embodied in this earliest portion of their daily liturgy: The Branch of David, Thy Servant, speedily make to shoot forth, and His Horn exalt Thou by Thy Salvation....Blessed art Thou Jehovah, Who causeth to spring forth (literally: to branch forth) the Horn of Salvation (15th Eulogy). Now, what is expressed by the word Tsemach is also conveyed by the term Netser, Branch in such passages as Isaiah xi, 1, which was likewise applied to the Messiah. Thus, starting from Isaiah xi. 1, Netser being equivalent to Tsemach, Jesus would, as Notsri or Ben Netser, bear in popular parlance, and that on the ground of prophetic Scriptures, the exact equivalent of the best-known designation of the Messiah. The more significant this, that it was not a self-chosen nor man-given name, but arose, in the providence of God, from what otherwise might have been called the accident of His residence. We admit that this is a Jewish view; but then this Gospel is the Jewish view of the Jewish Messiah.

But, taking this Jewish title in its Jewish significance, it has also a deeper meaning, and that not only to Jews, but to all men. The idea of Christ as the Divinely placed Branch (symbolised by His Divinely-appointed early residence), small and despised in its forthshooting, or then visible appearance (like Nazareth and the Nazarenes), but destined to grow as the Branch sprung out of Jesse's roots, is most marvellously true to the whole history of the Christ, alike as sketched by the prophets and as exhibited in reality. And thus to us all, Jews or Gentiles, the Divine guidance to Nazareth and the name Nazarene present the truest fulfilment of the prophecies of His history.

Greater contrast could scarcely be imagined than between the intricate scholastic studies of the Judaeans, and the active pursuits that engaged men in Galilee. It was a common saying: 'If a person wishes to be rich, let him go north; if he wants to be wise, let him come south' and to Judaea, accordingly, flocked, from ploughshare and workshop, whoever wished to become learned in the Law. The very neighbourhood of the Gentile world, the contact with the great commercial centres close by, and the constant intercourse with foreigners, who passed through Galilee along one of the world's great highways, would render the narrow exclusiveness of the Southerners impossible. Galilee was to Judaism the Court of the Gentiles; the Rabbinic Schools of Judaea its innermost Sanctuary. The natural disposition of the people, even the soil and climate of Galilee, were not favourable to the all-engrossing passion for Rabbinic study. In Judaea all seemed to invite to retrospection and introspection; to favour habits of solitary thought and study, till it kindled into fanaticism. Mile by mile as you travelled southwards, memories of the past would crowd around, and thoughts of the future would rise within. Avoiding the great towns as the centres of hated heathenism, the traveller would meet few foreigners, but everywhere encounter those gaunt representatives of what was regarded as the superlative excellency of his religion. These were the embodiment of Jewish piety and asceticism, the possessors and expounders of the mysteries of his faith, the fountain-head of wisdom, who were not only sure of heaven themselves, but knew its secrets, and were its very aristocracy; men who could tell him all about his own religion, practised its most minute injunctions, and could interpret every stroke and letter of the Law, nay, whose it actually was to loose and to bind to pronounce an action lawful or unlawful, and to remit or retain sins by declaring a man liable to, or free from, expiatory sacrifices, or else punishment in this or the next world. No Hindoo fanatic would more humbly bend before Brahmin saints, nor devout Romanist more venerate the members of a holy fraternity, than the Jew his great Rabbis. Reason, duty, and precept, alike bound him to reverence them, as he revered the God Whose interpreters, representatives, deputies, intimate companions, almost colleagues in the heavenly Sanhedrin, they were. And all around, even nature itself, might seem to foster such tendencies. Even at that time Judaea was comparatively desolate, barren, grey. The decaying cities of ancient renown; the lone highland scenery; the bare, rugged hills; the rocky terraces from which only artificial culture could woo a return; the wide solitary plains, deep glens, limestone heights with distant glorious Jerusalem ever in the far background, would all favour solitary thought and religious abstraction.

It was quite otherwise in Galilee. The smiling landscape of Lower Galilee invited the easy labour of the agriculturist. Even the highlands of Upper Galilee were not, like those of Judaea, sombre, lonely, enthusiasm-killing, but gloriously grand, free, fresh, and bracing. A more beautiful country hill, dale, and lake could scarcely be imagined than Galilee Proper. It was here that Asher had dipped his foot in oil. According to the Rabbis, it was easier to rear a forest of olive-trees in Galilee than one child in Judaea. Corn grew in abundance; the wine, though not so plentiful as the oil, was rich and generous. Proverbially, all fruit grew in perfection, and altogether the cost of living was about one-fifth that in Judaea. And then, what a teeming, busy population! Making every allowance for exaggeration, we cannot wholly ignore the account of Josephus about the 240 towns and villages of Galilee, each with not less than 15,000 inhabitants. In the centres of industry all then known trades were busily carried on; the husbandman pursued his happy toil on genial soil, while by the Lake of Gennesaret, with its

unrivalled beauty, its rich villages, and lovely retreats, the fisherman plied his healthy avocation. By those waters, overarched by a deep blue sky, spangled with the brilliancy of innumerable stars, a man might feel constrained by nature itself to meditate and pray; he would not be likely to indulge in a morbid fanaticism.

Assuredly, in its then condition, Galilee was not the home of Rabbinism, though that of generous spirits, of warm, impulsive hearts, of intense nationalism, of simple manners, and of earnest piety. Of course, there would be a reverse side to the picture. Such a race would be excitable, passionate, violent. The Talmud accuses them of being quarrelsome, but admits that they cared more for honour than for money. The great ideal teacher of Palestinian schools was Akiba, and one of his most outspoken opponents a Galilean, Rabbi José. In religious observances their practice was simpler; as regarded canon-law they often took independent views, and generally followed the interpretations of those who, in opposition to Akiba, inclined to the more mild and rational we had almost said, the more human application of traditionalism. The Talmud mentions several points in which the practice of the Galileans differed from that of Judaea all either in the direction of more practical earnestness, or of alleviation of Rabbinic rigorism. On the other hand, they were looked down upon as neglecting traditionalism, unable to rise to its speculative heights, and preferring the attractions of the Haggadah to the logical subtleties of the Halakhah. There was a general contempt in Rabbinic circles for all that was Galilean. Although the Judaeian or Jerusalem dialect was far from pure, the people of Galilee were especially blamed for neglecting the study of their language, charged with error in grammar, and especially with absurd malpronunciation, sometimes leading to ridiculous mistakes. Galilean Fool! was so common an expression, that a learned lady turned with it upon so great a man as R. José, the Galilean, because he had used two needless words in asking her the road to Lydda. Indeed, this R. José had considerable prejudices to overcome, before his remarkable talents and learning were fully acknowledged.

Among such a people, and in that country, Jesus spent by far the longest part of His life upon earth. Generally, this period may be described as that of His true and full Human Development physical, intellectual, spiritual of outward submission to man, and inward submission to God, with the attendant results of wisdom favour and grace. Necessary, therefore, as this period was, if the Christ was to be TRUE MAN, it cannot be said that it was lost, even so far as His Work as Saviour was concerned. It was more than the preparation for that work; it was the commencement of it: subjectively (and passively), the self-abnegation of humiliation in His willing submission; and objectively (and actively), the fulfilment of all righteousness through it. But into this mystery of piety we may only look afar off simply remarking, that it almost needed for us also these thirty years of Human Life, that the overpowering thought of His Divinity might not overshadow that of His Humanity. But if He was subject to such conditions, they must, in the nature of things, have affected His development. It is therefore not presumption when, without breaking the silence of Holy Scripture, we follow the various stages of the Nazareth life, as each is, so to speak, initialled by the brief but emphatic summaries of the third Gospel.

In regard to the Child-Life, we read: And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. This marks, so to speak, the lowest rung in the ladder. Having entered upon life as the Divine Infant, He began it as the Human Child, subject to all its conditions, yet perfect in them.

These conditions were, indeed, for that time, the happiest conceivable, and such as only centuries of Old Testament life-training could have made them. The Gentile world here presented terrible contrast, alike in regard to the relation of parents and children, and the character and moral object of their upbringing. Education begins in the home, and there were not homes like those in Israel; it is imparted by influence and example, before it comes by teaching; it is acquired by what is seen and heard, before it is laboriously learned from books; its real object becomes instinctively felt, before its

goal is consciously sought. What Jewish fathers and mothers were; what they felt towards their children; and with what reverence, affection, and care the latter returned what they had received, is known to every reader of the Old Testament. The relationship of father has its highest sanction and embodiment in that of God towards Israel; the tenderness and care of a mother in that of the watchfulness and pity of the Lord over His people. The semi-Divine relationship between children and parents appears in the location, the far more than outward duties which it implies in the wording, of the Fifth Commandment. No punishment more prompt than that of its breach; no description more terribly realistic than that of the vengeance which overtakes such sin.

From the first days of its existence, a religious atmosphere surrounded the child of Jewish parents. Admitted in the number of God's chosen people by the deeply significant rite of circumcision, when its name was first spoken in the accents of prayer, it was henceforth separated unto God. Whether or not it accepted the privileges and obligations implied in this dedication, they came to him directly from God, as much as the circumstances of his birth. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, the God of the promises, claimed him, with all of blessing which this conveyed, and of responsibility which resulted from it. And the first wish expressed for him was that, as he had been joined to the covenant so it might also be to him in regard to the Torah (Law), to the Chuppah (the marriage-baldachino), and to good works; in other words, that he might live godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world' a holy, happy, and God-devoted life. And what this was, could not for a moment be in doubt. Putting aside the overlying Rabbinic interpretations, the ideal of life was presented to the mind of the Jew in a hundred different forms in none perhaps more popularly than in the words, These are the things of which a man enjoys the fruit in this world, but their possession continueth for the next: to honour father and mother, pious works, peacemaking between man and man, and the study of the Law, which is equivalent to them all. This devotion to the Law was, indeed, to the Jew the all in all the sum of intellectual pursuits, the aim of life. What better thing could a father seek for his child than this inestimable boon?

The first education was necessarily the mother's. Even the Talmud owns this, when, among the memorable sayings of the sages, it records one of the School of Rabbi Jannai, to the effect that knowledge of the Law may be looked for in those, who have sucked it in at their mother's brea And what the true mothers in Israel were, is known not only from instances in the Old Testament, from the praise of woman in the Book of Proverbs, and from the sayings of the son of Sirach (Ecclus. iii.), but from the Jewish women of the New Testament. If, according to a somewhat curious traditional principle, women were dispensed from all such positive obligations as were incumbent at fixed periods of time (such as putting on phylacteries), other religious duties devolved exclusively upon them. The Sabbath meal, the kindling of the Sabbath lamp, and the setting apart a portion of the dough from the bread for the household, these are but instances, with which every Taph as he clung to his mother's skirts, must have been familiar. Even before he could follow her in such religious household duties, his eyes must have been attracted by the Mezuzah attached to the door-post, as the name of the Most High on the outside of the little folded parchment was reverently touched by each who came or went, and then the fingers kissed that had come in contact with the Holy Name. Indeed, the duty of the Mezuzah was incumbent on women also, and one can imagine it to have been in the heathen-home of Lois and Euice in the far-off dispersion where Timothy would first learn to wonder at, then to understand, its meaning. And what lessons for the past and for the present might not be connected with it! In popular opinion it was the symbol of the Divine guard over Israel s homes, the visible emblem of this joyous hymn: The Lord shall preserve thy going out and coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.

There could not be national history, nor even romance, to compare with that by which a Jewish mother might hold her child entranced. And it was his own history that of his tribe, clan, perhaps family; of the past, indeed, but yet of the present, and still more of the glorious future. Long before he

could go to school, or even Synagogue, the private and united prayers and the domestic rites, whether of the weekly Sabbath or of festive seasons, would indelibly impress themselves upon his mind. In mid-winter there was the festive illumination in each home. In most houses, the first night only one candle was lit, the next two, and so on to the eighth day; and the child would learn that this was symbolic, and commemorative of the Dedication of the Temple, its purgation, and the restoration of its services by the lion-hearted Judas the Maccabee. Next came, in earliest spring, the merry time of Purim, the Feast of Esther and of Israel's deliverance through her, with its good cheer and boisterous enjoyments. Although the Passover might call the rest of the family to Jerusalem, the rigid exclusion of all leaven during the whole week could not pass without its impressions. Then, after the Feast of Weeks, came bright summer. But its golden harvest and its rich fruits would remind of the early dedication of the first and best to the Lord, and of those solemn processions in which it was carried up to Jerusalem. As autumn seared the leaves, the Feast of the New Year spoke of the casting up of man's accounts in the great Book of Judgment, and the fixing of destiny for good or for evil. Then followed the Fast of the Day of Atonement, with its tremendous solemnities, the memory of which could never fade from mind or imagination; and, last of all, in the week of the Feast of Tabernacles, there were the strange leafy booths in which they lived and joyed, keeping their harvest-thanksgiving; and praying and longing for the better harvest of a renewed world.

But it was not only through sight and hearing that, from its very inception, life in Israel became religious. There was also from the first positive teaching, of which the commencement would necessarily devolve on the mother. It needed not the extravagant laudations, nor the promises held out by the Rabbis, to incite Jewish women to this duty. If they were true to their descent, it would come almost naturally to them. Scripture set before them a continuous succession of noble Hebrew mothers. How well they followed their example, we learn from the instance of her, whose son, the child of a Gentile father, and reared far away, where there was not even a Synagogue to sustain religious life, had from an infant known the Holy Scriptures and that in their life-moulding influence. 60 It was, indeed, no idle boast that the Jews were from their swaddling-clothes...trained to recognise God as their Father, and as the Maker of the world; that, having been taught the knowledge (of the laws) from earliest youth, they bore in their souls the image of the commandments; 61 that from their earliest consciousness they learned the laws, so as to have them, as it were, engraven upon the soul; 62 and that they were brought up in learning exercised in the laws and made acquainted with the acts of their predecessors in order to their imitation of them.

