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THE BIBLE STORY FOR CHILDREN

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THE BIBLE STORY

AND ITS TEACHING

FOR CHILDREN

BY

BARONESS FREDA DE KNOOP



"ALL HAIL"

FORTY COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

AN enthusiastic love of the Bible must be my excuse for publishing this book. To my love of the Bible has been joined a love of Italian art, which has developed during many visits to Italy and which has guided the choice of my illustrations. The book, at first planned for young children, has grown into a serious attempt to help older children and even adults to understand the Bible—to help those, I mean, who have not the use of the best commentaries and the best Bible dictionaries. I have been aided in my work by kind friends to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. Mrs. Thynne's beautiful reproductions of celebrated pictures will, I feel sure, appeal to all. The work of editing has proved very heavy, for much of the book has had to be rewritten. This work has been carried out by an old friend of mine, the Rev. J. Verschoyle, to whom I am deeply grateful. He has done his best, without discussing debated questions, to improve a work conceived from the traditional point of view. In my ignorance I did not realise the vast extent and complexity of the task I had undertaken in attempting to deal with the whole Bible, book by book. I realise it now with all humility.

Travelling in Italy, I learned to feel that most of its art treasures may be regarded as a beautiful Biblical picture-book. As I emerged from the enthusiasm of ignorance into the enthusiasm of a little more knowledge, I thought I would like to try to help simple people, and particularly mothers and children, to understand the Book of books. My own standpoint may be expressed in the words of Jeremiah vi. ver. 16: 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls;' but this standpoint has become modified by taking into consideration the changed and changing conditions of to-day, and the need, which I have learned

specially in America, of pushing on ahead. My heart goes out to my native land, to Italy, to the Holy Land, to the swarming millions of India, in the longing that all may be brought into the Kingdom and under the influence of our Blessed Lord. My heart goes out to America with the same longing. I pray that these simple teachings on the Bible may be of use to some of the many to whom my heart goes out in good will: to people of Canada, of Africa, and of Australia. Our needs are many and various, but the Holy Bible can supply all our needs out of its fulness.

Here I may be permitted to give a passage from a letter to me from Mr. Verschoyle, the friend who has edited my book, which will, I think, be found interesting.

‘The unrivalled power in the Old Testament of training the moral sense in children is perhaps due to the intense interest aroused in them by its vivid stories of real men and women, full of breathing life.

‘Tolstoy found this power of the Old Testament in arousing interest absolutely unique in his remarkable experiments in the schooling of peasant children: “Of all the oral subjects I tried during three years, nothing so suited the understanding and mental condition of the boys as the Old Testament. The same was the case in all the schools that came under my observation. . . . It seems to me that the book of the childhood of the race will always be the best book for the childhood of each man. . . . To alter or to abbreviate the Bible . . . appears to me bad. All, every word, in it is right, both as revelation and as art.”

‘After Tolstoy had tried in vain with other books and other teaching to win his pupils he says, “Then I tried reading the Bible to them, and quite took possession of them. . . . The corner of the veil was lifted, and they yielded themselves to me completely. They fell in love with the book and with learning and with me. It only remained for me to guide them on. . . . To reveal to the pupil a new world, and to make him, without possessing knowledge, love knowledge, there is no book but the Bible. There are no other works—at least, I know of none—which in so compressed and poetic a form contain all those sides of human thought which the Bible unites in itself. All the questions raised by natural phenomena

are there dealt with. Of all the primitive relations of men with one another, the family, the State, and religion, we first become conscious through that book. . . . The development of a child or a man in our society without the Bible is as inconceivable as that of an ancient Greek would have been without Homer. The Bible, both in its form and in its contents, should serve as a model for all children's primers and all reading books. A translation of the Bible into the language of the common folk would be the best book for the people."

'A book which Tolstoy, certainly not an ecclesiastically-minded layman under priestly domination, found absolutely essential to modern education will never, one thinks, be given up in our English elementary schools. But there are ominous signs of a growing disregard of the Bible among adults of the wealthier as well as the poorer classes, which, if it continues, is bound to influence the children.

'As that great student of the Bible, Bishop Westcott, wrote twelve years ago: "There is much discussion about the Bible, but, as I fear, little knowledge of it. We are curious to inquire—and it is a reasonable curiosity—when this book and that, was written; but we are contented to be ignorant of what this book or that book contains. We remain blind to the magnificent course of the Divine education of the world . . . nothing less than our national character is at stake in our regard for the Bible. . . . We are beginning to forget, under new conditions of life, what has made England great, and what, as I believe, alone can keep it great."

'Bishop Westcott's words warn us against a national danger, which has not lessened in the last twelve years. This book is an attempt to supply parents and teachers who have not time to consult more ambitious or learned works with an easy help to the better understanding of the Bible which may encourage a closer study of its life-shaping contents.' So ends my extract from Mr. Verschoyle's letter.

With this introduction I leave to the judgment of the public this very humble endeavour to encourage in the average reader a more intelligent study of the Bible, not forgetting, when we have done our best, what the greatest and most highly-equipped student

of the Bible of late years called 'the vast and unapproachable mysteriousness of all truth. Because we see clearly what we do see, we shall know that we do not and we cannot see all.' (1 Corinthians xiii. ver. 12—R.V. with marginal reading): 'For now we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know fully even as also I have been fully known.'

FREDA DE KNOOP.

Among the books that have been used in preparing this volume, to parts of which it is indebted, are the following: Dr. Hastings' larger Bible Dictionary in five volumes; the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Bishop Westcott's and Bishop Lightfoot's Commentaries on Books of the New Testament; The Speaker's Commentary. Driver's Genesis and Ramsay's and Farrar's works dealing with the life and work of St. Paul; also Bishop Ryle of Winchester's *Early Narratives of Genesis*, and the Bishop of London's excellent little books dealing with the difficulties of the Old Testament and the New.

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FOREWORD TO CHILDREN

FOR you all, dear children, this book has been written, and to you this foreword is addressed. It was for you that the whole book was, in the first instance, conceived and written. It has grown insensibly from being an attempt to make the Bible intelligible to young children, into a continuous account of all the books of the Bible from a convinced but not a narrow conservative standpoint, a modified traditional point of view.

You, my dear children, will find the study of many of the books of the Bible too difficult for you at present, but it is my hope that your parents, especially your mothers, and perhaps your school-teachers, will get such help in my chapters as will enable them to instruct you intelligently, and, may I add, with some of the loving enthusiasm with which this book was written.

And now, my dear children, let me say a few words specially to you to whom this book is dedicated.

God is Love. God is Light. God is a Spirit. God is a Consuming Fire. It is the Bible that tells us this. Let us talk about this a little, and together try to find out what this means. Love is the greatest thing in the world. Love can accomplish anything. Whatever wonderful powers we may possess, all is of no value unless we have Love—love for our Creator and love for our fellow-creatures. God is Light. We know what a beautiful thing is light; without it life fails and dies. God is a Spirit. This means that we must not think of God as being as we are, limited by the flesh. Nobody can see Him here with the eyes of the body. When we go to Heaven we shall see Him with the eyes of the soul with which we do already see Him, to some extent, through the veil of our flesh. His beloved Son Jesus Christ has assured us of this.

During our life on earth we feel God's nearness to us. He

chooses our hearts to live in, because that is the best part of us. I am sure you have heard people sometimes say: This man has courage; or, That woman speaks the truth. Can we see courage? No. Courage is not blue or green. Can we touch truth? No. Truth has no corners or edges. And so we come to understand that there are quite a number of things which we cannot see, but which are, nevertheless, of the very greatest importance. Thus, when we are told that God is a Spirit, we begin to realise that this means a great deal.

God is the first cause of everything. Nothing can exist without Him. God is a consuming fire. The explanation of this is, that all wickedness shall finally be destroyed. In its proper time, all wickedness shall be made by God to pass away, so as to give place to Love and Light and Spirit. God is All-Powerful, and unites all good in His One and Only Supreme Being. God begins everything and He never ends working.

God, the Holy Spirit, desires us to love Him. This is His condition. This He expects from us. Only thus can we show Him our gratitude. Although we do not see the Lord, He, because He is the All-powerful God, and can do everything, sees us all the while. The Lord is present everywhere. He sees us, when we are trying to be good, and then He is pleased. He sees us when we are disobedient, and then He is sore displeased. Why is the Lord not satisfied with us when we do wrong? Why is He sad? He so great, we so small.

~ Why does He care about a tiny child? Because the Lord loves it so dearly. You little child, you do not like to see your brother crying when he is in pain and ill, do you? This makes you very sorry. You cuddle him, and you say: 'There, there, don't cry; it will soon be better.' In the same way, but infinitely more tenderly and wisely, does our Heavenly Father care about each one of us. He wishes us to be happy. He has given us many beautiful gifts, and expects us to be obedient and good, which alone can secure happiness for us. Don't you therefore think that you must try hard to please God, when He has done so much for us?

There is an illness which causes God to be most sad of all. This illness is called a guilty conscience. This means, that when we do

wrong, something right inside of us tells us that we have done that which we ought not to have done. We feel very uncomfortable, ill at ease. Something in our hearts, there where God lives, speaks to us and chides us. We know at once that it is our conscience speaking. God has given us our conscience, and wishes us all always to listen to what it tells us, before it is too late. He has given us our conscience as our best friend. As soon as ever we know that wickedness is driving out love and light from our hearts, we must pluck it out, fling it away, and make a bonfire of it. God's Fire consumes all wickedness. Just as the fire burns up the bad weeds in the garden.

I want to say to you some more about our conscience. I hope afterwards you will never more forget what conscience is. Your father has told you never to tell an untruth. Remember that all your life. You must never be afraid of speaking the truth. You can never help feeling very much afraid when you tell an untruth. I will tell you why it is so. Supposing you speak up bravely, and you say: 'I am very sorry indeed, I have broken a glass.' Or you say: 'I have been unkind, I have snatched away the dollie from my little sister, and I would not let her play with it.' Well then, you will be told: 'Indeed, you have been a naughty child.' In future you are expected to give up being naughty. You feel that this is right and fair, that you should be blamed. You are honestly sorry, and you are forgiven.