But while the earliest religious teaching would, of necessity, come from the lips of the mother, it was the father who was bound to teach his son. To impart to the child knowledge of the Torah conferred as great spiritual distinction, as if a man had received the Law itself on Mount Horeb. Every other engagement, even the necessary meal, should give place to this paramount duty; nor should it be forgotten that, while here real labour was necessary, it would never prove fruitless. That man was of the profane vulgar (an Am ha-arets), who had sons, but failed to bring them up in knowledge of the Law. Directly the child learned to speak, his religious instruction was to begin no doubt, with such verses of Holy Scripture as composed that part of the Jewish liturgy, which answers to our Creed. Then would follow other passages from the Bible, short prayers, and select sayings of the sages. Special attention was given to the culture of the memory, since forgetfulness might prove as fatal in its consequences as ignorance or neglect of the Law. Very early the child must have been taught what might be called his birthday-text some verse of Scripture beginning, or ending with, or at least containing, the same letters as his Hebrew name. This guardian-promise the child would insert in its daily prayers. The earliest hymns taught would be the Psalms for the days of the week, or festive Psalms, such as the Hallel, or those connected with the festive pilgrimages to Zion.

The regular instruction commenced with the fifth or sixth year (according to strength), when every child was sent to school. There can be no reasonable doubt that at that time such schools existed

throughout the land. We find references to them at almost every period; indeed, the existence of higher schools and Academies would not have been possible without such primary instruction. Two Rabbis of Jerusalem, specially distinguished and beloved on account of their educational labours, were among the last victims of Herod's cruelty. Later on, tradition ascribes to Joshua the son of Gamla the introduction of schools in every town, and the compulsory education in them of all children above the age of six. Such was the transcendent merit attaching to this act, that it seemed to blot out the guilt of the purchase for him of the High-Priestly office by his wife Martha, shortly before the commencement of the great Jewish war. To pass over the fabulous number of schools supposed to have existed in Jerusalem, tradition had it that, despite of this, the City only fell because of the neglect of the education of children. It was even deemed unlawful to live in a place where there was no school. Such a city deserved to be either destroyed or excommunicated.

It would lead too far to give details about the appointment of, and provision for, teachers, the arrangements of the schools, the method of teaching, or the subjects of study, the more so as many of these regulations date from a period later than that under review. Suffice it that, from the teaching of the alphabet or of writing, onwards to the farthest limit of instruction in the most advanced Academies of the Rabbis, all is marked by extreme care, wisdom, accuracy, and a moral and religious purpose as the ultimate object. For a long time it was not uncommon to teach in the open air; but this must have been chiefly in connection with theological discussions, and the instruction of youths. But the children were gathered in the Synagogues, or in School-houses, where at first they either stood, teacher and pupils alike, or else sat on the ground in a semicircle, facing the teacher, as it were, literally to carry into practice the prophetic saying: Thine eyes shall see thy teachers. The introduction of benches or chairs was of later date; but the principle was always the same, that in respect of accommodation there was no distinction between teacher and taught. Thus, encircled by his pupils, as by a crown of glory (to use the language of Maimonides), the teacher generally the Chazzan, or Officer of the Synagogue should impart to them the precious knowledge of the Law, with constant adaptation to their capacity, with unwearied patience, intense earnestness, strictness tempered by kindness, but, above all, with the highest object of their training ever in view. To keep children from all contact with vice; to train them to gentleness, even when bitterest wrong had been received; to show sin in its repulsiveness, rather than to terrify by its consequences; to train to strict truthfulness; to avoid all that might lead to disagreeable or indelicate thoughts; and to do all this without showing partiality, without either undue severity, or laxity of discipline, with judicious increase of study and work, with careful attention to thoroughness in acquiring knowledge all this and more constituted the ideal set before the teacher, and made his office of such high esteem in Israel.

Roughly classifying the subjects of study, it was held, that, up to ten years of age, the Bible exclusively should be the text-book; from ten to fifteen, the Mishnah, or traditional law; after that age, the student should enter on those theological discussions which occupied time and attention in the higher Academies of the Rabbis. Not that this progression would always be made. For, if after three, or, at most, five years of tuition that is, after having fairly entered on Mishnic studies the child had not shown decided aptitude, little hope was to be entertained of his future. The study of the Bible commenced with that of the Book of Leviticus. Thence it passed to the other parts of the Pentateuch; then to the Prophets; and, finally, to the Hagiographa. What now constitutes the Gemara or Talmud was taught in the Academies, to which access could not be gained till after the age of fifteen. Care was taken not to send a child too early to school, nor to overwork him when there. For this purpose the school-hours were fixed, and attendance shortened during the summer-months.

The teaching in school would, of course, be greatly aided by the services of the Synagogue, and the deeper influences of home-life. We know that, even in the troublous times which preceded the rising of the Maccabees, the possession of parts or the whole of the Old Testament (whether in the original or the LXX. rendering) was so common, that during the great persecutions a regular search was

made throughout the land for every copy of the Holy Scriptures, and those punished who possessed them. After the triumph of the Maccabees, these copies of the Bible would, of course, be greatly multiplied. And, although perhaps only the wealthy could have purchased a MS. of the whole Old Testament in Hebrew, yet some portion or portions of the Word of God, in the original, would form the most cherished treasure of every pious household. Besides, a school for Bible-study was attached to every academy, in which copies of the Holy Scripture would be kept. From anxious care to preserve the integrity of the text, it was deemed unlawful to make copies of small portions of a book of Scripture. But exception was made of certain sections which were copied for the instruction of children. Among them, the history of the Creation to that of the Flood; Lev. i.-ix.; and Numb. i.-x. 35, are specially mentioned.

It was in such circumstances, and under such influences, that the early years of Jesus passed. To go beyond this, and to attempt lifting the veil which lies over His Child-History, would not only be presumptuous, but involve us in anachronisms. Fain would we know it, whether the Child Jesus frequented the Synagogue School; who was His teacher, and who those who sat beside Him on the ground, earnestly gazing on the face of Him Who repeated the sacrificial ordinances in the Book of Leviticus, that were all to be fulfilled in Him. But it is all a mystery of Godliness. We do not even know quite certainly whether the school-system had, at that time, extended to far-off Nazareth ; nor whether the order and method which have been described were universally observed at that time. In all probability, however, there was such a school in Nazareth , and, if so, the Child-Saviour would conform to the general practice of attendance. We may thus, still with deepest reverence, think of Him as learning His earliest earthly lesson from the Book of Leviticus. Learned Rabbis there were not in Nazareth either then or afterwards. He would attend the services of the Synagogue, where Moses and the prophets were read, and, as afterwards by Himself, occasional addresses delivered. That His was pre-eminently a pious home in the highest sense, it seems almost irreverent to say. From His intimate familiarity with Holy Scripture, in its every detail, we may be allowed to infer that the home of Nazareth, however humble, possessed a precious copy of the Sacred Volume in its entirety. At any rate, we know that from earliest childhood it must have formed the meat and drink of the God-Man. The words of the Lord, as recorded by Matthew and Luke, also imply that the Holy Scriptures which He read were in the original Hebrew, and that they were written in the square, or Assyrian, characters. Indeed, as the Pharisees and Sadducees always appealed to the Scriptures in the original, Jesus could not have met them on any other ground, and it was this which gave such point to His frequent expostulations with them: Have ye not read?

But far other thoughts than theirs gathered around His study of the Old Testament Scriptures. When comparing their long discussions on the letter and law of Scripture with His references to the Word of God, it seems as if it were quite another book which was handled. As we gaze into the vast glory of meaning which He opens to us; follow the shining track of heavenward living to which He points; behold the lines of symbol, type, and prediction converging in the grand unity of that Kingdom which became reality in Him; or listen as, alternately, some question of His seems to rive the darkness, as with flash of sudden light, or some sweet promise of old to lull the storm, some earnest lesson to quiet the tossing waves we catch faint, it may be far-off, glimpses of how, in that early Child-life, when the Holy Scriptures were His special study, He must have read them, and what thoughts must have been kindled by their light. And thus better than before can we understand it: And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.

Chapter 10 In the House of His Heavenly, and in the Home of His Earthly Father

The Temple of Jerusalem The Retirement at Nazareth

(Luke 2:41-52.)

Once only is the great silence, which lies on the history of Christ's early life, broken. It is to record what took place on His first visit to the Temple . What this meant, even to an ordinary devout Jew, may easily be imagined. Where life and religion were so intertwined, and both in such organic connection with the Temple and the people of Israel, every thoughtful Israelite must have felt as if his real life were not in what was around, but ran up into the grand unity of the people of God, and were compassed by the halo of its sanctity. To him it would be true in the deepest sense, that, so to speak, each Israelite was born in Zion , as, assuredly, all the well-springs of his life were there. It was, therefore, not merely the natural eagerness to see the City of their God and of their fathers, glorious Jerusalem; nor yet the lawful enthusiasm, national or religious, which would kindle at the thought of our feet standing within those gates, through which priests, prophets, and kings had passed; but far deeper feelings which would make glad, when it was said: Let us go into the house of Jehovah. They were not ruins to which precious memories clung, nor did the great hope seem to lie afar off, behind the evening-mi But glorious things were spoken of Zion , the City of God ' in the past, and in the near future the thrones of David were to be set within her walls, and amidst her palaces.

In strict law, personal observance of the ordinances, and hence attendance on the feasts at Jerusalem, devolved on a youth only when he was of age, that is, at thirteen years. Then he became what was called a son of the Commandment or of the Torah. But, as a matter of fact, the legal age was in this respect anticipated by two years, or at least by one. It was in accordance with this custom, that, on the first Pascha after Jesus had passed His twelfth year, His Parents took Him with them in the company of the Nazarenes to Jerusalem . The text seems to indicate, that it was their wont 6 to go up to the Temple; and we mark that, although women were not bound to make such personal appearance, Mary gladly availed herself of what seems to have been the direction of Hillel (followed also by other religious women, mentioned in Rabbinic writings), to go up to the solemn services of the Sanctuary. Politically, times had changed. The weak and wicked rule of Archelaus had lasted only nine years, when, in consequence of the charges against him, he was banished to Gaul. Judaea, Samaria and Idumaea were now incorporated into the Roman province of Syria, under its Governor, or Legate. The special administration of that part of Palestine was, however, entrusted to a Procurator, whose ordinary residence was at Caesarea. It will be remembered, that the Jews themselves had desired some such arrangement, in the vain hope that, freed from the tyranny of the Herodians, they might enjoy the semi-independence of their brethren in the Grecian cities. But they found it otherwise. Their privileges were not secured to them; their religious feelings and prejudices were constantly, though perhaps not intentionally, outraged; and their Sanhedrin shorn of its real power, though the Romans would probably not interfere in what might be regarded as purely religious questions. Indeed, the very presence of the Roman power in Jerusalem was a constant offence, and must necessarily have issued in a life and death struggle. One of the first measures of the new Legate of Syria, P. Sulpicius Quirinius, after confiscating the ill-gotten wealth of Archelaus, was to order a census in Palestine, with the view of fixing the taxation of the country. The popular excitement which this called forth was due, probably, not so much to opposition on principle, as to this, that the census was regarded as the badge of servitude, and incompatible with the Theocratic character of

Israel. Had a census been considered absolutely contrary to the Law, the leading Rabbis would never have submitted to it; nor would the popular resistance to the measure of Quirinius have been quelled by the representations of the High-Priest Joazar. But, although through his influence the census was allowed to be taken, the popular agitation was not suppressed. Indeed, that movement formed part of the history of the time, and not only affected political and religious parties in the land, but must have been presented to the mind of Jesus Himself, since, as will be shown, it had a representative within His own family circle.

This accession of Herod, misnamed the Great, marked a period in Jewish history, which closed with the war of despair against Rome and the flames of Jerusalem and the Temple. It gave rise to the appearance of what Josephus, despite his misrepresentation of them, rightly calls a fourth party besides the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes that of the Nationalists. A deeper and more independent view of the history of the times would, perhaps, lead us to regard the whole country as ranged either with or against that party. As afterwards expressed in its purest and simplest form, their watchword was, negatively, to call no human being their absolute lord; positively, that God alone was to lead as absolute Lord. It was, in fact, a revival of the Maccabean movement, perhaps more fully in its national than in its religious aspect, although the two could scarcely be separated in Israel, and their motto almost reads like that which according to some, furnished the letters whence the name Maccabee was composed: *Mi Camochah Baelim Jehovah, Who like Thee among the gods, Jehovah?* It is characteristic of the times and religious tendencies, that their followers were no more called, as before, Assideans or Chasidim, the pious but Zealots *zhlwtai?* or by the Hebrew equivalent *Qannaim* (Cananaeans, not Canaanites as in A.V.) The real home of that party was not Judaea nor Jerusalem, but Galilee.

Quite other, and indeed antagonistic, tendencies prevailed in the stronghold of the Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees. Of the latter only a small portion had any real sympathy with the national movement. Each party followed its own direction. The Essenes, absorbed in theosophic speculations, not untinged with Eastern mysticism, withdrew from all contact with the world, and practiced an ascetic life. With them, whatever individuals may have felt, no such movement could have originated; nor yet with the Herodians or Boethusians, who combined strictly Pharisaic views with Herodian political partisanship; nor yet with the Sadducees; nor, finally, with what constituted the great bulk of the Rabbinist party, the School of Hillel. But the brave, free Highlanders of Galilee, and of the region across their glorious lake, seemed to have inherited the spirit of Jephthah, and to have treasured as their ideal alas! often wrongly apprehended their own Elijah, as, descending in wild, shaggy garb from the mountains of Gilead, he did battle against all the might of Ahab and Jezebel. Their enthusiasm could not be kindled by the logical subtleties of the Schools, but their hearts burned within them for their God, their land, their people, their religion, and their freedom.