Now comes the other thing, not speaking the truth. The child says: 'It was not I who spilt the ink. It was someone else who spoiled the tablecloth.' And the child knows that it was not someone else, but he himself. Now this is what is so wicked; you have no idea how horrid it makes one feel. The child becomes afraid of looking up, and will be found out all the same. The child who spoke the untruth has to be punished; it hid away a nasty dirty thing which soiled its clean and cheerful heart. An untruth makes your heart as ugly as dirt makes your face. Let us take a walk into a lovely garden. Do look at all these happy children playing about, how they are enjoying themselves. Their hearts are clean and healthy, and that is why they are having such a good time. What a pity then it would be to spoil everything.

But such is surely the case as soon as we forget what we have been told, if we are disobedient, if we do wrong. You have been told not to pluck the flowers from mother's favourite bed in the garden, the lovely pink and white and yellow roses. Now you and your conscience—because you cannot leave your conscience behind if you tried—see the roses, bathed in the bright sunshine. Your fingers itch. You think: 'I want them.' 'No,' says your conscience, 'no, you have been forbidden to pluck them.' Had you listened to your conscience, you would have remained a happy girlie.

What do you do? You forget your promise. You stoop. All people have to stoop when they do wrong, instead of remaining upright as God has made us. You stoop down, break a poor stem in two. You gather the roses. You prick your fingers. That hurts; but your conscience hurts a great deal more. You hold the flowers in your hand tightly. You see the gardener coming. You know that he is going to scold you. You run away. Why? Because your conscience makes you feel naughty and afraid. You did not want the gardener to see the flowers. You fling them away on the ground, into a bush, in order to hide them. How cruel! They hate to lie withering on the ground. They love the sunshine. They have been plucked off by a naughty child, and lie fading and dying. They can no more drink the dewdrops, or invite the bees to look for honey. All their joy is over, and why? Because of a naughty, disobedient child, who is feeling unhappy too, and a great deal more so than they.

You have done wrong. You have broken your word. You wish to forget all, but you find you cannot. You have trouble written on your face. Your father came into the garden and said to you, 'Why do you look so miserable?' You thought nobody knew about your wrong-doing. You answered, 'I don't know.' You told an untruth.

Do you remember what we have been talking about? Who is it that sees us all the time? Tell me. You have not forgotten? God had seen you. He had seen a little child. You had not been alone. God is always the same, always present. He had seen everything, and you were most unhappy. You confessed your

fault, and God forgave you. The Lord sees us by day and by night. When it is light and when it is dark. When we are awake, when we are asleep. He never leaves us, but takes care of us always. This is a most beautiful and comforting feeling ; always to feel we have our loving Heavenly Father with us. He gives us courage and hope and help. Never can we give Him thanks half enough. We must never forget Him. We must ever remember His goodness to us, and praise Him.

When you are a school boy or school girl, your teachers will give you marks for your work. This means they will put underneath your exercise in your copybooks in red ink, 'Very good,' if they know that you have tried your hardest. Then you are so happy. You run and show it to your father and mother, and you make them so happy too. A brave sailor who weathers the storm and the perils of the sea, wears a good-conduct badge on his sleeve. He has been praised by his captain, who said, 'Well done.' Then he is a happy man.

Thus are we all happy, just in so far as we try our hardest to do our best. If we try to live good, honest, upright, truthful lives, then the Lord will some day say to us, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' He says to you His children, 'Come to me.' When that time comes, then He will enable us to see Him. That will be the very best of all things that can possibly happen to us. To be near Him, with Him, and never to leave Him. He has promised us this. Jesus Christ, His Son, our Saviour, is the proof. Let us serve God all the days of our life. Let us love Him as we ought. He is the Truth, and He is our Father.

FREDA DE KNOOP.

THE BIBLE STORY

AND ITS TEACHING FOR CHILDREN

CHAPTER I

THE OLD TESTAMENT

GENESIS I.—IV. (THE CREATION NARRATIVES)

GOD, who gives all good things, has given us the best of books, or rather the best library of sacred books, the Book of books, the Bible. The Bible falls naturally into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, which really ought to be written in accordance with the meaning of the original word, the Old Covenant and the New. The Old Testament consists of thirty-nine books in the English Version, though of only twenty-four in the Hebrew, the number of books being reduced by grouping several books and counting them as one book.

The language of the Old Testament is for the most part Hebrew, one of the Semitic family of languages.

The language of the New Testament is Greek, with a few words of Aramaic, but it is the Greek used by the Hellenists or Jews of the Dispersion. This Greek has, manifestly, been subjected to the powerful influence of the Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is the history of the covenant between Jehovah and the Jewish nation. The New Testament records the establishment of the new covenant in Jesus Christ, and is the same covenant predicted by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah xxxi. verse 33 : 'After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their

God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord : for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'

What distinguishes the Bible, the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, from the sacred books of other religions is the immense superiority of its contents. It contains, and has always been held to contain, a Divine Revelation and a Divine Inspiration which are absolutely unique. The Revelation is the self-unveiling by which God makes known His will, His mind, His purposes to man. The Revelation is gradual and goes on continuously. God reveals Himself in many ways, in the workings of His moral law, in the experience of the individual and in the experience of the community, in the control He manifestly exercises over the history of mankind, in nature, and above all, in the one complete and perfect Revelation, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Everywhere and always God has been and is revealing Himself to man, but this self-revelation, while open to all, is observed by few.

A book is inspired in which the in-breathed spirit of God moves the consciousness of man. It is in this sense that the Bible is inspired. It is alive with the presence of God, and breathes the influence of His Holy Spirit. Indeed, it may be safely said that the real presence of God in the Old Testament as well as in the New constitutes the main characteristic which distinguishes the Bible from the sacred books of other religions. This is a fact amply evidenced by the experience of vast numbers of serious readers of the Bible in past centuries and at the present time throughout the world. The prophets of the Old Testament are perhaps the most notable examples of the continuity as well as the strength of Biblical inspiration. They asserted that God spoke to them directly to their minds and in their minds, and that they felt this Inspiration as a compelling force.

A word more before we begin the first book of the Bible. If we read the Bible reverently, we shall find it far more interesting, as well as far more valuable, and in the deepest sense far more true, than any other book in the world. The Bible is the truest of all

books. It is full of the highest truth—the knowledge of God and of His dealings with men. The difference between the Old Testament, which is the history of a nation written during many centuries by many hands, and the histories of other nations, is briefly this. While the histories of other nations deal with their earthly prosperity or adversity, the Old Testament, the history of the Israelites, deals with the relations of the Israelites to God. The standpoint is quite different from that of Greek or Roman history, or even from that of English history. The writers see God's Hand in everything, and God's dealings, whether with individuals or with the nations, are to them of absorbing interest. Everything is illumined by the light of the vision of God. And so the most ordinary events take a new meaning from their connection with the divine purpose of the Unseen Lord of nature and man, whose Presence is to be perceived alike in the individual soul and in all the varied movements of national and nature's life. Let us study the Bible thoughtfully and prayerfully as full of the true wisdom of life.

We will now look at some Italian pictures, and at the same time we will take the Bible and read what it has to tell us about many wondrous things. And first about the Creation: which means the shaping of a higher order out of a lower.

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.'
(Genesis i. 1.)

These are the first words in the Bible, and they record the great Foundation Miracle out of which God's wonderful Revelation of Himself was by degrees to be given. This miracle of Creation is the Foundation Fact of Religion.

The opening words of the Bible—the first words of the Book of Genesis—say: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon' (rather 'was brooding upon,' *i.e.*, like a bird upon its nest, to fit the waters to generate life) 'the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.'

'And God saw the light that it was good' (God's approval of creation is declared seven times in this chapter); 'and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and

the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day' (rather to be translated, 'and evening came and morning came, one day.' Observe the day begins with the evening, in accordance with the Jewish point of view, which began the day at sunset.) 'And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas; and God saw that it was good.'

You know very well, my readers, when you are at the seaside, that the ocean always remains in its own appointed place. There is a high tide, and there is a low tide; but both come and go at regular intervals. The house you live in is on dry land. God controls all by His laws, and He takes care that the sea does not overstep its boundary. Let us look at this picture, painted by a painter called Botticelli, whom you will love when you go to Italy, and when you see for yourself all the wonderful things he has put on canvas. Here we see the seaside and the children digging in the sands. Who do you think this Child is in this picture? It is our beloved Lord, who was once a Sinless Child on earth. He is teaching us a lesson. The man you see standing near Him is St. Augustine. He was a very learned man, but he was not so learned as not to be taught something new at the hands of Christ.

In Mrs. Jameson's book, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, in vol. i., page 312, it says:—'While' (St. Augustine) 'was busied in writing his Discourse on the Trinity, he wandered along the seashore lost in meditation. Suddenly he beheld a child, who, having dug a hole in the sand, appeared to be bringing water from the sea to fill it. Augustine inquired what was the object of his task? He replied, that he intended to empty into this cavity all the waters of the great deep. "Impossible!" exclaimed Augustine. "Not more impossible," replied the child, "than for thee, O Augustine!



Painting

THE CHRIST CHILD AND ST. AUGUSTINE
THE ACCADEMIA AT FLORENCE
ALESSANDRO BOTTICELLI (1447-1510)

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to explain the mystery on which thou art now meditating." Teaching us, at one and the same time, two important Christian lessons, namely, one of Humility, the other of Faith.'

'And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind, and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.'

'And God said.' The thought of man is seen in what he makes, and so is the thought of God. 'God said' is the very life of God, making itself visible for us to see. What was it that 'God said' in that dim morning of Creation when the earth stretched a bare and barren waste, unclothed as yet by vegetation? The thought of God took visible shape, and became grass and herb and fruit-bearing tree, so that all vegetation is seen to be the word or words of God, the thought of God expressed in visible shape. Grass and corn and the rest of vegetation, if we view them rightly, are words of God to us, our Father's speech to us, His children, for evermore.

Thus this beautiful Creation narrative in the Bible teaches us to love and reverence all nature, to look upon the earth as a glorious place which God saw to be very good when His creative work was done. God's approval surely referred not only to the utility of the vegetable world He had created, but to the beauty also. Note, 'the herb yielding seed after his kind,' which brings before us the marvels of seed-bearing. And truly in every seed there is one of the greatest wonders in the world, the unseen power which no microscope can show forth and no scales, however delicate, can weigh, which shows itself as what we call life alike in the smallest plant and the largest animal. All life on the earth is a wonder or miracle.