It was in Galilee, accordingly, that such wild, irregular resistance to Herod at the outset of his career, as could be offered, was organised by guerilla bands, which traversed the country, and owned one Ezekias as their leader. Although Josephus calls them robbers a far different estimate of them obtained in Jerusalem, where, as we remember, the Sanhedrin summoned Herod to answer for the execution of Ezekias. What followed is told in substantially the same manner, though with difference of form and, sometimes, nomenclature, by Josephus, and in the Talmud. The story has already been related in another connection. Suffice it that, after the accession of Herod, the Sanhedrin became a shadow of itself. It was packed with Sadducees and Priests of the King's nomination, and with Doctors of the canon-law, whose only aim was to pursue in peace their subtleties; who had not, and, from their contempt of the people, could not have, any real sympathy with national aspirations; and whose ideal heavenly Kingdom was a miraculous, heaven-instituted, absolute rule of Rabbis.

Accordingly, the national movement, as it afterwards developed, received neither the sympathy nor the support of leading Rabbis. Perhaps the most gross manifestation of this was exhibited, shortly

before the taking of Jerusalem, by R. Jochanan ben Saccai, the most renowned among its teachers. Almost unmoved he had witnessed the portent of the opening of the Temple-doors by an unseen Hand, which, by an interpretation of Zech. xi. 1, was popularly regarded as betokening its speedy destruction. There is cynicism, as well as want of sympathy, in the story recorded by tradition, that when, in the straits of famine during the siege, Jochanan saw people eagerly feasting on soup made from straw, he scouted the idea of such a garrison resisting Vespasian and immediately resolved to leave the city. In fact, we have distinct evidence that R. Jochanan had, as leader of the School of Hillel, used all his influence, although in vain, to persuade the people to submission to Rome. We can understand it, how this school had taken so little interest in anything purely national. Generally only one side of the character of Hillel has been presented by writers, and even this in greatly exaggerated language. His much lauded gentleness, peacefulness, and charity were rather negative than positive qualities. He was a philosophic Rabbi, whose real interest lay in a far other direction than that of sympathy with the people and whose motto seemed, indeed, to imply, We, the sages, are the people of God; but this people, who know not the Law, are curse. A far deeper feeling, and intense, though misguided earnestness pervaded the School of Shammai. It was in the minority, but it sympathised with the aspirations of the people. It was not philosophic nor eclectic, but intensely national. It opposed all approach to, and by, strangers; it dealt harshly with proselytes, even the most distinguished (such as Akylas or Onkelos); it passed, by first murdering a number of Hillelites who had come to the deliberative assembly, eighteen decrees, of which the object was to prevent all intercourse with Gentiles; and it furnished leaders or supporters of the national movement. We have marked the rise of the Nationalist party in Galilee at the time of Herod's first appearance on the scene, and learned how mercilessly he tried to suppress it: first, by the execution of Ezekias and his adherents, and afterwards, when he became King of Judaea, by the slaughter of the Sanhedrists. The consequence of this unsparing severity was to give Rabbinism a different direction. The School of Hillel which henceforth commanded the majority, were men of no political colour, theological theorists, self-seeking Jurists, vain rather than ambitious. The minority, represented by the School of Shammai, were Nationalists. Defective and even false as both tendencies were, there was certainly more hope, as regarded the Kingdom of God, of the Nationalists than of the Sophists and Jurists. It was, of course, the policy of Herod to suppress all national aspirations. No one understood the meaning of Jewish Nationalism so well as he; no one ever opposed it so systematically. There was internal fitness, so to speak, in his attempt to kill the King of the Jews among the infants of Bethlehem. The murder of the Sanhedrists, with the consequent new anti-Messianic tendency of Rabbinism, was one measure in that direction; the various appointments which Herod made to the High-Priesthood another. And yet it was not easy, even in those times, to deprive the Pontificate of its power and influence. The High-Priest was still the representative of the religious life of the people, and he acted on all occasions, when the question under discussion was not one exclusively of subtle canon-law, as the President of the Sanhedrin, in which, indeed, the members of his family had evidently seat and vote. The four families from which, with few exceptions, the High-Priest however often changed were chosen, absorbed the wealth, and commanded the influence, of a state-endowed establishment, in its worst times. It was, therefore, of the utmost importance to make wise choice of the High-Prie With the exception of the brief tenure by Aristobulus, the last of the Maccabees whose appointment, too soon followed by his murder, was at the time a necessity all the Herodian High-Priests were non-Palestinians. A keener blow than this could not have been dealt at Nationalism. The same contempt for the High-Priesthood characterised the brief reign of Archelaus. On his death-bed, Herod had appointed to the Pontificate Joazar, a son of Boethos, the wealthy Alexandrian priest, whose daughter, Mariamme II., he had married. The Boethusian family, allied to Herod, formed a party the Herodians who combined strict Pharisaic views with devotion to the reigning family. Joazar took the popular part against Archelaus, on his accession. For this he was deprived of his dignity in

favour of another son of Boethos, Eleazar by name. But the mood of Archelaus was fickle perhaps he was distrustful of the family of Boethos. At any rate, Eleazar had to give place to Jesus, the son of Sië, an otherwise unknown individual. At the time of the taxing of Quirinius we find Joazar again in office, apparently restored to it by the multitude, which, having taken matters into its own hands at the change of government, recalled one who had formerly favoured national aspirations. It is thus that we explain his influence with the people, in persuading them to submit to the Roman taxation.

But if Joazar had succeeded with the unthinking populace, he failed to conciliate the more advanced of his own party, and, as the event proved, the Roman authorities also, whose favour he had hoped to gain. It will be remembered, that the Nationalist party or Zealots as they were afterwards called first appeared in those guerilla-bands which traversed Galilee under the leadership of Ezekias, whom Herod executed. But the National party was not destroyed, only held in check, during his iron reign. It was once more the family of Ezekias that headed the movement. During the civil war which followed the accession of Archelaus, or rather was carried on while he was pleading his cause in Rome, the standard of the Nationalists was again raised in Galilee. Judas, the son of Ezekias, took possession of the city of Sepphoris, and armed his followers from the royal arsenal there. At that time, as we know, the High-Priest Joazar sympathised, at least indirectly, with the Nationalists. The rising, which indeed was general throughout Palestine, was suppressed by fire and sword, and the sons of Herod were enabled to enter on their possessions. But when, after the deposition of Archelaus, Joazar persuaded the people to submit to the taxing of Quirinius, Judas was not disposed to follow what he regarded as the treacherous lead of the Pontiff. In conjunction with a Shammaite Rabbi, Sadduk, he raised again the standard of revolt, although once more unsuccessfully. How the Hillelites looked upon this movement, we gather even from the slighting allusion of Gamaliel. The family of Ezekias furnished other martyrs to the National cause. The two sons of Judas died for it on the cross in 46 a.d. Yet a third son, Manahem, who, from the commencement of the war against Rome, was one of the leaders of the most fanatical Nationalists, the Sicarii the Jacobins of the party, as they have been aptly designated died under unspeakable sufferings, while a fourth member of the family, Eleazar, was the leader of Israel's forlorn hope, and nobly died at Masada, in the closing drama of the Jewish war of independence. Of such stuff were the Galilean Zealots made. But we have to take this intense Nationalist tendency also into account in the history of Jesus, the more so that at least one of His disciples, and he a member of His family, had at one time belonged to the party. Only the Kingdom of which Jesus was the King was, as He Himself said, not of this world, and of far different conception from that for which the Nationalists longed.

At the time when Jesus went up to the feast, Quirinius was, as already stated, Governor of Syria. The taxing and the rising of Judas were alike past; and the Roman Governor, dissatisfied with the trimming of Joazar, and distrustful of him, had appointed in his stead Ananos, the son of Seth, the Annas of infamous memory in the New Testament. With brief interruption, he or his son held the Pontifical office till, under the Procuratorship of Pilate, Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, succeeded to that dignity. It has already been stated that, subject to the Roman Governors of Syria, the rule of Palestine devolved on Procurators, of whom Coponius was the first. Of him and his immediate successors Marcus Ambivius, Annius Rufus, and Valerius Gratus, we know little. They were, indeed, guilty of the most grievous fiscal oppressions, but they seem to have respected, so far as was in them, the religious feelings of the Jews. We know, that they even removed the image of the Emperor from the standards of the Roman soldiers before marching them into Jerusalem, so as to avoid the appearance of a cultus of the Caesars. It was reserved for Pontius Pilate to force this hated emblem on the Jews, and otherwise to set their most sacred feelings at defiance. But we may notice, even at this stage, with what critical periods in Jewish history the public appearance of Christ synchronised. His first visit to the Temple followed upon the Roman possession of Judaea, the taxing, and the national rising, as also the institution of Annas to the High-Priesthood. And the commencement of His

public Ministry was contemporaneous with the accession of Pilate, and the institution of Caiaphas. Whether viewed subjectively or objectively, these things also have a deep bearing upon the history of the Christ.

It was, as we reckon it, in spring a.d. 9, that Jesus for the first time went up to the Paschal Feast in Jerusalem. Coponius would be there as the Procurator; and Annas ruled in the Temple as High-Priest, when He appeared among its doctors. But far other than political thoughts must have occupied the mind of Christ. Indeed, for a time a brief calm had fallen upon the land. There was nothing to provoke active resistance, and the party of the Zealots, although existing, and striking deeper root in the hearts of the people, was, for the time, rather what Josephus called it, the philosophical party' their minds busy with an ideal, which their hands were not yet preparing to make a reality. And so, when, according to ancient wont, the festive company from Nazareth, soon swelled by other festive bands, went up to Jerusalem, chanting by the way those Psalms of Ascent to the accompaniment of the flute, they might implicitly yield themselves to the spiritual thoughts kindled by such words. When the pilgrims feet stood within the gates of Jerusalem, there could have been no difficulty in finding hospitality, however crowded the City may have been on such occasions the more so when we remember the extreme simplicity of Eastern manners and wants, and the abundance of provisions which the many sacrifices of the season would supply. But on this subject, also, the Evangelic narrative keeps silence. Glorious as a view of Jerusalem must have seemed to a child coming to it for the first time from the retirement of a Galilean village, we must bear in mind, that He Who now looked upon it was not an ordinary Child. Nor are we, perhaps, mistaken in the idea that the sight of its grandeur would, as on another occasion, awaken in Him not so much feelings of admiration, which might have been akin to those of pride, as of sadness, though He may as yet have been scarcely conscious of its deeper reason. But the one all-engrossing thought would be of the Temple. This, his first visit to its halls, seems also to have called out the first outspoken and may we not infer, the first conscious thought of that Temple as the House of His Father, and with it the first conscious impulse of his Mission and Being. Here also it would be the higher meaning, rather than the structure and appearance, of the Temple, that would absorb the mind. And yet there was sufficient, even in the latter, to kindle enthusiasm. As the pilgrim ascended the Mount, crested by that symmetrically proportioned building, which could hold within its gigantic girdle not fewer than 210,000 persons, his wonder might well increase at every step. The Mount itself seemed like an island, abruptly rising from out deep valleys, surrounded by a sea of walls, palaces, streets, and houses, and crowned by a mass of snowy marble and glittering gold, rising terrace upon terrace. Altogether it measured a square of about 1,000 feet, or, to give a more exact equivalent of the measurements furnished by the Rabbis, 927 feet. At its north-western angle, and connected with it, frowned the Castle of Antonia, held by the Roman garrison. The lofty walls were pierced by massive gates the unused gate (Tedi) on the north; the Susa Gate on the east, which opened on the arched roadway to the Mount of Olives; the two so-called Huldah (probably, weasel) gates, which led by tunnels from the priest-suburb Ophel into the outer Court; and, finally, four gates on the west.

Within the gates ran all around covered double colonnades, with here and there benches for those who resorted thither for prayer or for conference. The most magnificent of those was the southern, or twofold double colonnade, with a wide space between; the most venerable, the ancient Solomon's Porch or eastern colonnade. Entering from the Xystus bridge, and under the tower of John, one would pass along the southern colonnade (over the tunnel of the Huldah-gates) to its eastern extremity, over which another tower rose, probably the pinnacle of the history of the Temptation. From this height yawned the Kedron valley 450 feet beneath. From that lofty pinnacle the priest each morning watched and announced the earliest streak of day. Passing along the eastern colonnade, or Solomon's Porch, we would, if the description of the Rabbis is trustworthy, have reached the Susa Gate, the carved representation of that city over the gateway reminding us of the Eastern Dispersion.

Here the standard measures of the Temple are said to have been kept; and here, also, we have to locate the first or lowest of the three Sanhedrins, which, according to the Mishnah, held their meetings in the Temple; the second, or intermediate Court of Appeal, being in the Court of the Priests (probably close to the Nicanor Gate); and the highest, that of the Great Sanhedrin, at one time in the Hall of Hewn Square Stones (Lishkath ha-Gazith.)

Passing out of these colonnades or porches you entered the Court of the Gentiles or what the Rabbis called the Mount of the House which was widest on the west side, and more and more narrow respectively on the east, the south, and the north. This was called the Chol, or profane place to which Gentiles had access. Here must have been the market for the sale of sacrificial animals, the tables of the money-changers, and places for the sale of other needful articles. Advancing within this Court, you reached a low breast-wall (the Soreg), which marked the space beyond which no Gentile, nor Levitically unclean person, might proceed tablets, bearing inscriptions to that effect, warning them off. Thirteen openings admitted into the inner part of the Court. Thence fourteen steps led up to the Chel or Terrace, which was bounded by the wall of the Temple-buildings in the stricter sense. A flight of steps led up to the massive, splendid gates. The two on the west side seem to have been of no importance, so far as the worshippers were concerned, and probably intended for the use of workmen. North and south were four gates. But the most splendid gate was that to the east, termed the Beautiful.