'And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night.'

The Creation story goes on and tells of the peopling of the waters with living beings. 'And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life.'

‘ And God blessed them ’ (*i.e.* the living creatures or animals). Look at our beloved Lord in His babyhood in this picture. He is holding the little bird in His own hand, caressing it. He is, though but a child, teaching all of us. We must follow His example.

This opening part of the Bible is an inspired picture-story or vision of Creation ; not intended as a scientific history of it. It reflects the mind of a great inspired poet, not of a modern man of science, for modern science did not then exist.

The value of the picture is that it teaches us that everything is God’s making, that behind everything in the world is the Supreme Spirit who made it, sustains it, and rules it, whom we call God.

There remained still in God’s mind a last and most wonderful thought, which was to find expression in the crowning work of creation. This last and most beautiful of the Divine thoughts, the creation of man, is described by the inspired writer with due solemnity. It is only after deep deliberation that God enters on the final work of creative thought.

‘ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’ The plural ‘ us ’ in God’s words is noticeable, and different explanations have been given. It may be what has been called a plural of majesty.

The Creation story goes on (Genesis, chapter i. verse 26) : ‘ And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth . . . and God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed ; to you it shall be for meat.’

The writer of this first Creation story represents God as intending man to live solely on vegetable food, animal food being only obtainable at the cost of animal life. With this ideal picture of the happy relations of man and the animal world may be contrasted the later permission to Noah to use animal food (Genesis ix. 2-3).

Genesis, chapter ii. begins : ‘ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made ; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God

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blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it ; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.'

This passage, which is manifestly the end of the first Creation story, illustrates the awkwardness of the modern division of the Bible into chapters, for not only do these first verses of the second chapter belong to the first story, but in the fourth verse begins the second and independent story of the Creation and man's beginning on the earth. The account of the seventh day closes the first Creation story. God's rest from His work on the seventh day is referred to, in the book of Exodus, as a reason for keeping the Sabbath. The fact that the Babylonians had a somewhat similar observance on certain days of the month suggests the thought that Abraham may have brought the custom from beyond the Euphrates when he left his Babylonian home for Canaan. The Hebrews, however, differed from the Babylonians in the intense religious earnestness with which their observance of the Sabbath was inspired. Moreover, the Babylonian custom was associated with the changes of the moon, the Hebrew was independent of them. The old Creation picture of the Creator resting on the seventh day inclines us to rest one day likewise, but our day is the Lord's Day, so called from the Risen Lord, the first day of the week. As regards the six days of Creation, Bishop Ryle of Winchester, in his *Early Narratives of Genesis*, takes the days as literal days, observing that the Divine Revelation gives us instruction on things spiritual, not on things of natural science. One might add it would be as reasonable to look for accurate science in an ancient and inspired religious epic as it would be to look for religious poetry in a modern manual of physical science.

The second Creation story may be called the story of Paradise and the Fall. 'The compiler of Genesis,' to quote again from Bishop Ryle, 'selects from two recognised Hebrew traditions parallel extracts descriptive of the work of Creation.' It is enough to say that the name given to the Creator is different in the two accounts, and so is the point of time at which man is created. He is created last in the first Creation story and created first in the second.

After a few preliminary words the second Creation story goes on thus (Genesis ii. 7) : 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust

of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man became a living soul.' That the spirit of man comes direct from God is the great truth revealed by the inspired words of this old Creation story. Life is nothing less than the breath of God Himself. Life is a sacred thing, and it is high treason against God to misuse it. Again, in beginning the new Creation, our Lord breathed on His disciples and said, 'Take ye the Holy Spirit,' the breath of God as revealed in Christ.

Genesis ii. verse 8, goes on : 'And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden ; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food ; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden.'

'And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.' This is the primeval charter of work. God's purpose for man's life is work, and our duty is to work to make this earth the garden of God.

'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it ; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone ; I will make him an help meet for him ' (rather, 'corresponding to him'). 'And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air ; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them : and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.' The Hebrew 'adam' simply means 'man.'

In the accompanying picture Adam is calling all the animals in a procession. After this, the Creation story tells us, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, and, while he lay there unconscious, took one of his ribs and made a woman, the equal help spoken of : the rib origin being a beautiful allegory of the essential oneness of woman and man.

And now we have come to the third chapter of Genesis, which records the ancient and wonderfully inspired account of the Fall. It is, like the rest of the Creation narratives, to be taken symbolically,

not literally. The man and the woman represent the human race. The temptation and fall of man and his expulsion from Paradise are described with an insight into human nature and a perception of the problem of evil and the mysterious reality of man's relationship to God which, already in this third chapter of Genesis, show us, in concrete example, what Biblical inspiration is.

The third chapter begins thus: 'Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.' (Gen. iii. 1-7.)

The man and the woman have been already before us, but in this passage a new personage enters on the scene, the serpent. The painters in old pictures used to draw the serpent sitting up. If the man or the woman were to be tempted, there was no one in the Garden to tempt them save the animals, and simply as one of the animals the serpent is represented as tempting woman. To the Eastern mind the serpent seemed and seems an incarnation of cunning and poisonous malevolence.

In Genesis iii. verse 8, we read: 'And they heard the voice' (rather, sound) 'of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that

thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' Eve means Living, or Life.

Thus we read that the Lord God came as Judge to guilty man in the Garden, and pressed for the full confession, which man characteristically endeavoured to avoid, casting the blame on the woman, as she, in her turn, on the serpent; and the Lord God passed sentences on all the guilty three, and first upon the serpent, who had suggested the evil thoughts that resulted in man's fall. Then follows the expulsion from Paradise. 'So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life' (Genesis iii. verse 24). Paradise is an ideal place; for the Garden in which the Almighty walked and the serpent spoke and man after the Fall could not remain, the entrance of which is guarded by cherubims and a flaming sword, is manifestly nowhere on this earth. This is a symbolical expression of the fact that the Garden of innocence, purity, and happiness cannot be entered again of his own power by man on earth.

In these sacred trees in this Hebrew story of Paradise (Paradise is a Persian word signifying an enclosure of trees), it is impossible not to trace the resemblance to the sacred trees of Assyrian and Babylonian art, though neither the Hebrew story of Paradise nor that of Creation is directly derived from Assyro-Babylonian sources. The study of the Creation Tablets, and particularly of the third tablet, reveals an unmistakable connection between the Jewish and the Assyro-Babylonian traditions, due probably to their proceeding ultimately from a common source. The resemblance is



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ADAM AND THE ANIMALS
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not only to be found in the story of the Creation and the story of Paradise, but also, as we shall see, in the story of the Flood. An excellent way for a reader of the Bible to gain a vivid realisation of the difference between Biblical inspiration and Assyro-Babylonian is to compare the spirit that breathes through the Hebrew narratives of the Creation and Fall and Flood with that which is to be found in those portions of the Cuneiform Tablets that deal with the same subjects.

CHAPTER II

GENESIS IV.—XII. (NARRATIVES OF THE EARLY TRADITIONS)

THE next story is also an early tradition, and grows out of the prehistoric stories we have been reading of the Creation and the Fall. It is the story of Cain and Abel, and it, too, has lessons for us. Henceforth the man and the woman, who represent mankind, were obliged to live away from Eden, as men have lived since, conscious of sin, possessing the new sense of sin and of shame, which awoke in the prehistoric past in the far-away time to which the Creation story refers. The story goes on and tells us that a son was born unto them, called Cain; and a second son, called Abel. The latter was a keeper of sheep, while Cain was a tiller of the ground. Each brought to the Lord an offering or present: Cain the fruit of the ground; Abel the firstlings of his flock.

Both brothers brought gifts. Both gifts were alike good. But the Lord had respect to Abel's, and not to Cain's. The reason was that God saw the state of the hearts of both. The difference between the two brothers was this: Cain offered his gift only because it had to be done; he did not put his heart and soul into it. Cain gave unwillingly, Abel willingly. The reason why Abel's offering was received with blessing rather than Cain's is excellently explained by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who leaves us in no doubt as to the truth. Hebrews xi. 4: 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.'

Genesis iv. 5-7: 'And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?'

The word heredity was unknown to the writer of this ancient narrative, but the thing which it represents is well shown forth in the story of Cain, the sin of his parents having developed in him in the form of a sullen discontent, which made him very

wroth when his brother's offering was accepted and his own rejected. It is not the value of the gift, but the spirit in which the gift is offered, that constitutes its value in the sight of God. God sees the heart, and He saw the sullen temper in Cain's struggling to find expression in some violent act.

Genesis iv. 8-13: 'And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.'

So Cain, disregarding God's warning voice, indulged his sullen temper, and in the end tempted his brother into a lonely place, and killed him.

'And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear . . . and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.' This means that Cain's guilty mind sees the Blood-avenger pressing hard upon his steps. God, in mercy, promised Cain protection from the Blood-avenger. 'And the Lord said unto him, Therefore, whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.' 'Sevenfold' means by seven of the murderer's family being slain.

The narrative of Cain is an example of the way in which sin gains its mastery over a man. It shows us, for instance, the crimes into which an unbridled temper may lead a man, the gradual descent by which a man goes down-hill to become a murderer, the need that offerings should be made with a true and high purpose in order that they may be accepted by God, the comforting fact that God cares for the guilty sinner after he has received his appointed punishment; these and other lessons, intended originally for the Hebrew nation, are now a power for the moral instruction

of the world. The sketch of Cain is one of those little masterpieces of the Bible which show how truly, in literature, brevity and simplicity are power.

A descendant of Cain, through his son Enoch, was Lamech, who apparently introduced polygamy by marrying two wives, Adah and Zillah. Adah bore Jabal, the originator of the pastoral life, and his brother Jubal, the father of all such as handle the harp, or rather the lyre, and the pipe.

Zillah, Lamech's wife, bore Tubal-Cain, or rather Tubal of Cain, the forger of every cutting instrument of brass, or rather bronze, and iron. To Lamech is ascribed the first lyric poetry in the Bible, the song of the sword. Lamech returns brandishing his weapon, and boasting to his wives, as an Arab does to-day, of what he has done. (Genesis iv. 23, 24.)