Entering by the latter, you came into the Court of the Women, so called because the women occupied in it two elevated and separated galleries, which, however, filled only part of the Court. Fifteen steps led up to the Upper Court, which was bounded by a wall, and where was the celebrated Nicanor Gate, covered with Corinthian brass. Here the Levites, who conducted the musical part of the service, were placed. In the Court of the Women were the Treasury and the thirteen Trumpets while at each corner were chambers or halls, destined for various purposes. Similarly, beyond the fifteen steps, there were repositories for the musical instruments. The Upper Court was divided into two parts by a boundary the narrow part forming the Court of Israel, and the wider that of the Priests, in which were the great Altar and the Laver.

The Sanctuary itself was on a higher terrace than that Court of the Priests. Twelve steps led up to its Porch, which extended beyond it on either side (north and south). Here, in separate chambers, all that was necessary for the sacrificial service was kept. On two marble tables near the entrance the old shewbread which was taken out, and the new that was brought in, were respectively placed. The Porch was adorned by votive presents, conspicuous among them a massive golden vine. A two-leaved gate opened into the Sanctuary itself, which was divided into two parts. The Holy Place had the Golden Candlestick (south), the Table of Shewbread (north), and the Golden Altar of Incense between them. A heavy double veil concealed the entrance to the Most Holy Place, which in the second Temple was empty, nothing being there but the piece of rock, called the Ebhen Shethiyah, or Foundation Stone, which, according to tradition, covered the mouth of the pit, and on which, it was thought, the world was founded. Nor does all this convey an adequate idea of the vastness of the Temple-buildings. For all around the Sanctuary and each of the Courts were various chambers and out-buildings, which served different purposes connected with the Services of the Temple.

In some part of this Temple, sitting in the midst of the Doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions we must look for the Child Jesus on the third and the two following days of the Feast on which He first visited the Sanctuary. Only on the two first days of the Feast of Passover was personal attendance in the Temple necessary. With the third day commenced the so-called half-holydays, when it was lawful to return to one's home a provision of which, no doubt, many availed themselves. Indeed, there was really nothing of special interest to detain the pilgrims. For, the Passover had been eaten, the festive sacrifice (or Chagigah) offered, and the first ripe barely reaped and brought to the Temple, and waved as the Omer of first flour before the Lord. Hence, in view of the well-known

Rabbinic provision, the expression in the Gospel-narrative concerning the Parents of Jesus, when they had fulfilled the days cannot necessarily imply that Joseph and the Mother of Jesus had remained in Jerusalem during the whole Paschal week. On the other hand, the circumstances connected with the presence of Jesus could not have been found among the Doctors after the close of the Fea The first question here is as to the locality in the Temple, where the scene has to be laid. It has, indeed, been commonly supposed that there was a Synagogue in the Temple; but of this there is, to say the least, no historical evidence.² But even if such had existed, the worship and addresses of the Synagogue would not have offered any opportunity for the questioning on the part of Jesus which the narrative implies. Still more groundless is the idea that there was in the Temple something like a Beth ha-Midrash, or theological Academy, not to speak of the circumstance that a child of twelve would not, at any time, have been allowed to take part in its discussions. But there were occasions on which the Temple became virtually, though not formally, a Beth ha-Midrash. For we read in the Talmud, that the members of the Temple-Sanhedrin, who on ordinary days sat as a Court of Appeal, from the close of the Morning-to the time of the Evening-Sacrifice, were wont on Sabbaths and feast-days to come out upon the Terrace of the Temple, and there to teach. In such popular instruction the utmost latitude of questioning would be given. It is in this audience, which sat on the ground, surrounding and mingling with the Doctors and hence during, not after the Feast that we must seek the Child Jesus.

But we have yet to show that the presence and questioning of a Child of that age did not necessarily imply anything so extraordinary, as to convey the idea of supernaturalness to those Doctors or others in the audience. Jewish tradition gives other instances of precocious and strangely advanced students. Besides, scientific theological learning would not be necessary to take part in such popular discussions. If we may judge from later arrangements, not only in Babylon, but in Palestine, there were two kinds of public lectures, and two kinds of students. The first, or more scientific class, was designated Kallah (literally, bride), and its attendants Beney-Kallah (children of the bride). These lectures were delivered in the last month of summer (Elul), before the Feast of the New Year, and in the last winter month (Adar), immediately before the Feast of Passover. They implied considerable preparation on the part of the lecturing Rabbis, and at least some Talmudic knowledge on the part of the attendants. On the other hand, there were Students of the Court (Chatsatsta, and in Babylon Tarbitsa), who during ordinary lectures sat separated from the regular students by a kind of hedge, outside, as it were in the Court, some of whom seem to have been ignorant even of the Bible. The lectures addressed to such a general audience would, of course, be of a very different character. But if there was nothing so unprecedented as to render His Presence and questioning marvellous, yet all who heard Him were amazed at His combinative insight⁶⁵ and discerning answers. We scarcely venture to inquire towards what His questioning had been directed. Judging by what we know of such discussion, we infer that they may have been connected with the Paschal solemnities. Grave Paschal questions did arise. Indeed, the great Hillel obtained his rank as chief when he proved to the assembled Doctors that the Passover might be offered even on the Sabbath. Many other questions might arise on the subject of the Passover. Or did the Child Jesus as afterwards, in connection with the Messianic teaching⁶⁸ lead up by His questions to the deeper meaning of the Paschal solemnities, as it was to be unfolded, when Himself was offered up, the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world?

Other questions also almost force themselves on the mind most notably this: whether on the occasion of this His first visit to the Temple, the Virgin Mother had told her Son the history of His Infancy, and of what had happened when, for the first time, He had been brought to the Temple. It would almost seem so, if we might judge from the contrast between the Virgin Mother's complaint about the search of His father and of her, and His own emphatic appeal to the business of His Father. But most surprising, truly wonderful it must have seemed to Joseph, and even to the Mother of Jesus, that the

meek, quiet Child should have been found in such company, and so engaged. It must have been quite other than what, from His past, they would have expected; or they would not have taken it for granted, when they left Jerusalem, that He was among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, perhaps mingling with the children. Nor yet would they, in such case, after they missed Him at the first night's halt at Sichem, 69 if the direct road north, through Samaria, was taken (or, according to the Mishnah, at Akrah) have so anxiously sought Him by the way, and in Jerusalem; nor yet would they have been amazed when they found Him in the assembly of the Doctors. The reply of Jesus to the half-reproachful, half-relieved expostulation of them who had sought Him sorrowing these three days, sets clearly these three things before us. He had been so entirely absorbed by the awakening thought of His Being and Mission, however kindled, as to be not only neglectful, but forgetful of all around. Nay, it even seemed to Him impossible to understand how they could have sought Him, and not known where He had lingered. Secondly: we may venture to say, that He now realised that this was emphatically His Father's House. And, thirdly: so far as we can judge, it was then and there that, for the first time, He felt the strong and irresistible impulse that Divine necessity of His Being to be about His Father's business. We all, when first awakening to spiritual consciousness or, perhaps, when for the first time taking part in the feast of the Lord's House may, and, learning from His example, should, make this the hour of decision, in which heart and life shall be wholly consecrated to the business of our Father. But there was far more than this in the bearing of Christ on this occasion. That forgetfulness of His Child-life was a sacrifice a sacrifice of self; that entire absorption in His Father's business, without a thought of self, either in the gratification of curiosity, the acquisition of knowledge, or personal ambition a consecration of Himself unto God. It was the first manifestation of His passive and active obedience to the Will of God. Even at this stage, it was the forth-bursting of the inmost meaning of His Life: My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. And yet this awakening of the Christ-consciousness on His first visit to the Temple, partial, and perhaps even temporary, as it may have been, seems itself like the morning-dawn, which from the pinnacle of the Temple the Priest watched, ere he summoned his waiting brethren beneath to offer the early sacrifice. From what we have already learned of this History, we do not wonder that the answer of Jesus came to His parents as a fresh surprise. For, we can only understand what we perceive in its totality. But here each fresh manifestation came as something separate and new not as part of a whole; and therefore as a surprise, of which the purport and meaning could not be understood, except in its organic connection and as a whole. And for the true human development of the God-Man, what was the natural was also the needful process, even as it was best for the learning of Mary herself, and for the future reception of His teaching. These three subsidiary reasons may once more be indicated here in explanation of the Virgin Mother's seeming ignorance of her Son's true character: the necessary gradualness of such a revelation; the necessary development of His own consciousness; and the fact, that Jesus could not have been subject to His Parents, nor had true and proper human training, if they had clearly known that He was the essential Son of God.

A further, though to us it seems a downward step, was His quiet, immediate, unquestioning return to Nazareth with His Parents, and His willing submission to them while there. It was self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-consecration to His Mission, with all that it implied. It was not self-examination but self-submission, all the more glorious in proportion to the greatness of that Self. This constant contrast before her eyes only deepened in the heart of Mary the everpresent impression of all those matters of which she was the most cognisant. She was learning to spell out the word Messiah, as each of those matters taught her one fresh letter in it, and she looked at them all in the light of the Nazareth-Sun. With His return to Nazareth began Jesus Life of youth and early manhood, with all of inward and outward development, of heavenly and earthly approbation which it carried. Whether or not He went to Jerusalem on recurring Feasts, we know not, and need not inquire. For only once during that period on His first visit to the Temple, and in the awakening of His Youth-Life could there have been

such outward forth-bursting of His real Being and Mission . Other influences were at their silent work to weld His inward and outward development, and to determine the manner of His later Manifesting of Himself. We assume that the School-education of Jesus must have ceased soon after His return to Nazareth . Henceforth the Nazareth-influences on the Life and Thinking of Jesus may be grouped and progressively as He advanced from youth to manhood under these particulars: Home, Nature, and Prevailing Ideas.

1. Home. Jewish Home-Life, especially in the country, was of the simple Even in luxurious Alexandria it seems often to have been such, alike as regarded the furnishing of the house, and the provisions of the table. The morning and midday meal must have been of the plainest, and even the larger evening meal of the simplest, in the home at Nazareth. Only the Sabbath and festivals, whether domestic or public, brought what of the best lay within reach. But Nazareth was not the city of the wealthy or influential, and such festive evening-entertainments, with elaborate ceremoniousness of reception, arranging of guests according to rank, and rich spread of board, would but rarely, if ever, be witnessed in those quiet homes. The same simplicity would prevail in dress and manners. But close and loving were the bonds which drew together the members of a family, and deep the influence which they exercised on each other. We cannot here discuss the vexed question whether the brothers and sisters of Jesus were such in the real sense, or step-brothers and sisters, or else cousins, though it seems to us as if the primary meaning of the terms would scarcely have been called in question, but for a theory of false asceticism, and an undervaluing of the sanctity of the married estate. But, whatever the precise relationship between Jesus and these brothers and sisters it must, on any theory, have been of the closest, and exercised its influence upon Him.

Passing over Joses or Joseph, of whose history we know next to nothing, we have sufficient materials to enable us to form some judgment of what must have been the tendencies and thoughts of two of His brothers James and Jude, before they were heart and soul followers of the Messiah, and of His cousin Simon. If we might venture on a general characterisation, we would infer from the Epistle of James, that his religious views had originally been cast in the mould of Shammai. Certainly, there is nothing of the Hillelite direction about it, but all to remind us of the earnestness, directness, vigour, and rigour of Shammai. Of Simon we know that he had belonged to the Nationalist party, since he is expressly so designated (Zelotes, Cananaean). Lastly, there are in the Epistle of Jude, one undoubted, and another probable reference to two of those (Pseudepigraphic) Apocalyptic books, which at that time marked one deeply interesting phase of the Messianic outlook of Israel. We have thus within the narrow circle of Christ's Family-Life not to speak of any intercourse with the sons of Zebedee, who probably were also His cousins the three most hopeful and pure Jewish tendencies, brought into constant contact with Jesus: in Pharisaism, the teaching of Shammai; then, the Nationalist ideal; and, finally, the hope of a glorious Messianic future. To these there should probably be added, at least knowledge of the lonely preparation of His kinsman John, who, though certainly not an Essene, had, from the necessity of his calling, much in his outward bearing that was akin to them. But we are anticipating. From what are, necessarily, only suggestions, we turn again to what is certain in connection with His Family-Life and its influences. From Mark vi. 3, we may infer with great probability, though not with absolute certainty, that He had adopted the trade of Joseph. Among the Jews the contempt for manual labour, which was one of the painful characteristics of heathenism, did not exist. On the contrary, it was deemed a religious duty, frequently and most earnestly insisted upon, to learn some trade, provided it did not minister to luxury, nor tend to lead away from personal observance of the Law. There was not such separation between rich and poor as with us, and while wealth might confer social distinction, the absence of it in no way implied social inferiority. Nor could it be otherwise where wants were so few, life was so simple, and its highest aim so ever present to the mind.

We have already spoken of the religious influences in the family, so blessedly different from that

neglect, exposure, and even murder of children among the heathen, or their education by slaves, who corrupted the mind from its earliest opening. The love of parents to children, appearing even in the curse which was felt to attach to childlessness; the reverence towards parents, as a duty higher than any of outward observance; and the love of brethren, which Jesus had learned in His home, form, so to speak, the natural basis of many of the teachings of Jesus. They give us also an insight into the family-life of Nazareth. And yet there is nothing sombre nor morose about it; and even the joyous games of children, as well as festive gatherings of families, find their record in the words and the life of Christ. This also is characteristic of His pa And so are His deep sympathy with all sorrow and suffering, and His love for the family circle, as evidenced in the home of Lazarus. That He spoke Hebrew, and used and quoted the Scriptures in the original, has already been shown, although, no doubt, He understood Greek, possibly also Latin.