Lamech's confidence in his power to pay back an enemy's attack with interest was perhaps founded in the bronze and iron weapons provided by his son Tubal-Cain's invention.

The next chapter (Genesis vi.) begins with what appears to be a Hebrew tradition, abruptly introduced immediately before the story of the Flood. It tells of the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men, and of the giants that were apparently the issue of that union. Probably the passage is introduced here as an example of abnormal wickedness which made the Flood a necessity.

Now we come to the story of the Flood. It is a very old tradition, found in different forms in the records of different nations, but in its highest form in the inspired pages of Genesis. We cannot, so long after the event, tell exactly what took place in detail, but the main facts of the narrative of Genesis are supported by the other traditions. Allowing for what is dramatic and figurative, the substantial truth seems to be that there were great floods, and a great inundation from the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, in the broad region between them, and that all the people were drowned except a few who, guided by God, escaped in a ship. When the inundation subsided, those in the ship found the rest of the people and the animals drowned. That the Flood was local and not universal seems manifest, for, as has been well said by

a great scholar, 'so vast an accumulation of water would be in itself an impossibility.' To the authors of the tradition of the Flood preserved in Genesis the valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris, the region of Mesopotamia, was the world, the only world they knew, and to this world the Flood was probably confined.

The Flood is God's judgment on man for his gross disregard of the moral law, and the preservation of Noah is the reward of righteousness, and saves not only himself but his family.

Let us turn to the account in the Bible.

In Genesis vi. verse 5, we read : ' And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth ; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air ; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. . . . Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. . . . And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me ; for the earth is filled with violence through them ; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood ; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.'

Our Book continues : ' Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven ; and everything that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant.' Covenant means an agreement made by promise on God's part to Noah, but conditional on his performance of his duty to God. God says : ' Thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy son's wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee.'

For forty days and nights God caused it to rain upon the earth . . . ' all the fountains of the great deep broke up, and the windows of heaven were opened . . . the waters increased, and

bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth . . . and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. . . . Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days. And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark; and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.' This means, the waters diminished. The waters went down; the rain left off; the flood abated; and the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat—*i.e.*, Armenia, north of Lake Van. Observe, God not only remembered and preserved men but animals in the ark—an example of His universal care for His creatures.

Genesis viii. verse 6: . . . 'Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth; then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

'And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord . . . and offered burnt offerings on the altar.'

Up to now we have said nothing about the structure of the Flood-story in the Bible. Just as there are two accounts of the Creation, so there are two versions here of the story of the Flood. The cause of the Flood is different in the two accounts. In the one account the Flood is caused by rain alone, in the other by

'the fountains of the great deep' being broken up, as well as by the 'windows of heaven being opened.' A still more definite difference is found in the duration of the Flood; in the one account it is sixty-eight days, in the other it is over a year, one hundred and fifty days of which the Flood continued to rise and increase. Yet it is quite evident these differences are only two versions of the one story.

Noah offered sacrifices with heartfelt thanksgivings to the Lord for his wonderful preservation. 'And God blessed Noah and his sons,' and the blessing was, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.' They were to have the lordship over the animal creation. They might eat flesh, but not with the blood, the blood being regarded as the seat of the life, too sacred to be eaten, but to be offered to God before man ate the flesh.

Genesis ix. verse 8: 'Behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you. . . . And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud. . . . And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant . . . and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.'

Whenever we look upon the rainbow stretching out of heaven and reaching to earth, we ought to remember that God is keeping watch and fulfilling His promise.

Thus the Bible account of the Flood represents it as sent by God for the punishment of the great wickedness of the human race. It is sent in judgment, it is withdrawn in mercy. Moreover, the fatherly goodwill, and the gracious friendliness with which God regards all mankind, find an appropriate symbol in the rainbow, which the sun lights up in a cloudy sky when a storm is passing away, reminding the devout mind of God's returning favour after the storm of His just displeasure is over. It was not chiefly to preserve the memory of the Flood that the story of Noah was written. Rather, the writer or writers who composed the account in Genesis were inspired by God to use the ancient record of the Flood, to stamp upon the minds of the Israelites some

of the essential truths of their religion. The first of these truths is undoubtedly the nature of God, Who appears in the Biblical story of the Flood as the One God of heaven and earth, Who punishes man and forgives and brings down to the ground and raises up again, and has always, whether He appears for judgment or for salvation, the purpose of love towards man, whom He made in His image, after His likeness.

Nimrod, 'a mighty hunter before God,' is described in Genesis x. as having Babel, that is Babylon, as his capital, and thence colonising Assyria and building Nineveh.

The story of the Tower of Babel, *i.e.*, Gate of God, is the last of the interesting prehistoric traditions which fill the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis. It tells of an attempt to build in the land of Shinar, *i.e.*, Babylonia, 'a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.' This probably means the building of an unusually high ziggurat, or Babylonian temple tower. By some it is supposed to have been the celebrated temple tower in Borsippa, the ruins of which form the mound called Birs Nimroud; by others it is identified with the famous seven-storied tower of Merodach, in Babylon, which Nebuchadnezzar restored. A ziggurat, it may be explained, was a massive pyramidal tower, ascending in stage-like terraces, with a temple at the top. The story seems to be intended to account for the division of men into different races and languages.

We have now finished the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis, the first portion of the Bible, which occupies a place by itself, dealing, as it does, with the prehistoric period, and giving an account of the Creation of the universe, and of man's early history on the earth, unique in its inspiration from a religious point of view. As we go on with the reading of the Bible we shall find that the Revelation or self-unveiling of God which has already begun in these chapters, is a progressive Revelation of Himself which meets religious difficulties as they arise and supplies their solution. The form so far throughout this prehistoric period has been that of narrative, a form innately dear to the Eastern heart and habits of thought.

In the story of the Fall a great hope is left to man in the fact that God does not forsake him after the Fall, but to hearten him in the struggle with temptation gives him the sure promise of the Protevangelium, the ultimate victory over evil of the woman's seed in Christ. In the whole of this first portion of Genesis, God appears as a gracious, generous, and loving Creator, and a just and merciful judge.

At this point we may say a few words on the value of the whole book of Genesis, as indeed of the whole Old Testament, as a means of teaching morality to the young, and teaching it as practical religion. The Eastern is the prince of story-tellers, and Genesis in particular and the Old Testament in general teach by stories, the very best means for teaching children. Genesis, moreover, even beyond the other Old Testament books, has an atmosphere of its own, the atmosphere of God, which of itself is invaluable as stimulating the moral and spiritual growth of the child. The moral teaching of the Old Testament is never dull, and no one takes it in more readily than the child. In the hands of competent teachers, of parents in the home, and masters and mistresses in the school, the Old Testament remains the very best practical handbook for the teaching of morals to boy or girl, and it is hoped that these simple readings and explanations of the Bible may be a help and encouragement to parents, and even to school-teachers, to bring home the life-giving contents of the Bible to the children in their charge.

It was the Old Testament of which St. Paul wrote to Timothy that it was given by inspiration of God, 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' The effect on the moral life is one of the best tests of true inspiration, and the Old Testament emerges triumphantly from this test, in the case of adults as well as in the case of children. The Bible (the New Testament, of course, but not without the Old) is God's chief instrument for the education of the world in that which is most important, the power of the righteous life. The regular reading of the Bible and a practical knowledge of its contents have formed the character of the English-speaking race in the past, and are needed to continue it in the future. We cannot

live without ideals, 'but the Bible,' says Bishop Westcott, 'not only offers to us an ideal of service and sympathy and fellowship, of love to God and man, which answers to the noblest aspirations of all men, but also supplies us with a motive to seek it and power to approach it, the sense of Christ's love for us, and the sense of Christ's presence.'

We have more than once referred to the fact that in the stories of prehistoric times in the early chapters of Genesis there is a remarkable resemblance to Assyro-Babylonian traditions which have been found in cuneiform inscriptions and deciphered very successfully of late years. How is this resemblance to be explained? 'On the assumption,' says Bishop Ryle, 'of derivation from an ultimately common source in the religious mythology of Mesopotamia. The original tradition,' he says, 'was received from their Mesopotamian ancestors by the founders of the Israelite branch of the Semitic race.' We have accepted this view, and ascribed the bringing of these prehistoric stories from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Abraham, the historic father of the Hebrew race.

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CHAPTER III

GENESIS XII.—XXXVII. (THE HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS)

GENESIS, as we have seen, and as the name signifies, is the book of Origins. We have had the origins of the world and of man pictured in poetic visions, the early narratives of which we have been reading, and now we are coming to the origin of the Hebrew race and nation.

God is invisible to our bodily eyes, and He seeks to reveal Himself, His Presence, and His Nature, to our spiritual eyes. Without this Revelation (that is to say, unveiling) we should not know God. The knowledge of God is the most important thing in our lives, for this alone can give us true knowledge of ourselves as made in the image of God, and this alone can teach us the secret of how to live the best life here, and the best life here is the necessary stepping-stone to the best life hereafter.

How does God reveal Himself to us? In many ways—through Nature, through History, and chiefly through the moral and spiritual part of man, which is moved by an inward voice. This our religion teaches us to recognise as the Holy Spirit. The crown and climax of this last Self-Revelation of God, to which all the other Revelations point and in which they are united and completed, is the Revelation God has given in Jesus Christ.

Have you ever heard a voice in the depth of your heart warning you to give up what is bad, urging you to aim at what is good? It is a still small voice like that which spoke to the prophet Elijah on Mount Horeb, and you need close attention to catch its accents within you, and willing obedience to what it tells you, in order that you may gain the power of hearing it more readily and more clearly. Just as God reveals Himself to you by this inward Voice, so He revealed Himself to the men whose experience of His revelation is recorded in the Bible. The difference is that the record

is written by Easterns, and very commonly thrown into poetic or dramatic form. Those who heard the inward Voice communicated their experience to others, and helped others to listen to the Voice, and to recognise it when heard, and to obey it. Such experiences are open to all mankind, but only a few have made a really full use of their opportunities; that is to say, only a few have the seeing mind, and can interpret what they see.

In one part of the world, thousands of years ago, a man heard this Voice more clearly and obeyed it more faithfully than other men. That part of the world was known as Aram Naharaim, *i.e.*, Aram of the two Rivers, from being the land of the two great rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, and the particular part of this region in which he heard the Voice was called Haran. As far as learned men can fix the date, it was about 2250 B.C. when this man determined to obey the Voice of the invisible God in his inmost soul, and obeyed it so faithfully, and at such a cost, that he has been ever since acknowledged as the Father of the Faithful. All round him his friends and kindred worshipped many gods, of which the Mood-god was the chief, known as Baal-Haran, or the Lord of Haran; while teraphim, or little household gods, were, as we know, much-prized possessions in his grand-nephew Laban's household.

Who was this man? His name was Abraham, a man of pure Semitic race, dwelling, as we have seen, in Haran. His life and steadfast character are vividly pictured for us in the book of Genesis. When the Voice of God called him, it called him to make great sacrifices, for he was ordered to leave his home and his kindred, and to go into a strange land to make a new home, there, where he might worship the Unseen God by listening to, and obeying His Voice, without any image or representation to make that worship easier.

This mysterious and only true God spoke to Abraham and called him to a higher destiny, which was to be worked out by Abraham's obedience to Jehovah's Voice—obedience to be rendered in the teeth of difficulties, and to be persisted in at any cost.

What did the Voice of Jehovah say to Abraham? (Turn to Genesis xii. 1.) 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kin-

dred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation.' The command was a plain one, but obedience was difficult. With rare conciseness and dignity the book of Genesis tells what took place (Genesis xii. 4). 'So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance which they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.'

How much is conveyed, what a series of pictures is unfolded in the narrow limits of the last seven words! The crossing of the Euphrates at Carchemish, sixty miles west of Haran, and the turning due south across the desert past Hamath and Damascus; then the climbing of the south spurs of Mount Hermon if the entry to Canaan was made from the north, or, if the entry was made on the east of Canaan, the journey down the long Jordan valley, the crossing of the river at a ford near the Dead Sea, and the journey to Shechem, where we read in the next verse Abraham arrived (Genesis xii. 6), 'And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem . . . and there builded he an altar unto the Lord.'

Abraham (who is called Abram up to Genesis xvii. 5, when God changed his name to Abraham in pledge of the fulfilment of the Promise) was the father of the Hebrews—the family that grew into a clan, afterwards into a tribe, and finally into a nation, God's dealings with which constitute the main body of the historical Revelation of the Bible. Who were the Hebrews? Abraham's family and household, and the name Hebrews probably signifies that they had 'come across' from the other side of the flood, that is, of the great river Euphrates. It may possibly signify their descent from an ancestor named Eber. We must not think of a family of those days as a few persons, but as a community, consisting of Abraham himself, the chief, and Sarai, the chief's wife, and his nephew Lot, and large numbers of household slaves. Abraham and his household, surrounded by great multitudes of

flocks and herds, to find pasturage for which they had to journey from place to place, lived in large goatskin tents, each with several rooms, just as the wandering Arabs do now.

So they wandered on, seeking the promised land where they might settle down and worship the One True God, and obey His inward Voice that spoke and continued to speak to their chief. Out of Abraham's family, the first Hebrews, the Hebrew tribes and Hebrew nation were to grow, and God's dealings with them were to be the Revelation of Himself, here a little and there a little as they were able to receive it.

The Jewish Christians of the first century looked back and claimed the faith of their Father Abraham as their own, and felt that they were realising in Christ the possession of the blessing promised to Abraham so long before.

One thing we owe to Abraham, and his trust in God's guidance that sent him across the Euphrates to found the Hebrew race. In founding the Hebrew race, he secured for mankind that product of the Hebrew race, the greatest of books, or rather collections of books, the greatest of teachers of justice and love—the Bible. The father of the Hebrew race is also in a very real sense the father of the Bible. The Bible—the Book which Abraham's descendants wrote long after—is full of his name; and thanks to the Book, the faith of Abraham is known, and the name of Abraham revered, in all lands wherever the work of the Christian Church is carried on, as well as by Mohammedans and Jews.

And now we turn to the Bible and read what the Book of Genesis has to tell us of the rest of Abraham's life. Genesis xii. verse 4: 'So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south. And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.'

We are told how much Abraham had to carry about with him in the way of slaves, and cattle, and silver, and gold—probably, in part, the gifts of the King of Egypt. There was not sufficient food for Abraham's flocks and herds, and for those of Lot, after the return to Canaan, and there arose a strife between the herdmen

of Abraham's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle. Abraham, a man of peace and goodwill, said (Genesis xiii. verse 8): 'Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. . . . Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.'

Lot was not at all like his uncle Abraham. He was neither religious nor high-minded. He wanted to enjoy himself in a life of self-indulgence. He was satisfied to live an easy-going existence in the very bad company which abounded in Sodom.

'And the Lord said unto Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him: Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. . . . Then Abraham removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.'

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision. His great wish was fulfilled. When Abraham and Sarah were very old people, a son was born to them whom they called Isaac, which means laughter, because it seemed so laughable that two very old people like Abraham and Sarah should have a child.

One day Abraham was sitting at his tent door, when angels came; angels, that is messengers from the Lord. He received them kindly. He called Sarah out of the tent, asking her to bring food and refreshment.

Lot also had a vision of angels, but his was not of a pleasant character. The news he received was bad. He was told that the walled towns of Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed by fire and brimstone. All came to pass as had been foretold. Lot

alone, out of all the town, with his two daughters, managed to flee and was saved. His wife, because she disobeyed and looked back at the burning city, was turned into a pillar of salt. That means probably that when the terrible storm broke on Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife, hanging back, was enveloped in a deluge of salt and bitumen. Thus overwhelmed and crusted over with salt, she might be very well called a pillar of salt, as a person covered with snow might fairly be called a pillar of snow. We can picture to ourselves the whole scene; Lot fleeing for dear life, his wife petrified in the storm of salt which swept over her and covered her.

To return to Abraham. We now read of the time when the Lord thought fit to try his faith. The Lord commanded Abraham to sacrifice his own beloved son, Isaac. In olden days and among all the people of Canaan and the neighbourhood, it had been the custom to sacrifice human beings as well as animals. Such an idea as the sacrifice of his son could have been no shock to Abraham; for a son was not considered as a separate and responsible being in those days, but a part of his father, and to sacrifice a son was looked on by every one as equivalent to a father's sacrifice of himself.

Our Book tells us, Genesis xxii. : 'And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham. . . . And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clove the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. So they went both of them

together. And they came to the place which God had told him of. And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took a knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.'

Abraham, as we know, loved his son more than any visible being in the world, but Abraham loved the unseen Lord the best of all, and therefore he was ready to face this supreme test of his willingness to do His Maker's Will. It is of no use in this life to give anything which gives us no trouble, be it to God or to our fellow-creatures. We will try and make this clear. Supposing we happen to have many toys and many books. Out of our plenty we make a friend a present. We do not mind at all if we keep or part with one or the other of most of the many things we possess. We shall never miss them. On the other hand, there is one particular thing which we prize very much indeed. Now, if we part with our favourite treasure, there is at once quite a different feeling in us. We become better by the sacrificing of ourselves. It improves our character, and we climb a rung higher on the ladder of life.

Suppose you have a canary-bird, such a dear, little, bright, yellow songster. Round the corner, in a street where houses are high, and hardly any sunshine ever manages to penetrate the gloom, and sad people cannot easily be cheered up, and are too poor to live elsewhere, there just exists a poor blind boy. He cannot go out into the fields, nobody has any time to help him, and the green fields are too far away. He never hears the joyous birds singing nor sees the blue sky. How great would be his pleasure had he your canary bird. This idea strikes you. You go and visit him, and bring him your treasure.

You miss your bird badly, but this feeling gives place to another, and you begin to experience real satisfaction. Something tells you (I am sure it is our old friend Conscience—yes, indeed, it is no other) that you have done well. You have thought more of somebody else than of yourself. In this case you have thought of a poor child less favoured than yourself. Another time it will

make you think of giving up more important things to please God. Now do you follow me, and see that God did not speak only to Abraham, but speaks also to each one of us? The Lord sees the blind boy's pleasure, and your little gift is acceptable to your Heavenly Father because you have tried to please one of His creatures. We realise that it must be only the best of everything we have to give, which is good enough to offer to the Lord. What can any little sacrifice of ours ever be, compared to the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ for us.

When Abraham had prepared everything, the angel of the Lord appeared out of heaven. And what blessed news did the angel bring? What a surprise! This was the message from God to Abraham (Genesis xxii. verse 12): 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.'

It was not the kind Lord's intention to do so terrible a thing as to let a father kill his own son. What the Lord did wish to ascertain was, whether Abraham's love for his Creator was the thing uppermost in his heart. The result of the tempting or testing of Abraham was that human sacrifices, which were very common in Canaan, were seen by him and by his descendants not to be acceptable to God, and were therefore abandoned.

In Genesis xxii. verse 13, we read how a ram was substituted for a human sacrifice: 'And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.'

We have seen Abraham's obedience, and the Lord's mercy. The Lord blessed Abraham to the end of his days. We are told how Sarah died, and how Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite a field containing the cave of Machpelah to bury her in. Before he died himself he sent out a trusted servant, the elder of his house—that is, the steward—to his own country, Aram Naharaim, to Haran, to fetch back a wife of the pure blood of his own kindred



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for his son Isaac. At the end of the journey the steward halted at a well, and a beautiful damsel came to water her father's flocks. She kindly gave him to drink, and watered his camels also.

Here is our picture telling us all about it. Her name was Rebekah, and her father's name was Bethuel, the son of Nahor, Abraham's kinsman. Alone she gave water to Abraham's servants and also to his camels. Abraham's steward accompanied her to the house of her father Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, and remained there for the night. All was arranged, and Rebekah and Laban, her brother, agreed that she should return at once with Abraham's messenger and become Isaac's wife.

Genesis xxiv. verse 62 : ' Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi ; for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide : And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us ? And the servant had said, It is my master : Therefore she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife ; and he loved her ; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.'

Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was a hairy man, and Jacob was smooth. Besides being different in appearance, they were also different in character. Esau and Jacob had quite different tastes. Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field ; Jacob, we are told, was a plain man, a stay-at-home shepherd, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved his son Esau the best ; Rebekah, on the other hand, preferred her son Jacob. The story tells us that one day Jacob was preparing some food, boiling red lentils. Esau came home from the chase, tired and hungry. He asked his brother to give him some of the red pottage. Jacob was unkind ; he did not give him the food at once. He had a selfish nature, which would not allow him readily to give anything for nothing.

' Look here,' said Jacob to Esau, ' I will give you some food if you will give me something in return.' Not a nice way of doing

things, this. Jacob said, 'Take this food, but you must sell me your birthright.' This means, that Jacob wanted to be the eldest brother and come first, before his brother in everything. Esau, being a careless sort of person, not minding this proposal either one way or the other, his sole concern being that he was hungry, wished only to have food and drink, and accepted Jacob's offer. Jacob, at this time of his life, was not by any means a good man ; he was a schemer as well as very selfish ; he loved crooked ways of getting things for himself. He had to be taught, and to be trained in the way he was to go. Before he died, we see how God, through the discipline of life, taught him his lesson. The Creator knew that there was good in him, which required to be drawn out by the education of experience. God had infinite patience with Jacob. At first the latter failed over and over again ; but presently we see him trying hard to overcome his faults.

Isaac, the Patriarch, was now a very old man. His eyes were dim. He felt that he might die any moment ; he wished to bless Esau, so he spoke as follows :—

Genesis xxvii. verse 3 : ' Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison ; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat ; that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison. . . . Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.'

Rebekah instructed her son Jacob how to deceive his father : that he was to go and fetch two good kids and make savoury meat, and bring it to his father, before Esau returned, so as to get the blessing for himself. Rebekah knew that Isaac was so old that he was nearly blind, and she thought that all would be safe, and he would never find out which son stood in front of him. Jacob reminded his mother of the difference in the feel of their skins—Esau was hairy, Jacob smooth. Isaac, being blind, might possibly ask his son to let him feel him. Jacob, perhaps, felt mean at

the idea of deceiving a blind man, and that man his own father. Rebekah overcame his scruples. It was bad of both of them : of her, to propose such a base and wicked thing ; and of him to do it. The kid was brought. Rebekah cooked the meat ; she took some skins of the kids of the goats and put them upon his hands and the smooth of his neck, and sent Jacob into his father's presence. There he passed himself off as Esau, and stole his brother's blessing.

Jacob had been twice his brother's supplanter : first he had stolen away Esau's birthright, and now he had stolen away his blessing. Esau was furious. He wished to kill his brother. Isaac, after all this had happened, counselled Jacob to go into his own country in search of a wife for himself, one of the daughters of Laban, his mother's brother. Rebekah, too, perhaps fearing for her son Jacob's life, on account of Esau's wrath, advised him for the same purpose to leave the country. Thus, having two reasons for leaving home, Jacob decided to flee, and he set out on his long journey to Haran. One night, while resting in the open, he took stones and made himself a pillow of them. It was at Bethel, between Beersheba and Haran. He went to sleep, and the Lord sent him a vision, a most beautiful dream. Genesis xxviii. verse 12 :

'And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven : and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac : the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. . . . And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place ; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.'

Verse 18 : 'And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of

that place Bethel. . . . And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.'

God put it into his heart to become a better man. He had had his ladder-dream, which was indeed most beautiful. We have better still. To-day we understand that Christ, the Lord, is our Ladder. He is the Mediator between our Heavenly Father and ourselves. He unites the earth with heaven. After the dream that Jacob had, we read of his wandering on; we are told of another well, and how he there saw an uncle of his named Laban, after he had met a daughter of his, called Rachel. Jacob rolled away the stone from the well's mouth, and drew the water for the sheep to drink. Jacob and Rachel talked together, and after he had kissed Rachel he told her he was Rebekah's son, and Laban hearing the tidings came up and embraced his nephew. Laban and Jacob arranged that the latter should serve the former, and work for him for seven years, in return for which work Jacob should be allowed to take Rachel as his wife.

We remember how Jacob had deceived his father. Now we shall see how the tables were turned, and how Jacob, in his turn, was deceived by his uncle. When we do wrong, sooner or later we have to suffer for it. Jacob was not spared the bitter lesson. To his cost he had to learn it. At the end of seven years, after Jacob had done his duty by Laban, his uncle deceived him and gave him the ugly, tender-eyed Leah, instead of the beautiful Rachel. Nothing remained for Jacob to do but to agree to serve Laban for a second term of seven years in order to receive Rachel at once, which he did. Jacob returned to Mamre, in time to see his father Isaac there before he died, and Jacob and Esau, his sons, buried him. On Jacob's way home, he and Esau had made up their long-standing quarrel.

CHAPTER IV

GENESIS XXXVII. TO EXODUS XV. 22 (THE HISTORY OF THE
PATRIARCHS—MOSES AND THE STORY OF THE EXODUS)

AFTER thirty years' absence, Jacob had, as we have seen, returned to Canaan to his old father Isaac, in time to be with him when he died, and had buried him in the cave of Machpelah.

Genesis xxxvii. verse 1 : ' And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.'

Joseph and Benjamin were sons of Jacob and Rachel—Joseph born in Padan-aram, Benjamin at Ephrath, or Bethlehem, on the way home, when Rachel died in giving him birth.

Joseph was his father's favourite and a spoilt child, and in consequence, during childhood and early youth, though otherwise an exemplary character, was a little of a talebearer and boaster. When Joseph was seventeen years old, we hear of his feeding the flock, and having a coat of many colours which he always wore. He used to have dreams which he spoke of to his brethren, and they mocked him and were jealous of him, for his dreams were of his own exaltation over the rest of the family.

Now it happened that all his brothers were wandering about in search of pasturage, feeding their father's flocks ; we read of them as being first near Shechem, and then at Dothan. Joseph was sent out by his father from the vale of Hebron after them to ascertain if all was well with them and the cattle, and he was to come back and report. When the brothers saw Joseph approach, ' they conspired to slay him, and said one to another : Behold this dreamer cometh.' They cast him into a pit by the advice of Reuben, who wished to save Joseph from death and intended to restore him to his father again. A party or caravan bearing spices and balm and myrrh from Gilead to Egypt on camels, all in single

file, one beast tied to another, were passing by, forming one long, continuous, winding line, as with slow and stately gait they wended their way through the varying country, now in the plain, now along the mountain sides.

Genesis xxxvii. verse 28 : ' There passed by Midianites, merchantmen ; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph into Egypt.'

His wicked brothers had stripped Joseph of his coat of many colours. They killed a goat and dipped the coat in the blood ; they took the coat home and brought it to their father, and asked if the coat were Joseph's. The poor father recognised it at once, and said, ' It is my son's coat ; an evil beast hath devoured him.' How could he fathom the extent of their wickedness ? What reason had he to suspect ? He mourned his son's supposed death for many a day, as though it had really taken place. Look at the poor old man in our picture, looking up towards heaven, the grief and anguish in his heart expressed in his face.

Genesis xxxvii. 35 : ' And he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.'

Now we are most anxious to hear what followed. All this time Joseph was not dead, but alive. Events come about in a wonderful way. A wicked deed had been done on earth. God Almighty was near to will and to bring it about, that intended wickedness should result in good. He loved and protected Joseph, and had a purpose for Joseph to fulfil. People are absolutely powerless to harm others, even if they try, when it is against the Lord's will.

We see the destiny of Joseph gradually working itself out, as we see the purpose of God fulfilling itself in the vicissitudes of his early life. The Ishmeelites, with their long line of camels, travelled along towards Egypt, probably by way of Joppa, Gaza, and Zoan, which was the first station in Egypt. Joseph was sold a second time, and his purchaser's name was Potiphar, who was the captain of the bodyguard of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

The Lord did not desert Joseph. We must not forget this. The Egyptians saw that Joseph was a good, conscientious young

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Parting

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH
THE PITTI GALLERY AT FLORENCE

man; that he worked well and diligently; and thus very soon we find him promoted and made an overseer, or house steward, over his master's house, one who was trusted and honoured by everybody he had dealings with. Potiphar had a wicked wife. Joseph was tempted by her and repulsed the temptation, saying, in words that are still an example to us when assailed by temptation, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Thereupon she brought a false accusation against Joseph. Her husband believed her, and was very angry with Joseph. He ought to have known better, and to have judged Joseph according to his proved trustworthiness. So now Joseph was cast into prison by his indignant master.

The book of Genesis, which we are still reading, tells us that the gaoler of the prison was kind to him. In prison it happened that two fellow-prisoners with Joseph, servants of Pharaoh (king of Egypt), the chief butler or cupbearer, and the chief baker, had remarkable dreams. We remember that Joseph had already, from boyhood, the gift from God of discerning the meaning of dreams. In this case he was able to tell these two men everything concerning their respective dreams. Joseph's interpretation turned out marvellously true.

Two years after, Pharaoh, in his palace, dreamed disquieting dreams. He wished to know what they meant. All his wise men and magicians failed to explain them. The king was sore perplexed. One of the king's servants from the prison, the cup-bearer, had been released, and restored to favour as Joseph predicted, and was back again in his old place serving the king. Suddenly the cup-bearer thought of Joseph, and proposed that he should be sent for, and the king decided to have him fetched out of prison and brought to his palace. Trusting in God, Joseph stood in the king's presence. 'It is not in me,' he said modestly and truly. 'God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace' (Genesis xli. verse 16).

God gave to Joseph the meaning of the dreams, and he told it to the king. He foretold that there would be seven years of plenty in the land, followed by seven years of famine. It was the Lord who put all wisdom into Joseph's heart and head. Here was the reason of God letting him be put into prison. What had seemed

his greatest misfortune had turned out his greatest blessing. His imprisonment led up to his success in life. The king had need of a clever person to look after the affairs of his state and country. He realised that he could do no better than appoint Joseph, who had the spirit of God in him. Thus he became second in the land, the next man in importance to Pharaoh himself.

Genesis xli. verse 41 : 'And Pharaoh said unto Joseph : See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.' The narrative continues (verse 42) : 'And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had, and they cried before him, Bow the knee, and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in the land of Egypt. . . . And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up food in the cities. . . . And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came . . . and Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh : For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim : For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.'