Secondly: Nature and Every-day Life. The most superficial perusal of the teaching of Christ must convince how deeply sympathetic He was with nature, and how keenly observant of man. Here there is no contrast between love of the country and the habits of city life; the two are found side by side. On His lonely walks He must have had an eye for the beauty of the lilies of the field, and thought of it, how the birds of the air received their food from an Unseen Hand, and with what maternal affection the hen gathered her chickens under her wing. He had watched the sower or the vinedresser as he went forth to his labour, and read the teaching of the tares which sprang up among the wheat. To Him the vocation of the shepherd must have been full of meaning, as he led, and fed, and watched his flock, spoke to his sheep with well-known voice, brought them to the fold, or followed, and tenderly carried back, those that had strayed, ever ready to defend them, even at the cost of his own life. Nay, He even seems to have watched the habits of the fox in its secret lair. But he also equally knew the joys, the sorrows, the wants and sufferings of the busy multitude. The play in the market, the marriage processions, the funeral rites, the wrongs of injustice and oppression, the urgent harshness of the creditor, the bonds and prison of the debtor, the palaces and luxury of princes and courtiers, the self-indulgence of the rich, the avarice of the covetous, the exactions of the tax-gatherer, and the oppression of the widow by unjust judges, had all made an indelible impression on His mind. And yet this evil world was not one which He hated, and from which He would withdraw Himself with His disciples, though ever and again He felt the need of periods of meditation and prayer. On the contrary, while He confronted all the evil in it, He would fain pervade the mass with the new leaven; not cast it away, but renew it. He recognised the good and the hopeful, even in those who seemed most lo He quenched not the dimly burning flax, nor brake the bruised reed. It was not contempt of the world, but sadness over it; not condemnation of man, but drawing him to His Heavenly Father; not despising of the little and the poor, whether outwardly or inwardly such, but encouragement and adoption of them, together with keen insight into the real under the mask of the apparent, and withering denunciation and unsparing exposure of all that was evil, mean, and unreal, wherever it might appear. Such were some of the results gathered from His past life, as presented in His teaching.

Thirdly: Of the prevailing ideas around, with which He was brought in contact, some have already been mentioned. Surely, the earnestness of His Shammaite brother, if such we may venture to designate him; the idea of the Kingdom suggested by the Nationalists, only in its purest and most spiritual form, as not of this world, and as truly realising the sovereignty of God in the individual, whoever he might be; even the dreamy thoughts of the prophetic literature of those times, which sought to read the mysteries of the coming Kingdom; as well as the prophet-like asceticism of His forerunner and kinsman, formed at least so many points of contact for His teaching. Thus, Christ was in sympathy with all the highest tendencies of His people and time. Above all, there was His intimate converse with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. If, in the Synagogue, He saw much to show the hollowness, self-seeking, pride, and literalism which a mere external observance of the Law fostered,

He would ever turn from what man or devils said to what He read, to what was written. Not one dot or hook of it could fall to the ground all must be established and fulfilled. The Law of Moses in all its bearings, the utterances of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Micah, Zechariah, Malachi and the hopes and consolations of the Psalms, were all to Him literally true, and cast their light upon the building which Moses had reared. It was all one, a grand unity; not an aggregation of different parts, but the unfolding of a living organism. Chiefest of all, it was the thought of the Messianic bearing of all Scripture to its unity, the idea of the Kingdom of God and the King of Zion, which was the life and light of all. Beyond this, into the mystery of His inner converse with God, the unfolding of His spiritual receptiveness, and the increasing communication from above, we dare not enter. Even what His bodily appearance may have been, we scarcely venture to imagine. 91 It could not but be that His outer man in some measure bodied forth His Inner Being. Yet we dread gathering around our thoughts of Him the artificial flowers of legend. What His manner and mode of receiving and dealing with men were, we can portray to ourselves from His life. And so it is best to remain content with the simple account of the Evangelic narrative: Jesus increased in favour with God and Man. '

Chapter 11 In the Fifteenth Year of Tiberius Caesar

(Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:1-18.)

There is something grand, even awful, in the almost absolute silence which lies upon the thirty years between the Birth and the first Messianic Manifestation of Jesus. In a narrative like that of the Gospels, this must have been designed; and, if so, affords presumptive evidence of the authenticity of what follows, and is intended to teach, that what had preceded concerned only the inner History of Jesus, and the preparation of the Christ. At last that solemn silence was broken by an appearance, a proclamation, a rite, and a ministry as startling as that of Elijah had been. In many respects, indeed, the two messengers and their times bore singular likeness. It was to a society secure, prosperous, and luxurious, yet in imminent danger of perishing from hidden, festering disease; and to a religious community which presented the appearance of hopeless perversion, and yet contained the germs of a possible regeneration, that both Elijah and John the Baptist came. Both suddenly appeared to threaten terrible judgment, but also to open unthought-of possibilities of good. And, as if to deepen still more the impression of this contrast, both appeared in a manner unexpected, and even antithetic to the habits of their contemporaries. John came suddenly out of the wilderness of Judaea, as Elijah from the wilds of Gilead; John bore the same strange ascetic appearance as his predecessor; the message of John was the counterpart of that of Elijah; his baptism that of Elijah's novel rite on Mount Carmel'. And, as if to make complete the parallelism, with all of memory and hope which it awakened, even the more minute details surrounding the life of Elijah found their counterpart in that of John. Yet history never repeats itself. It fulfils in its development that of which it gave indication at its commencement. Thus, the history of John the Baptist was the fulfilment of that of Elijah in the fulness of time.

For, alike in the Roman world and in Palestine, the time had fully come; not, indeed, in the sense of any special expectancy, but of absolute need. The reign of Augustus marked, not only the climax, but the crisis, of Roman history. Whatever of good or of evil the ancient world contained, had become fully ripe. As regarded politics, philosophy, religion, and society, the utmost limits had been reached. Beyond them lay, as only alternatives, ruin or regeneration. It was felt that the boundaries of the Empire could be no further extended, and that henceforth the highest aim must be to preserve what

had been conquered. The destinies of Rome were in the hands of one man, who was at the same time general-in-chief of a standing army of about three hundred and forty thousand men, head of a Senate (now sunk into a mere court for registering the commands of Caesar), and High-Priest of a religion, of which the highest expression was the apotheosis of the State in the person of the Emperor. Thus, all power within, without, and above lay in his hands. Within the city, which in one short reign was transformed from brick into marble, were, side by side, the most abject misery and almost boundless luxury. Of a population of about two millions, well-nigh one half were slaves; and, of the rest, the greater part either freedmen and their descendants, or foreigners. Each class contributed its share to the common decay. Slavery was not even what we know it, but a seething mass of cruelty and oppression on the one side, and of cunning and corruption on the other. More than any other cause, it contributed to the ruin of Roman society. The freedmen, who had very often acquired their liberty by the most disreputable courses, and had prospered in them, combined in shameless manner the vices of the free with the vileness of the slave. The foreigners especially Greeks and Syrians who crowded the city, poisoned the springs of its life by the corruption which they brought. The free citizens were idle, dissipated, sunken; their chief thoughts of the theatre and the arena; and they were mostly supported at the public co While, even in the time of Augustus, more than two hundred thousand persons were thus maintained by the State, what of the old Roman stock remained was rapidly decaying, partly from corruption, but chiefly from the increasing cessation of marriage, and the nameless abominations of what remained of family-life.

The state of the provinces was in every respect more favourable. But it was the settled policy of the Empire, which only too surely succeeded, to destroy all separate nationalities, or rather to absorb and to Grecianise all. The only real resistance came from the Jews. Their tenacity was religious, and, even in its extreme of intolerant exclusiveness, served a most important Providential purpose. And so Rome became to all the centre of attraction, but also of fast-spreading destructive corruption. Yet this unity also, and the common bond of the Greek language, served another important Providential purpose. So did, in another direction, the conscious despair of any possible internal reformation. This, indeed, seemed the last word of all the institutions in the Roman world: It is not in me! Religion, philosophy, and society had passed through every stage, to that of despair. Without tracing the various phases of ancient thought, it may be generally said that, in Rome at least, the issue lay between Stoicism and Epicureanism. The one flattered its pride, the other gratified its sensuality; the one was in accordance with the original national character, the other with its later decay and corruption. Both ultimately led to atheism and despair the one, by turning all higher aspirations self-ward, the other, by quenching them in the enjoyment of the moment; the one, by making the extinction of all feeling and self-deification, the other, the indulgence of every passion and the worship of matter, its ideal.

That, under such conditions, all real belief in a personal continuance after death must have ceased among the educated classes, needs not demonstration. If the older Stoics held that, after death, the soul would continue for some time a separate existence in the case of sages till the general destruction of the world by fire, it was the doctrine of most of their successors that, immediately after death, the soul returned into the world-soul of which it was part. But even this hope was beset by so many doubts and misgivings, as to make it practically without influence or comfort. Cicero was the only one who, following Plato, defended the immortality of the soul, while the Peripatetics denied the existence of a soul, and leading Stoics at least its continuance after death. But even Cicero writes as one overwhelmed by doubts. With his contemporaries this doubt deepened into absolute despair, the only comfort lying in present indulgence of the passions. Even among the Greeks, who were most tenacious of belief in the non-extinction of the individual, the practical upshot was the same. The only healthier tendency, however mixed with error, came from the Neo-Platonic School, which accordingly offered a point of contact between ancient philosophy and the new faith.

In such circumstances, anything like real religion was manifestly impossible.

Rome tolerated, and, indeed, incorporated, all national rites. But among the populace religion had degenerated into abject superstition. In the East, much of it consisted of the vilest rites; while, among the philosophers, all religions were considered equally false or equally true the outcome of ignorance, or else the unconscious modifications of some one fundamental thought. The only religion on which the State insisted was the deification and worship of the Emperor. These apotheoses attained almost incredible development. Soon not only the Emperors, but their wives, paramours, children, and the creatures of their vilest lusts, were deified; nay, any private person might attain that distinction, if the survivors possessed sufficient means. Mingled with all this was an increasing amount of superstition by which term some understood the worship of foreign gods, the most part the existence of fear in religion. The ancient Roman religion had long given place to foreign rites, the more mysterious and unintelligible the more enticing. It was thus that Judaism made its converts in Rome; its chief recommendation with many being its contrast to the old, and the unknown possibilities which its seemingly incredible doctrines opened. Among the most repulsive symptoms of the general religious decay may be reckoned prayers for the death of a rich relative, or even for the satisfaction of unnatural lusts, along with horrible blasphemies when such prayers remained unanswered. We may here contrast the spirit of the Old and New Testaments with such sentiments as this, on the tomb of a child: To the unjust gods who robbed me of life; or on that of a girl of twenty: I lift my hands against the god who took me away, innocent as I am.

It would be unsavoury to describe how far the worship of indecency was carried; how public morals were corrupted by the mimic representations of everything that was vile, and even by the pandering of a corrupt art. The personation of gods, oracles, divination, dreams, astrology, magic, necromancy, and theurgy, all contributed to the general decay. It has been rightly said, that the idea of conscience, as we understand it, was unknown to heathenism. Absolute right did not exist. Might was right. The social relations exhibited, if possible, even deeper corruption. The sanctity of marriage had ceased. Female dissipation and the general dissoluteness led at last to an almost entire cessation of marriage. Abortion, and the exposure and murder of newly-born children, were common and tolerated; unnatural vices, which even the greatest philosophers practised, if not advocated, attained proportions which defy description.

But among these sad signs of the times three must be specially mentioned: the treatment of slaves; the bearing towards the poor; and public amusements. The slave was entirely unprotected; males and females were exposed to nameless cruelties, compared to which death by being thrown to the wild beasts, or fighting in the arena, might seem absolute relief. Sick or old slaves were cast out to perish from want. But what the influence of the slaves must have been on the free population, and especially upon the young whose tutors they generally were may readily be imagined. The heartlessness towards the poor who crowded the city is another well-known feature of ancient Roman society. Of course, there was neither hospitals, nor provision for the poor; charity and brotherly love in their every manifestation are purely Old and New Testament ideas. But even bestowal of the smallest alms on the needy was regarded as very questionable; best, not to afford them the means of protracting a useless existence. Lastly, the account which Seneca has to give of what occupied and amused the idle multitude for all manual labour, except agriculture, was looked upon with utmost contempt horrified even himself. And so the only escape which remained for the philosopher, the satiated, or the miserable, seemed the power of self-destruction! What is worse, the noblest spirits of the time of self-destruction! What is worse, the noblest spirits of the time felt, that the state of things was utterly hopeless. Society could not reform itself; philosophy and religion had nothing to offer: they had been tried and found wanting. Seneca longed for some hand from without to lift up from the mire of despair; Cicero pictured the enthusiasm which would greet the embodiment of true virtue, should it ever appear on earth; Tacitus declared human life one great farce, and expressed his conviction that

the Roman world lay under some terrible curse. All around, despair, conscious need, and unconscious longing. Can greater contrast be imagined, than the proclamation of a coming Kingdom of God amid such a world; or clearer evidence be afforded of the reality of this Divine message, than that it came to seek and to save that which was thus lost? One synchronism, as remarkable as that of the Star in the East and the Birth of the Messiah, here claims the reverent attention of the student of history. On the 19th of December a.d. 69, the Roman Capitol, with its ancient sanctuaries, was set on fire. Eight months later, on the 9th of Ab a.d. 70, the Temple of Jerusalem was given to the flames. It is not a coincidence but a conjunction, for upon the ruins of heathenism and of apostate Judaism was the Church of Christ to be reared.

A silence, even more complete than that concerning the early life of Jesus, rests on the thirty years and more, which intervened between the birth and the open forthshowing of John in his character as Forerunner of the Messiah. Only his outward and inward development, and his being in the deserts are briefly indicated. The latter, assuredly, not in order to learn from the Essenes, but to attain really, in lonely fellowship with God, what they sought externally. It is characteristic that, while Jesus could go straight from the home and workshop of Nazareth to the Baptism of Jordan, His Forerunner required so long and peculiar preparation: characteristic of the difference of their Persons and Mission, characteristic also of the greatness of the work to be inaugurated. Luke furnishes precise notices of the time of the Baptist's public appearance not merely to fix the exact chronology, which would not have required so many details, but for a higher purpose. For, they indicate, more clearly than the most elaborate discussion, the fitness of the moment for the Advent of the Kingdom of Heaven. For the first time since the Babylonish Captivity, the foreigner, the Chief of the hated Roman Empire according to the Rabbis, the fourth beast of Daniel's vision was absolute and undisputed master of Judaea; and the chief religious office divided between two, equally unworthy of its functions. And it deserves, at least, notice, that of the Rulers mentioned by Luke, Pilate entered on his office only shortly before the public appearance of John, and that they all continued till after the Crucifixion of Christ. There was thus, so to speak, a continuity of these powers during the whole Messianic period.

As regards Palestine, the ancient kingdom of Herod was now divided into four parts, Judaea being under the direct administration of Rome, two other tetrarchies under the rule of Herod's sons (Herod Antipas and Philip), while the small principality of Abilene was governed by Lysanias. Of the latter no details can be furnished, nor are they necessary in this history. It is otherwise as regards the sons of Herod, and especially the character of the Roman government at that time.

Herod Antipas, whose rule extended over forty-three years, reigned over Galilee and Peraea the districts which were respectively the principal sphere of the Ministry of Jesus and of John the Baptist. Like his brother Archelaus, Herod Antipas possessed in an even aggravated form most of the vices, without any of the greater qualities, of his father. Of deeper religious feelings or convictions he was entirely destitute, though his conscience occasionally misgave, if it did not restrain, him. The inherent weakness of his character left him in the absolute control of his wife, to the final ruin of his fortunes. He was covetous, avaricious, luxurious, and utterly dissipated suspicious, and with a good deal of that fox-cunning which, especially in the East, often forms the sum total of state-craft. Like his father, he indulged a taste for building always taking care to propitiate Rome by dedicating all to the Emperor. The most extensive of his undertakings was the building, in 22 a.d., of the city of Tiberias, at the upper end of the Lake of Galilee. The site was under the disadvantage of having formerly been a burying-place, which, as implying Levitical uncleanness, for some time deterred pious Jews from settling there. Nevertheless, it rose in great magnificence from among the reeds which had but lately covered the neighbourhood (the ensigns armorial of the city were reeds). Herod Antipas made it his residence, and built there a strong castle and a palace of unrivalled splendour. The city, which was peopled chiefly by adventurers, was mainly Grecian, and adorned with an amphitheatre, of which the

ruins can still be traced.

A happier account can be given of Philip, the son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem. He was undoubtedly the best of Herod's sons. He showed, indeed, the same abject submission as the rest of his family to the Roman Emperor, after whom he named the city of Caesarea Philippi, which he built at the sources of the Jordan; just as he changed the name of Bethsaida, a village of which he made an opulent city, into Julias, after the daughter of Augustus. But he was a moderate and just ruler, and his reign of thirty-seven years contrasted favourably with that of his kinsmen. The land was quiet and prosperous, and the people contented and happy.

As regards the Roman rule, matters had greatly changed for the worse since the mild sway of Augustus, under which, in the language of Philo, no one throughout the Empire dared to molest the Jews. The only innovations to which Israel had then to submit were, the daily sacrifices for the Emperor and the Roman people, offerings on festive days, prayers for them in the Synagogues, and such participation in national joy or sorrow as their religion allowed.

It was far other when Tiberius succeeded to the Empire, and Judaea was a province. Merciless harshness characterised the administration of Palestine; while the Emperor himself was bitterly hostile to Judaism and the Jews, and that although, personally, openly careless of all religion. Under his reign the persecution of the Roman Jews occurred, and Palestine suffered almost to the verge of endurance. The first Procurator whom Tiberius appointed over Judaea, changed the occupancy of the High-Priesthood four times, till he found in Caiaphas a sufficiently submissive instrument of Roman tyranny. The exactions, and the reckless disregard of all Jewish feelings and interests, might have been characterised as reaching the extreme limit, if worse had not followed when Pontius Pilate succeeded to the procuratorship. Venality, violence, robbery, persecutions, wanton malicious insults, judicial murders without even the formality of a legal process and cruelty, such are the charges brought against his administration. If former governors had, to some extent, respected the religious scruples of the Jews, Pilate set them purposely at defiance; and this not only once, but again and again, in Jerusalem, in Galilee, and even in Samaria, until the Emperor himself interposed.

Such, then, was the political condition of the land, when John appeared to preach the near Advent of a Kingdom with which Israel associated all that was happy and glorious, even beyond the dreams of the religious enthusiast. And equally loud was the call for help in reference to those who held chief spiritual rule over the people. Luke significantly joins together, as the highest religious authority in the land, the names of Annas and Caiaphas. The former had been appointed by Quirinius. After holding the Pontificate for nine years, he was deposed, and succeeded by others, of whom the fourth was his son-in-law Caiaphas. The character of the High-Priests during the whole of that period is described in the Talmud in terrible language. And although there is no evidence that the house of Annas was guilty of the same gross self-indulgence, violence, luxury, and even public indecency, as some of their successors, they are included in the woes pronounced on the corrupt leaders of the priesthood, whom the Sanctuary is represented as bidding depart from the sacred precincts, which their presence defiled. It deserves notice, that the special sin with which the house of Annas is charged is that of 'whispering' or hissing like vipers which seems to refer to private influence on the judges in their administration of justice, whereby morals were corrupted, judgment perverted and the Shekhinah withdrawn from Israel. In illustration of this, we recall the terrorism which prevented Sanhedrists from taking the part of Jesus, and especially the violence which seems to have determined the final action of the Sanhedrin, against which not only such men as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, but even a Gamaliel, would feel themselves powerless. But although the expression High-Priest appears sometimes to have been used in a general sense, as designating the sons of the High-Priests, and even the principal members of their families, there could, of course, be only one actual High-Priest. The conjunction of the two names of Annas and Caiaphas probably indicates that, although Annas was deprived of the Pontificate, he still continued to preside over the Sanhedrin a conclusion not only

borne out by Acts iv. 6, where Annas appears as the actual President, and by the terms in which Caiaphas is spoken of, as merely one of them but by the part which Annas took in the final condemnation of Jesus.

Such a combination of political and religious distress, surely, constituted the time of Israel's utmost need. As yet, no attempt had been made by the people to right themselves by armed force. In these circumstances, the cry that the Kingdom of Heaven was near at hand, and the call to preparation for it, must have awakened echoes throughout the land, and startled the most careless and unbelieving. It was, according to Luke's exact statement, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar reckoning, as provincials would do, from his co-regency with Augustus (which commenced two years before his sole reign), in the year 26 a.d. According to our former computation, Jesus would then be in His thirtieth year. The scene of John's first public appearance was in the wilderness of Judaea that is, the wild, desolate district around the mouth of the Jordan . We know not whether John baptized in this place, nor yet how long he continued there; but we are expressly told, that his stay was not confined to that locality. Soon afterwards we find him at Bethabara, which is farther up the stream. The outward appearance and the habits of the Messenger corresponded to the character and object of his Mission. Neither his dress nor his food was that of the Essenes; and the former, at least, like that of Elijah, whose mission he was now to fulfil. This was evinced alike by what he preached, and by the new symbolic rite, from which he derived the name of Bapti . The grand burden of his message was: the announcement of the approach of the Kingdom of Heaven and the needed preparation of his hearers for that Kingdom. The latter he sought, positively, by admonition, and negatively, by warnings, while he directed all to the Coming One, in Whom that Kingdom would become, so to speak, individualised. Thus, from the first, it was the good news of the Kingdom to which all else in John's preaching was but subsidiary.

Concerning this Kingdom of Heaven which was the great message of John, and the great work of Christ Himself, we may here say, that it is the whole Old Testament sublimated, and the whole New Testament realised. The idea of it did not lie hidden in the Old, to be opened up in the New Testament as did the mystery of its realisation. But this rule of heaven and Kingship of Jehovah was the very substance of the Old Testament; the object of the calling and mission of Israel; the meaning of all its ordinances, whether civil or religious; the underlying idea of all its institutions. It explained alike the history of the people, the dealings of God with them, and the prospects opened up by the prophets. Without it the Old Testament could not be understood; it gave perpetuity to its teaching, and dignity to its representations. This constituted alike the real contrast between Israel and the nations of antiquity, and Israel's real title to distinction. Thus the whole Old Testament was the preparatory presentation of the rule of heaven and of the Kingship of its Lord.

But preparatory not only in the sense of typical, but also in that of inchoative. Even the twofold hindrance internal and external which the Kingdom encountered, indicated this. The former arose from the resistance of Israel to their King; the latter from the opposition of the surrounding kingdoms of this world. All the more intense became the longing through thousands of years, that these hindrances might be swept away by the Advent of the promised Messiah, Who would permanently establish (by His spirit) the right relationship between the King and His Kingdom, by bringing in an everlasting righteousness, and also cast down existing barriers, by calling the kingdoms of this world to be the Kingdom of our God. This would, indeed, be the Advent of the Kingdom of God , such as had been the glowing hope held out by Zechariah, the glorious vision beheld by Daniel. Three ideas especially did this Kingdom of God imply: universality, heavenliness, and permanency. Wide as God's domain would be His Dominion; holy, as heaven in contrast to earth, and God to man, would be his character; and triumphantly lasting its continuance. Such was the teaching of the Old Testament, and the great hope of Israel . It scarcely needs mental compass, only moral and spiritual capacity, to see its matchless grandeur, in contrast with even the highest aspirations of heathenism, and the blanched

ideas of modern culture.

How imperfectly Israel understood this Kingdom, our previous investigations have shown. In truth, the men of that period possessed only the term as it were, the form. What explained its meaning, filled, and fulfilled it, came once more from heaven. Rabbinism and Alexandrianism kept alive the thought of it; and in their own way filled the soul with its longing just as the distress in church and State carried the need of it to every heart with the keenness of anguish. As throughout this history, the form was of that time; the substance and the spirit were of Him Whose coming was the Advent of that Kingdom. Perhaps the nearest approach to it lay in the higher aspirations of the Nationalist party, only that it sought their realisation, not spiritually, but outwardly. Taking the sword, it perished by the sword. It was probably to this that both Pilate and Jesus referred in that memorable question: Art Thou then a King? to which our Lord, unfolding the deepest meaning of His mission, replied: My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight.

According to the Rabbinic views of the time, the terms Kingdom of heaven and Kingdom of God (in the Targum on Micah iv. 7 Kingdom of Jehovah), were equivalent. In fact, the word heaven was very often used instead of God so as to avoid unduly familiarising the ear with the Sacred Name. This, probably, accounts for the exclusive use of the expression Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel by Matthew. And the term did imply a contrast to earth, as the expression the Kingdom of God did to this world. The consciousness of its contrast to earth or the world was distinctly expressed in Rabbinic writings.

This Kingdom of Heaven or of God must, however, be distinguished from such terms as the Kingdom of the Messiah (Malkhutha dimeshicha), the future age (world) of the Messiah (Alma deathey dimeshicha), the days of the Messiah the age to come (soeculum futurum, the Athid labho both this and the previous expression), the end of days and the end of the extremity of days (Soph Equeb Yomaya). This is the more important, since the Kingdom of Heaven has so often been confounded with the period of its triumphant manifestation in the days or in the Kingdom, of the Messiah. Between the Advent and the final manifestation of the Kingdom Jewish expectancy placed a temporary obscuration of the Messiah. Not His first appearance, but His triumphant manifestation, was to be preceded by the so-called sorrows of the Messiah (the Chebhley shel Mashiach), the tribulations of the latter days.

A review of many passages on the subject shows that, in the Jewish mind the expression Kingdom of Heaven referred, not so much to any particular period, as in general to the Rule of God as acknowledged, manifested, and eventually perfected. Very often it is the equivalent for personal acknowledgment of God: the taking upon oneself of the yoke of the Kingdom or of the commandments the former preceding and conditioning the latter. 65 Accordingly, the Mishnah gives this as the reason why, in the collection of Scripture passages which forms the prayer called Shema the confession, Deut. vi. 4 &c., precedes the admonition, Deut. xi. 13 &c., because a man takes upon himself first the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and afterwards that of the commandments. And in this sense, the repetition of this Shema, as the personal acknowledgment of the Rule of Jehovah, is itself often designated as taking upon oneself the Kingdom of Heaven . Similarly, the putting on of phylacteries, and the washing of hands, are also described as taking upon oneself the yoke of the Kingdom of God. To give other instances: Israel is said to have taken up the yoke of the Kingdom of God at Mount Sinai; the children of Jacob at their last interview with their father; 71 and Isaiah on his call to the prophetic office, where it is also noted that this must be done willingly and gladly. On the other hand, the sons of Eli and the sons of Ahab are said to have cast off the Kingdom of Heaven. While thus the acknowledgment of the Rule of God, both in profession and practice, was considered to constitute the Kingdom of God, its full manifestation was expected only in the time of the Advent of Messiah. Thus in the Targum on Isaiah xl. 9, the words Behold your God! are paraphrased: The Kingdom of your God is revealed. Similarly, we read: When the time approaches that the Kingdom of

Heaven shall be manifested, then shall be fulfilled that "the Lord shall be King over all the earth." On the other hand, the unbelief of Israel would appear in that they would reject these three things: the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of the House of David, and the building of the Temple, according to the prediction in Hos. iii. 5. It follows that, after the period of unbelief, the Messianic deliverances and blessings of the Athid Labho or future age, were expected. But the final completion of all still remained for the Olam Habba or world to come. And that there is a distinction between the time of the Messiah and this world to come is frequently indicated in Rabbinic writings.