All the success that Joseph had in his life was due to God's merciful guiding. Joseph was sensible enough to know this, and took no credit to himself. This Pharaoh was the more ready to appoint an Asiatic from Canaan as his Prime Minister, inasmuch as he was not an Egyptian, but of Asiatic race himself. It may be observed here that the obelisk so familiar to us as Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames Embankment, was originally one of the obelisks put up in front of the Temple, where Joseph's father-in-law was priest, by Thothmes III.

In Genesis xli. verse 53, we read : 'And the seven years of plenteousness that was in the land of Egypt were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said : and the dearth was in all lands, but in the land of Egypt

there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth. And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians, and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.'

Now, who do you think were amongst those buyers of corn, journeying to Egypt? Can you guess? Joseph's own wicked brethren. The famine was great in the land of Canaan, and they were all starving. Jacob told his sons to go to Egypt to buy corn. According to the Eastern custom, they took gifts with them to present to the lord of the land. Joseph's brethren arrived, and came 'and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them.'

Joseph asked them if they were spies, and questioned them about their home and parentage. He told them that it was impossible for him to sell them corn, unless one brother remained, behind as hostage, and unless they went home and returned with their youngest brother to Egypt. This news upset them greatly. Well they knew that their father would never give his consent to this proposal. The poor old man, they knew, had never recovered from the loss of his son Joseph. Therefore he would never trust Benjamin out of his sight. They could not conceive what to do. They were starving: they required corn for food for their families and cattle at home.

Joseph had a kind and generous heart. It was aching to see his youngest brother again, and it was to see his brother that he made this condition. It grieved him to see the distress his people were in. He ordered that their sacks should be filled with corn, and, without their knowledge, every man's bundle of money was hidden in his sack. Afterwards, on their way home, one of them opened his sack to feed his ass at the inn, and found the money in the sack's mouth, and then they all found that the same had been done to them.

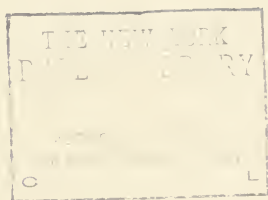
They and their father were sore afraid when they saw the bundles of money, and Jacob, their father, said unto them: 'Me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me. And Reuben spake unto his father saying: Slay my two sons if I bring him not to thee; deliver him into my hand and I will bring him to thee again' (Genesis xlii. verse 36).

The famine continued in the land of Canaan. The provisions which Joseph had given his family were all at last consumed. A second time they were obliged to travel to Egypt in quest of new supplies. Poor old Jacob had now to make up his mind to part with his dearly beloved Benjamin. They all knew that nothing short of his consenting to part with his youngest son would content the lord of the land, as his brethren called Joseph. This time they were tested once more by the orders of Joseph. On the occasion of this second visit, Joseph again had every sack filled with food, and every man's money put in his sack's mouth. He gave orders to take his own silver cup, and have it put in Benjamin's sack. He also told his servants that on the return journey the men should be stopped, their sacks searched, and that the man was to return to Egypt and be detained there in whose sack the silver cup was found.

Joseph's brethren were terrified. They had been found with the Egyptian lord's property in their possession. There was no explaining away this fact. They were all brought back as thieves to the presence of Joseph. And now a generous spirit began to show itself in one of them. Judah became the spokesman for the rest. He explained firmly, but very humbly, the way their father had bound them to bring back Benjamin safe, and that he himself had become surety for the lad to his father. He made a definite offer.

Genesis xliv. 33: 'Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.'

And now we come to the opportunity for Joseph to return





Painting

MOSES PRESENTED TO PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

THE BRERA GALLERY AT MILAN

BONIFAZIO (D. 1540)

good for evil. He had in him the Christ-like spirit, eager to give to all free forgiveness.

Genesis xlv. : 'Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him ; and he cried : Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud ; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren : I am Joseph ; doth my father yet live ? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither ; for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . And he fell upon Benjamin's neck, and wept ; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. . . . And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye ; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan ; And take your father and your households, and come unto me : and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. . . . And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them : and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough ; Joseph my son is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die.'

Is not this a beautiful ending ?

The record in Genesis tells us that it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told that his father was sick, and that he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and went to Jacob. 'And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die : but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.'

Genesis xlix. : 'And Jacob called unto his sons and said, Gather yourselves together.' Jacob blessed them all separately and gave

them instructions. In Genesis xlix. verse 29, we read: 'And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite. . . . There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. . . . And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.'

Genesis l. : 'And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father, and the physicians embalmed Israel.'

If you want to know all about what embalming means, you must go to the British Museum when you are in London, and there you will see for yourselves many mummies, embalmed bodies, preserved from the olden days of Egypt.

'And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house; and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.'

Joseph was, from his youth up, from the time he was thrown on his own resources, straightforward and trustworthy in every position of life, whether acting as steward of Potiphar's house, or as deputy for the keeper of the prison, or as chief ruler over the land of Egypt. His wonderful success in life teaches the useful lesson of the supreme value of a trustworthy character. His generosity and magnanimity to his unnatural brothers, who had plotted to kill him, and had sold him as a slave to the Midianites, is very wonderful at that early age, long before men had the example and teaching of Christ. The way in which he rejoices over every sign of better feeling towards their father in these guilty brothers shows the spirit of a true Christian; and the way he put his brothers at their ease when he disclosed himself to them, by making little of their offences, and ascribing his coming to Egypt to the purpose of God, has the delicacy of a true gentleman.

And all this beautiful and noble character is built up upon a foundation without which it would not exist—the deepest godliness, which makes him feel thankfully that he is always in God's hands. 'God was with him,' is the summary of the writer of the book

of Genesis, and 'the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hands.'

It is possible that the memories of the patriarchs may have been handed down by word of mouth, for it is difficult to overestimate the strength of memory in times when there is little writing. It is less likely that the narratives were written down on clay tablets, such as we find in Babylonian libraries; though the possibility that Abraham, coming from Haran, brought with him the cuneiform (wedge-shaped) writing, and perhaps clay tablets, containing the Creation stories and other early narratives of Genesis, is interesting to consider.

The story of the Exodus, and the journey to Canaan, is the subject of the Book of Exodus, the second book in the Pentateuch, which we have now to consider. It was rightly regarded by the Israelites, as the descendants of Israel (Jacob) were called, as the turning-point in their history—the decisive chain of events which lifted them out of the morass of slavery on to the high ground of conquerors of Canaan, making a horde of slaves a nation of warriors. What had made the Israelites a horde of slaves? They had come to Egypt and settled in Goshen on the invitation of the king of Egypt, himself probably an Asiatic. In Goshen they lived as in Canaan, a free, pastoral life, with their flocks and herds. After Joseph was dead, and the Pharaoh, who was Joseph's friend, had died too, a new king of Egypt noticed with alarm the rapid growth in the numbers of the Israelites, and feared that in time of war they might join an invader and imperil the kingdom. To stop this growth in numbers, Pharaoh took them for forced labour, and made them build him treasure cities. The forced labour, under severe taskmasters, was intended to take the manly spirit out of them, and to reduce them to the position of slaves. In Exodus i. 14, we are told, 'he made their lives bitter with hard bondage; in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service wherein they made them serve was with rigour.' He set taskmasters over them, who treated them cruelly and made them very unhappy. They had to work their hardest, both in the fields and in the cities. They had to make bricks to build with, and bricks of this kind have survived to the

present day, and some of them you can see for yourselves in the British Museum. You can plainly see the little cut-up pieces of straw which were mixed up with the clay.

But ill-used, overworked, and underfed, the Israelites multiplied even more rapidly than before. As the forced labour had not had the desired effect, Pharaoh adopted other measures. He aimed at stopping the increasing numbers by killing all the male children as soon as they were born. We read of one mother in particular, Jochebed, the wife of Amram, who, wishing to save her child, hid him for three months, and when no longer able to keep him with her, bethought herself of a plan. Exodus ii. 3 : 'And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.' The ark was built, not of what we call bulrushes in England, but of papyrus reed, from the inner layers of which the first paper was made, and the name paper derived. Here lay this ark among the river reeds and the flowering rushes and beautiful flags and sedges and waterside vegetation such as grows near the brooks by which we love to walk in our country rambles. This mother prayed with all her heart to the Lord that her dear child's life might be saved. Her prayers were heard by God, and He took compassion on her and her babe.

The child's little sister stood watching from afar. She could not bear to have her little brother left like that all alone. She waited to see what was going to happen to him.

It came to pass just that very day on which this little baby had been put into the water that the king's daughter came down with her maids to bathe in the river Nile. The princess was walking on the banks of the river; she saw the ark, and one of her maids went to fetch it. When she opened it she saw the child, and the babe wept. She had compassion on him, and immediately guessed that this must be one of the Hebrew babies. And now came the devoted little sister's chance of making herself useful. Up she went to the princess and said : 'Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for



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THE EXODUS
THE BRERA GALLERY AT MILAN
LUINI (1473-1530)

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thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it' (Exodus ii. 7).

We have here another example of the Lord's care of and goodness to all such as put their trust in Him. This Hebrew mother was no exception. She had placed her confidence in God, and prayed to Him, and He had not left her disappointed. God had a further purpose in mind in saving this baby's life. We shall learn presently what it was. Pharaoh's daughter called this child Moses (from an Egyptian word meaning 'son'). The princess took the child to live with her, and thus Moses had the splendid position of being brought up as an Egyptian prince of the blood royal, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, intended by the childless princess to be her father's successor. He received a good education, owing to the advanced position the ancient Egyptians occupied in learning and culture.

He grew up, and when he was old enough to understand, he saw that his poor countrymen, the Israelites, were grievously oppressed. Though now an Egyptian prince, he did not hesitate to cast in his lot with the enslaved Israelites. One day, having been specially provoked, and being very angry, he killed an Egyptian because he was beating an Israelite. Moses hid the body in the sand, and thought that he had not been seen; but his own countrymen did not keep the secret, and Pharaoh wanted to take his revenge. The life of Moses was in danger, and he had to flee for fear of being killed himself.