As we pass from the Jewish ideas of the time to the teaching of the New Testament, we feel that while there is complete change of spirit, the form in which the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven is presented is substantially similar. Accordingly, we must dismiss the notion that the expression refers to the Church, whether visible (according to the Roman Catholic view) or invisible (according to certain Protestant writers). The Kingdom of God or Kingly Rule of God, is an objective fact. The visible Church can only be the subjective attempt at its outward realisation, of which the invisible Church is the true counterpart. When Christ says, that except a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God He teaches, in opposition to the Rabbinic representation of how the Kingdom was taken up, that a man cannot even comprehend that glorious idea of the Reign of God, and of becoming, by conscious self-surrender, one of His subjects, except he be first born from above. Similarly, the meaning of Christ's further teaching on this subject seems to be that, except a man be born of water (profession, with baptism as its symbol) and the Spirit, he cannot really enter into the fellowship of that Kingdom.

In fact, an analysis of 119 passages in the New Testament where the expression Kingdom occurs, shows that it means the rule of God; which was manifested in and through Christ; is apparent in the Church; gradually develops amidst hindrances; is triumphant at the second coming of Christ (the end); and, finally, perfected in the world to come. Thus viewed, the announcement of John of the near Advent of this Kingdom had deepest meaning, although, as so often in the case of prophetism, the stages intervening between the Advent of the Christ and the triumph of that Kingdom seem to have been hidden from the preacher. He came to call Israel to submit to the Reign of God, about to be manifested in Christ. Hence, on the one hand, he called them to repentance a change of mind' with all that this implied; and, on the other, pointed them to the Christ, in the exaltation of His Person and Office. Or rather, the two combined might be summed up in the call: Change your mind', repent, which implies, not only a turning from the past, but a turning to the Christ in newness of mind. And thus the symbolic action by which this preaching was accompanied might be designated the baptism of repentance.

The account given by Luke bears, on the face of it, that it was a summary, not only of the first, but of all John's preaching. The very presence of his hearers at this call to, and baptism of, repentance, gave point to his words. Did they who, notwithstanding their sins, lived in such security of carelessness and self-righteousness, really understand and fear the final consequences of resistance to the coming Kingdom? If so, theirs must be a repentance not only in profession, but of heart and mind, such as would yield fruit, both good and visible. Or else did they imagine that, according to the common notion of the time, the vials of wrath were to be poured out only on the Gentiles, while they, as Abraham's children, were sure of escape in the words of the Talmud, that the night (Is. xxi. 12) was only to the nations of the world, but the morning to Israel?

For, no principle was more fully established in the popular conviction, than that all Israel had part in the world to come (Sanh. x. 1), and this, specifically, because of their connection with Abraham. This appears not only from the New Testament, from Philo, and Josephus, but from many Rabbinic passages. The merits of the Fathers is one of the commonest phrases in the mouth of the Rabbis. Abraham was represented as sitting at the gate of Gehenna, to deliver any Israelite who otherwise might have been consigned to its terrors. In fact, by their descent from Abraham, all the children of

Israel were nobles, infinitely higher than any proselytes. What exclaims the Talmud, shall the born Israelite stand upon the earth, and the proselyte be in heaven? In fact, the ships on the sea were preserved through the merit of Abraham; the rain descended on account of it. For his sake alone had Moses been allowed to ascend into heaven, and to receive the Law; for his sake the sin of the golden calf had been forgiven; his righteousness had on many occasions been the support of Israel's cause; Daniel had been heard for the sake of Abraham; nay, his merit availed even for the wicked. In its extravagance the Midrash thus apostrophises Abraham: If thy children were even (morally) dead bodies, without blood vessels or bones, thy merit would avail for them!

But if such had been the inner thoughts of his bearers, John warned them, that God was able of those stones that strewed the river-bank to raise up children unto Abraham; or, reverting to his former illustration of fruits meet for repentance that the proclamation of the Kingdom was, at the same time, the laying of the axe to the root of every tree that bore not fruit. Then making application of it, in answer to the specific inquiry of various classes, the preacher gave them such practical advice as applied to the well-known sins of their past; yet in this also not going beyond the merely negative, or preparatory element of repentance. The positive, and all-important aspect of it, was to be presented by the Christ. It was only natural that the hearers wondered whether John himself was the Christ, since he thus urged repentance. For this was so closely connected in their thoughts with the Advent of the Messiah, that it was said, If Israel repented but one day, the Son of David would immediately come. But here John pointed them to the difference between himself and his work, and the Person and Mission of the Christ. In deepest reverence he declared himself not worthy to do Him the service of a slave or of a disciple. His Baptism would not be of preparatory repentance and with water, but the Divine Baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire in the Spirit Who sanctified, and the Divine Light which purified, and so effectively qualified for the Kingdom. And there was still another contra John's was but preparing work, the Christ's that of final decision; after it came the harvest His was the harvest, and His the garner; His also the fan, with which He would sift the wheat from the straw and chaff the one to be garnered, the other burned with fire unextinguished and inextinguishable. Thus early in the history of the Kingdom of God was it indicated, that alike that which would prove useless straw and the good corn were inseparably connected in God's harvest-field till the reaping time; that both belonged to Him; and that the final separation would only come at the last, and by His own Hand. What John preached, that he also symbolised by a rite which, though not in itself, yet in its application, was wholly new. Hitherto the Law had it, that those who had contracted Levitical defilement were to immerse before offering sacrifice. Again, it was prescribed that such Gentiles as became proselytes of righteousness or proselytes of the Covenant (Gerey hatstsedeq or Gerey habberith), were to be admitted to full participation in the privileges of Israel by the threefold rites of circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice the immersion being, as it were, the acknowledgment and symbolic removal of moral defilement, corresponding to that of Levitical uncleanness. But never before had it been proposed that Israel should undergo a baptism of repentance although there are indications of a deeper insight into the meaning of Levitical baptisms. Was it intended, that the hearers of John should give this as evidence of their repentance, that, like persons defiled, they sought purification, and, like strangers, they sought admission among the people who took on themselves the Rule of God? These two ideas would, indeed, have made it truly a baptism of repentance. But it seems difficult to suppose, that the people would have been prepared for such admissions; or, at least, that there should have been no record of the mode in which a change so deeply spiritual was brought about. May it not rather have been that as, when the first Covenant was made, Moses was directed to prepare Israel by symbolic baptism of their persons and their garments, 119 so the initiation of the new Covenant, by which the people were to enter into the Kingdom of God, was preceded by another general symbolic baptism of those who would be the true Israel, and receive, or take on themselves, the Law from God? In that case the rite would have acquired not only

a new significance, but be deeply and truly the answer to John's call. In such case also, no special explanation would have been needed on the part of the Baptist, nor yet such spiritual insight on that of the people as we can scarcely suppose them to have possessed at that stage. Lastly, in that case nothing could have been more suitable, nor more solemn, than Israel in waiting for the Messiah and the Rule of God, preparing as their fathers had done at the foot of Mount Sinai'.

Chapter 12 The Baptism of Jesus: Its Higher Meaning

(Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:7-11; Luke 3:21-23; John 1:32-34.)

The more we think of it, the better do we seem to understand how that Voice crying in the wilderness: Repent! for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand awakened echoes throughout the land, and brought from city, village, and hamlet strangest hearers. For once, every distinction was levelled. Pharisee and Sadducee, outcast publican and semi-heathen soldier, met here as on common ground. Their bond of union was the common hope of Israel ' the only hope that remained: that of the Kingdom. The long winter of disappointment had not destroyed, nor the storms of suffering swept away, nor yet could any plant of spurious growth overshadow, what had struck its roots so deep in the soil of Israel's heart.

That Kingdom had been the last word of the Old Testament. As the thoughtful Israelite, whether Eastern or Western, viewed even the central part of his worship in sacrifices, and remembered that his own Scriptures had spoken of them in terms which pointed to something beyond their offering, he must have felt that the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean could only sanctify to the purifying of the flesh; that, indeed, the whole body of ceremonial and ritual ordinances could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience. They were only the shadow of good things to come; of a new and better covenant, established upon better promises. 3 It was otherwise with the thought of the Kingdom. Each successive link in the chain of prophecy bound Israel anew to this hope, and each seemed only more firmly welded than the other. And when the voice of prophecy had ceased, the sweetness of its melody still held the people spell-bound, even when broken in the wild fantasies of Apocalyptic literature. Yet that root of Jesse whence this Kingdom was to spring, was buried deep under ground, as the remains of ancient Jerusalem are now under the desolations of many generations. Egyptian, Syrian, Greek, and Roman had trodden it under foot; the Maccabees had come and gone, and it was not in them; the Herodian kingdom had risen and fallen; Pharisaism, with its learning, had overshadowed thoughts of the priesthood and of prophetism; but the hope of that Davidic Kingdom, of which there was not a single trace or representative left, was even stronger than before. So closely has it been intertwined with the very life of the nation, that, to all believing Israelites, this hope has through the long night of ages, been like that eternal lamp which burns in the darkness of the Synagogue, in front of the heavy veil that shrines the Sanctuary, which holds and conceals the precious rolls of the Law and the Prophets.

This great expectancy would be strung to utmost tension during the pressure of outward circumstances more hopeless than any hitherto experienced. Witness here the ready credence which impostors found, whose promises and schemes were of the wildest character; witness the repeated attempts at risings, which only despair could have prompted; witness, also, the last terrible war against Rome, and, despite the horrors of its end, the rebellion of Bar-Kokhabh, the false Messiah. And now the cry had been suddenly raised: The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! It was heard in the wilderness of Judaea, within a few hours distance from Jerusalem . No wonder Pharisee and Sadducee flocked to the spot. How many of them came to inquire, how many remained to be

baptized, or how many went away disappointed in their hopes of the Kingdom we know not. But they would not see anything in the messenger that could have given their expectations a rude shock. His was not a call to armed resistance, but to repentance, such as all knew and felt must precede the Kingdom. The hope which he held out was not of earthly possessions, but of purity. There was nothing negative or controversial in what he spoke; nothing to excite prejudice or passion. His appearance would command respect, and his character was in accordance with his appearance. Not rich nor yet Pharisaic garb with wide Tsitsith, bound with many-coloured or even priestly girdle, but the old prophet's poor raiment held in by a leathern girdle. Not luxurious life, but one of meanest fare. 6 And then, all in the man was true and real. Not a reed shaken by the wind but unbendingly firm in deep and settled conviction; not ambitious nor self-seeking, but most humble in his self-estimate, discarding all claim but that of lowliest service, and pointing away from himself to Him Who was to come, and Whom as yet he did not even know. Above all, there was the deepest earnestness, the most utter disregard of man, the most firm belief in what he announced. For himself he sought nothing; for them he had only one absorbing thought: The Kingdom was at hand, the King was coming let them prepare!

Such entire absorption in his mission, which leaves us in ignorance of even the details of his later activity, must have given force to his message. And still the voice, everywhere proclaiming the same message, travelled upward, along the winding Jordon which cleft the land of promise. It was probably the autumn of the year 779 (a.u.c.), which, it may be noted, was a Sabbatic year. Released from business and agriculture, the multitudes flocked around him as he passed on his Mission. Rapidly the tidings spread from town and village to distant homestead, still swelling the numbers that hastened to the banks of the sacred river. He had now reached what seems to have been the most northern point of his Mission-journey, Beth-Abara (the house of passage or of shipping) according to the ancient reading, Bethany (the house of shipping) one of the best known fords across the Jordan into Peraea. Here he baptized. The ford was little more than twenty miles from Nazareth. But long before John had reached that spot, tidings of his word and work must have come even into the retirement of Jesus Home-Life.

It was now, as we take it, the early winter of the year 780. Jesus had waited those months. Although there seems not to have been any personal acquaintance between Jesus and John and how could there be, when their spheres lay so widely apart? each must have heard and known of the other. Thirty years of silence weaken most human impressions or, if they deepen, the enthusiasm that had accompanied them passes away. Yet, when the two met, and perhaps had brief conversation, each bore himself in accordance with his previous history. With John it was deepest, reverent humility even to the verge of misunderstanding his special Mission, and work of initiation and preparation for the Kingdom. He had heard of Him before by the hearing of the ear, and when now he saw Him, that look of quiet dignity, of the majesty of unsullied purity in the only Unfallen, Unsinning Man, made him forget even the express command of God, which had sent him from his solitude to preach and baptize, and that very sign which had been him by which to recognise the Messiah. In that Presence it only became to him a question of the more worthy to the misunderstanding of the nature of his special calling.

But Jesus, as He had not made haste, so was He not capable of misunderstanding. To Him it was the fulfilling of all righteousness. From earliest ages it has been a question why Jesus went to be baptized. The heretical Gospels put into the mouth of the Virgin Mother an invitation to go to that baptism, to which Jesus is supposed to have replied by pointing to His own sinlessness, except it might be on the score of ignorance, in regard to a limitation of knowledge. Objections lie to most of the explanations offered by modern writers. They include a bold denial of the fact of Jesus Baptism; the profane suggestion of collusion between John and Jesus; or such suppositions, as that of His personal sinfulness, of His coming as the Representative of a guilty race, or as the bearer of the sins

of others, or of acting in solidarity with His people or else to separate Himself from the sins of Israel; of His surrendering Himself thereby unto death for man; of His purpose to do honour to the baptism of John; or thus to elicit a token of His Messiahship; or to bind Himself to the observance of the Law; or in this manner to commence His Messianic Work; or to consecrate Himself solemnly to it; or, lastly, to receive the spiritual qualification for it. To these and similar views must be added the latest conceit of Renan, who arranges a scene between Jesus, who comes with some disciples, and John, when Jesus is content for a time to grow in the shadow of John, and to submit to a rite which was evidently so generally acknowledged. But the most reverent of these explanations involve a twofold mistake. They represent the Baptism of John as one of repentance, and they imply an ulterior motive in the coming of Christ to the banks of Jordan. But, as already shown, the Baptism of John was in itself only a consecration to, and preparatory initiation for, the new Covenant of the Kingdom. As applied to sinful men it was indeed necessarily a baptism of repentance; but not as applied to the sinless Jesus. Had it primarily and always been a baptism of repentance He could not have submitted to it. Again, and most important of all, we must not seek for any ulterior motive in the coming of Jesus to this Baptism. He had no ulterior motive of any kind: it was an act of simple submissive obedience on the part of the Perfect One and submissive obedience has no motive beyond itself. It asks no reasons; it cherishes no ulterior purpose. And thus it was the fulfilment of all righteousness. And it was in perfect harmony with all His previous life. Our difficulty here lies if we are unbelievers, in thinking simply of the Humanity of the Man of Nazareth; if we are believers, in making abstraction of his Divinity. But thus much, at least, all must concede, that the Gospels always present Him as the God-Man, in an inseparable mystical union of the two natures, and that they present to us the even more mysterious idea of His Self-examination, of the voluntary obscuration of His Divinity, as part of His Humiliation. Placing ourselves on this standpoint which is, at any rate, that of the Evangelic narrative we may arrive at a more correct view of this great event. It seems as if, in the Divine Self-examination, apparently necessarily connected with the perfect human development of Jesus, some corresponding outward event were ever the occasion of a fresh advance in the Messianic consciousness and work. The first event of that kind had been his appearance in the Temple. These two things then stood out vividly before Him not in the ordinary human, but in the Messianic sense: that the Temple was the House of His Father, and that to be busy about it was His Lifework. With this He returned to Nazareth, and in willing subjection to His Parents fulfilled all righteousness. And still, as He grew in years, in wisdom, and in favour with God and Man, this thought rather this burning consciousness, was the inmost spring of His Life. What this business specially was, He knew not yet, and waited to learn; the how and the when of His life-consecration, He left unasked and unanswered in the still waiting for Him. And in this also we see the Sinless, the Perfect One.

When tidings of John's Baptism reached His home, there could be no haste on His part. Even with knowledge of all that concerned John's relation to Him, there was in the fulfilment of all righteousness quiet waiting. The one question with Him was, as He afterwards put it: The Baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? (Matt. xxi. 25). That question once answered, there could be no longer doubt nor hesitation. He went not for any ulterior purpose, nor from any other motive than that it was of God. He went voluntarily, because it was such and because it became Him in so doing to fulfill all righteousness. There is this great difference between His going to that Baptism, and afterwards into the wilderness: in the former case, His act was of preconceived purpose; in the latter it was not so, but He was driven' without previous purpose to that effect under the constraining power of the Spirit without premeditation and resolve of it; without even knowledge of its object. In the one case He was active, in the other passive; in the one case He fulfilled righteousness, in the other His righteousness was tried. But as, on His first visit to the Temple, this consciousness about His Life-business came to Him in His Father's House, ripening slowly and fully those long years of quiet submission and growing wisdom and grace at Nazareth, so at His Baptism, with the accompanying

descent of the Holy Ghost, His abiding in Him, and the heard testimony from His Father, the knowledge came to Him, and, in and with that knowledge, the qualification for the business of His Father's House. In that hour He learned the when, and in part the how, of His Life-business; the latter to be still farther, and from another aspect, seen in the wilderness, then in His life, in His suffering, and, finally, in His death. In man the subjective and the objective, alike intellectually and morally, are ever separate; in God they are one. What He is, that He wills. And in the God-Man also we must not separate the subjective and the objective. The consciousness of the when and the how of His Life-business was necessarily accompanied, while He prayed, by the descent, and the abiding in Him, of the Holy Ghost, and by the testifying Voice from heaven. His inner knowledge was real qualification the forth-bursting of His Power; and it was inseparably accompanied by outward qualification, in what took place at His Baptism. But the first step to all was His voluntary descent to Jordan, and in it the fulfilling of all righteousness. His previous life had been that of the Perfect Ideal Israelite believing, unquestioning, submissive in preparation for that which, in His thirteenth year, He had learned as its business. The Baptism of Christ was the last act of His private life; and, emerging from its waters in prayer, He learned: when His business was to commence, and how it would be done.

That one outstanding thought, then, I must be about My Father's business which had been the principle of His Nazareth life, had come to full ripeness when He knew that the cry, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand was from God. The first great question was now answered. His Father's business was the Kingdom of Heaven . It only remained for Him to be about it and in this determination He went to submit to its initiatory rite of Baptism. We have, as we understand it, distinct evidence even if it were not otherwise necessary to suppose this that all the people had been baptized when Jesus came to John. Alone the two met probably for the first time in their lives. Over that which passed between them Holy Scripture has laid the veil of reverent silence, save as regards the beginning and the outcome of their meeting, which it was necessary for us to know. When Jesus came, John knew Him not. And even when He knew Him, that was not enough. Not remembrance of what he had heard and of past transactions, nor the overwhelming power of that spotless Purity and Majesty of willing submission, were sufficient. For so great a witness as that which John was to bear, a present and visible demonstration from heaven was to be given. Not that God sent the Spirit-Dove, or heaven uttered its voice, for the purpose of giving this as a sign to John. These manifestations were necessary in themselves, and, we might say, would have taken place quite irrespective of the Baptism. But, while necessary in themselves, they were also to be a sign to John. And this may perhaps explain why one Gospel (that of John) seems to describe the scene as enacted before the Baptist, whilst others (Matthew and Mark) tell it as if only visible to Jesus. The one bears reference to the record the other to the deeper and absolutely necessary fact which underlay the record. And, beyond this, it may help us to perceive at least one aspect of what to man is the miraculous: as in itself the higher Necessary, with casual and secondary manifestation to man.

We can understand how what he knew of Jesus, and what he now saw and heard, must have overwhelmed John with the sense of Christ's transcendentally higher dignity, and led him to hesitate about, if not to refuse, administering to Him the rite of Baptism. Not because it was the baptism of repentance but because he stood in the presence of Him the latchet of Whose shoes he was not worthy to loose. Had he not so felt, the narrative would not have been psychologically true; and, had it not been recorded, there would have been serious difficulty to our reception of it. And yet, withal, in so forbidding Him, and even suggesting his own baptism by Jesus, John forgot and misunderstood his mission. John himself was never to be baptized; he only held open the door of the new Kingdom; himself entered it not, and he that was least in that Kingdom was greater than he. Such lowliest place on earth seems ever conjoined with greatest work for God. Yet this misunderstanding and suggestion on the part of John might almost be regarded as a temptation to Christ. Not perhaps, His first, nor yet this His first victory, since the sorrow of His Parents about His absence from them when in the Temple

must to the absolute submissiveness of Jesus have been a temptation to turn aside from His path, all the more felt in the tenderness of His years, and the inexperience of a first public appearance. He then overcame by the clear consciousness of His Life-business, which could not be contravened by any apparent call of duty, however specious. And He now overcame by falling back upon the simple and clear principle which had brought him to Jordan : It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Thus, simply putting aside, without argument, the objection of the Baptist, He followed the Hand that pointed Him to the open door of the Kingdom.

Jesus stepped out of the baptismal waters praying. One prayer, the only one which He taught His disciples, recurs to our minds. We must here individualise and emphasise in their special application its opening sentences: Our Father Which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name! Thy Kingdom come! They will be done in earth, as it is in heaven! The first thought and the first petition had been the conscious outcome of the Temple-visit, ripened during the long years at Nazareth . The others were now the full expression of His submission to Baptism. He knew His Mission; He had consecrated Himself to it in His Baptism; Father Which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. The unlimited petition for the doing of God's Will on earth with the same absoluteness as in heaven, was His self-consecration: the prayer of His Baptism, as the other was its confession. And the hallowed be Thy Name was the eulogy, because the ripened and experimental principle of His Life. How this Will, connected with the Kingdom was to be done by Him, and when, He was to learn after His Baptism. But strange, that the petition which followed those which must have been on the lips of Jesus in that hour should have been the subject of the first temptation or assault by the Enemy; strange also, that the other two temptations should have rolled back the force of the assault upon the two great experiences He had gained, and which formed the burden of the petitions, Thy Kingdom come; Hallowed be Thy Name. Was it then so, that all the assaults which Jesus bore only concerned and tested the reality of a past and already attained experience, save those last in the Garden and on the Cross, which were sufferings by which He was made perfect?

But, as we have already seen, such inward forth-bursting of Messianic consciousness could not be separated from objective qualification for, and testimony to it. As the prayer of Jesus winged heavenwards, His solemn response to the call of the Kingdom Here am I; Lo, I come to do Thy Will' the answer came, which at the same time was also the predicted sign to the Bapti Heaven seemed cleft, and in bodily shape like a dove, the Holy Ghost descended on Jesus, remaining on him. It was as if, symbolically, in the words of Peter, that Baptism had been a new flood, and He Who now emerged from it, the Noah or rest, and comfort-bringer Who took into His Ark the dove bearing the olive-branch, indicative of a new life. Here, at these waters, was the Kingdom, into which Jesus had entered in the fulfilment of all righteousness; and from them he emerged as its Heaven-designated, Heaven-qualified, and Heaven-proclaimed King. As such he had received the fulness of the Spirit for His Messianic Work a fulness abiding in Him that out of it we might receive, and grace for grace. As such also the voice from Heaven proclaimed it, to Him and to John: Thou art (this is) My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. The ratification of the great Davidic promise, the announcement of the fulfilment of its predictive import in Psalm ii. was God's solemn declaration of Jesus as the Messiah, His public proclamation of it, and the beginning of Jesus Messianic work. And so the Baptist understood it, when he bare record that He was the Son of God.

Quite intelligible as all this is, it is certainly miraculous; not, indeed, in the sense of contravention of the Laws of Nature (illogical as that phrase is), but in that of having nothing analogous in our present knowledge and experience. But would we not have expected the supra-empirical, the directly heavenly, to attend such an event that is, if the narrative itself be true, and Jesus what the Gospels represent Him? To reject, therefore, the narrative because of its supra-empirical accompaniment seems, after all, a sad inversion of reasoning, and begging the question. But, to go a step further: if there be no reality in the narrative, whence the invention of the legend? It certainly had no basis in

contemporary Jewish teaching; and, equally certainly, it would not have spontaneously occurred to Jewish minds. Nowhere in Rabbinic writings do we find any hint of a Baptism of the Messiah, nor of a descent upon Him of the Spirit in the form of a dove. Rather would such views seem, à priori, repugnant to Jewish thinking. An attempt has, however, been made in the direction of identifying two traits in this narrative with Rabbinic notices. The Voice from heaven has been represented as the Bath-Qol or Daughter-Voice of which we read in Rabbinic writings, as bringing heaven's testimony or decision to perplexed or hardly bestead Rabbis. And it has been further asserted, that among the Jews the dove was regarded as the emblem of the Spirit. In taking notice of these assertions some warmth of language may be forgiven.

We make bold to maintain that no one, who has impartially examined the matter, could find any real analogy between the so-called Bath-Qol, and the Voice from heaven of which record is made in the New Testament. However opinions might differ, on one thing all were agreed: the Bath-Qol had come after the voice of prophecy and the Holy Ghost had ceased in Israel, and, so to speak, had taken, their place. But at the Baptism of Jesus the descent of the Holy Ghost was accompanied by the Voice from Heaven. Even on this ground, therefore, it could not have been the Rabbinic Bath-Qol. But, further, this Daughter-Voice was regarded rather as the echo of, than as the Voice of God itself (Toseph. Sanh. xi. 1). The occasions on which this Daughter-Voice was supposed to have been heard are so various and sometimes so shocking, both to common and to moral sense, that a comparison with the Gospels is wholly out of the question. And here it also deserves notice, that references to this Bath-Qol increase the farther we remove from the age of Christ.

We have reserved to the last the consideration of the statement, that among the Jews the Holy Spirit was presented under the symbol of a dove. It is admitted, that there is no support for this idea either in the Old Testament or in the writings of Philo (Lücke, Evang. Joh. i. pp. 425, 426); that, indeed, such animal symbolism of the Divine is foreign to the Old Testament. But all the more confident appeal is made to Rabbinic writings. The suggestion was, apparently, first made by Wetstein. It is dwelt upon with much confidence by Gfrörer and others, as evidence of the mythical origin of the Gospels; it is repeated by Wünsche, and even reproduced by writers who, had they known the real state of matters, would not have lent their authority to it. Of the two passages by which this strange hypothesis is supported, that in the Targum on Cant. ii. 12 may at once be dismissed, as dating considerably after the close of the Talmud. There remains, therefore, only the one passage in the Talmud, which is generally thus quoted: The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, like a dove. That this quotation is incomplete, omitting the most important part, is only a light charge against it. For, if fully made, it would only the more clearly be seen to be inapplicable. The passage (Chag. 15 a) treats of the supposed distance between the upper and the lower waters which is stated to amount to only three fingerbreadths. This is proved by a reference to Gen. i. 2, where the Spirit of God is said to brood over the face of the waters, just as a dove broodeth over her young without touching them. It will be noticed, that the comparison is not between the Spirit and the dove, but between the closeness with which a dove broods over her young without touching them, and the supposed proximity of the Spirit to the lower waters without touching them. But, if any doubt could still exist, it would be removed by the fact that in a parallel passage, the expression used is not dove but that bird. Thus much for this oft-misquoted passage. But we go farther, and assert, that the dove was not the symbol of the Holy Spirit, but that of Israel. As such it is so universally adopted as to have become almost historical. 40 If, therefore, Rabbinic illustration of the descent of the Holy Spirit with the visible appearance of a dove must be sought for, it would lie in the acknowledgment of Jesus as the ideal typical Israelite, the Representative of His People.

The lengthened details, which have been necessary for the exposure of the mythical theory, will not have been without use, if they carry to the mind the conviction that this history had no basis in existing Jewish belief. Its origin cannot, therefore, be rationally accounted for, except by the answer

which Jesus, when He came to Jordan, gave to that grand fundamental question: The Baptism of John, whence was it? From Heaven, or of men?