The greatness of the sacrifice he made by abandoning his high position as an Egyptian prince to succour his suffering fellow-tribesmen can scarcely be overestimated. He gave up everything that makes life pleasant to try to rescue a horde of slaves, and weld them into a nation. And the slaves were not even grateful. He fled from Egypt, and took refuge in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well, and there he met the seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, who came to draw water, and to fill the drinking troughs for their father's flocks. Some shepherds

came and wanted to drive them away, but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their sheep. On this account they got back sooner than they otherwise would have done, and they told their father how an Egyptian had helped them. He said, Where is he? Why have you left the man? Why did you not bring him to eat bread with us? And they fetched Moses, and he was content to dwell with Jethro, and Jethro gave him his daughter Zipporah for a wife.

In Exodus iii. we read: 'Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. . . . Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

'And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?' He was the meekest and humblest of men, and had no faith in himself. He thought he would not be able to do so great a thing as this. God encouraged him and said, 'Certainly I will be with thee' (verse 12). Moses asked God what he was to say

to the children of Israel in order that they should know that he had God's authority with him.

Verse 14: 'And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.' God's name—I AM—means that He alone truly exists.

Because Moses still remained fearful, the Lord showed him miracles. In his hand he carried a rod. This was turned into a serpent, then it was changed back again into a rod. Moses was in perfect health; but in a minute his hand became white as snow with leprosy, and immediately after it became again as his other flesh. The Lord enabled Moses himself to perform wonders, in order to impress on the Israelites that he was the man chosen by God to lead them. He came down from the mountain and went to his father-in-law, and said that he was going to Egypt. He took his wife and children and departed, bent on releasing his brethren from their bondage in Egypt. God had told Moses that it would be no easy task for him to persuade Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go, and that He would have occasion to visit this obstinate king with plagues. The Bible speaks of God 'hardening Pharaoh's heart.' This strikes us as needing explanation. We have heard and seen that God is Love. We ask ourselves how is it possible then that the God of Love should harden anybody's heart. It puzzles us, and we feel convinced that it is necessary that we should put the right meaning into this statement. God wishes us to have tender hearts; to be kind and forgiving. We must plainly understand what is meant by a hardening of the heart. The explanation is this:

The Old Testament writers saw God as the ultimate cause of everything; and when it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, nothing more is meant than that God is the ultimate cause of this, as of everything good and bad. Yet Pharaoh was the immediate cause of the hardening of his own heart by the misuse of the free will which God gives to every one, which free will in-

volves the immediate responsibility of the person who makes the choice, for the choice made. It is thus equally true to say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and to say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

Pharaoh refused again and again to allow the Israelites to leave his country. They were very useful to him and he was a selfish tyrant. The Lord sent ten plagues upon Egypt, one after the other. Frogs, and flies, and lice, and locusts came in such numbers that it was difficult to see the light, and impossible to live under such conditions. The river was turned into blood, probably owing to some red vegetable growth, so runs the story of marvels in Exodus, so that there was no water to drink, either for man or for beast. All the cattle died of a grievous murrain. While all these direful things were happening to the Egyptians, the Israelites were safe. Pharaoh consulted all his wise men and magicians. Naturally his wish was to prevent all these plagues, but he found himself powerless; none of his wisest men could stop God from carrying out His Will. The king saw himself obliged in his predicament to appeal for help to Moses, whose God alone, as he was made to see, was able to work great marvels or miracles, and remove all the trouble He had sent.

This state of affairs continued for some time. Pharaoh promised to allow the Israelites to go, and the plague ceased. As soon as the plague ceased he broke his word, and a new plague was sent. The Israelites were detained and detained in Egypt, and during all this time the Lord sent down to Moses more and more power and authority. It was the Lord's intention to prove to Pharaoh, to prove to the Egyptians, and to prove to the Israelites, how futile it was for anybody to try to persist in any course against the Will of God.

The last visitation that was sent on Egypt was the most distressing of all. It was the plague of the firstborn. God decreed that on a certain night the eldest son of every Egyptian was to die. Of Israelite children not one was to be touched, but all were to be preserved. A great cry of sorrow went up out of the land of Egypt. At last, when his own firstborn son had died with the rest, the king realised the extent of his folly. Meanwhile the



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THE DROWNING OF PHARAOH'S HOSTS
THE SISTINE CHAPEL AT ROME
COSIMO ROSSELLI (1439-1507)

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Lord had commanded Moses to tell the Israelites to take for each family a lamb, one without blemish ; to kill it, and to strike the blood of the lamb, as an offering to God and an atonement for those within the house, on their doorposts. By their doing this the Lord, when He passed by, would know that such a house belonged to an obedient Israelite. He would 'pass over' that house and not touch any child who lived therein. This is therefore called the Lord's passover. A feast was to be held. The flesh of the lamb was to be roasted and to be eaten in haste before they went forth out of Egypt, as Moses had told them after the plague of the firstborn, and this ordinance was to be kept year by year, in gratitude for their deliverance. They were also commanded to eat only a particular kind of bread, prepared without leaven—which was regarded as corrupt because it produces fermentation—and therefore called unleavened bread.

At last the time had come when the Israelites were enabled to depart out of Egypt. In our picture we see them all very busy packing up and fastening all their packages and bundles, and making ready. They had lived in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. The Lord took the Israelites under the shadow of His wing. He became their Leader. It was He who showed them their way through all their wanderings in the wilderness, and in their passage through the Red Sea. He gave them a sign of His own. By day He gave a pillar of cloud, which by night He made a pillar of fire. Whenever the pillar of cloud or fire moved and indicated to the Israelites the direction where to go, they followed.

After the Israelites had left Egypt, Pharaoh regretted he had allowed them to go, and decided to pursue them. When they saw the king and his horses and chariots gaining on them, they were terrified. This was only natural, but, fortunately for them, there was no cause for alarm. They were safe in God's keeping. He who does wonders came to their rescue, and His Strength sufficed to bring safety to His chosen people, and disaster to their enemies. They were on the shore of the Red Sea. The Lord caused a mighty wind from the north-east to blow, which drove back the waters of the sea. The Israelites walked across the sands thus laid bare,

and Pharaoh, seeing them landed safely on the other side, thought it possible to follow. The Lord willed it otherwise. No sooner was this proud king with all his army, all his men, and all his horses and chariots well in the middle of the bed of the Red Sea, than the Lord changed the direction of the wind, and instead of blowing back the water the wind blew the water straight upon them. Thus Pharaoh, his host, and his horses, and his chariots were overwhelmed in the sea.

CHAPTER V

EXODUS xv. 22—LEVITICUS—NUMBERS—DEUTERONOMY—
JOSHUA xxiv. 28 (MOSES AND JOSHUA)

EXODUS xv. verse 22, begins : ‘So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur and found no water they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter : therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink ? And he cried unto the Lord ; and the Lord shewed him a tree.’ This (probably the bark and leaves) was thrown into the brackish water and it became sweet, so that they could use it for drinking purposes. God told the Israelites that if they would ‘diligently hearken’ (verse 26) unto His Voice, and do that which was right in His sight, and would give ear to His commandments, and keep His statutes, He would keep them all in His care.

They came next to a place called Elim (trees), an oasis where were twelve wells, or water-holes, in the sand, and threescore and ten palm-trees, and they encamped at this well-watered place. Then they took their journey from Elim and came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai. This was the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt. The Israelites began murmuring about something else now. They were great grumblers—never satisfied. They began regretting that they had left the flesh pots of Egypt. ‘We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely ; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick’ (Numbers xi. 5). Where, they said, is the sense of dying in the wilderness first from thirst and then from hunger ? Exodus xvi. verse 4 : ‘Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you ;

and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or no.'

God wanted to be obeyed, in order to discipline them into a nation of which He, the unseen Lord, would be King, and He wished to teach them by experience to trust Him completely.

Manna was the name given to the bread God rained down from Heaven. When the manna fell, the children of Israel exclaimed in Hebrew, *Man Hu*, which means in English, What is this? or, What is it? And our book of Exodus continues (verse 31), 'And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.' See how the Israelites in our picture are all busy picking up this precious food, and filling their pots and pans with it.

Exodus xvii. commences by saying that all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin to Rephidim, and pitched there. At this place the same thing happened as before. They found no water, and again there were murmurings and discontent. The Lord stood by Moses, and came to his aid. He said (Exodus xvii. verse 5): 'Go on before the people, and take thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod . . . take in thine hand. . . . Behold I will stand before thee upon the rock of Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. . . . Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim.'

Moses told his lieutenant Joshua to choose men to fight the Amalekites. This was the beginning of the desert training by which God willed to harden a crowd of soft and self-indulgent slaves into a body of iron fighting men, fit to cope with and to conquer the giant warriors of Canaan.

At this early stage of the national life of the Israelites, they seemed most anxious to obey all God's wishes and commandments. Moses now received further orders. Exodus xix. verse 9: 'The Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever.'

The people were told to observe certain purifications in order



Painting

THE ISRAELITES PICKING UP MANNA
THE COLLECTION IN THE PALAZZO LAYARD AT VENICE
LUINI (1473-1530 ?)

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to sanctify themselves before receiving the Lord's awe-inspiring revelation of Himself in the Ten Commandments. They were to be ready against the third day.

In Exodus xix. verse 16, we read: 'And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud: so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God. . . . And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai on the top of the mount; and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.'

Exodus xx. verse 1: 'And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me' (better, 'beside me'). 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.' Then follow the remainder of the Ten Commandments.

Then follows a list of laws, such as laws to regulate the treatment of slaves. It was, moreover, forbidden to make any images at all, whether of gold or silver. The Israelites were ordered to worship the One and Only God. Amongst other things, it was impressed upon the Israelites always to be kind to strangers, to show hospitality, and share their own with others.

To everything the Israelites answered with one voice, and said: 'All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.'

Exodus xxiv. verse 18: 'And Moses went into the midst of the cloud . . . and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.'

We read next that the Lord commanded the children of Israel to bring offerings, and this had to be done with a willing heart. The Israelites were to bring gold and silver, and brass and blue and purple and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, rams' skins and badgers' skins (seal skins, R.V.); oil for light, and spices for sweet incense. All manner of precious stones and gems, and beautiful wood. And all these things were required as materials

for the Tabernacle, which was to be made according to the Lord's own pattern and instruction, as His visible dwelling-place, so that His invisible Presence could be easily realised by all among them.

The Israelites were to make an ark or chest of shittim wood, *i.e.*, acacia, the wood which grows in the desert; and this was to be overlaid with gold. And into this ark was to be put, as the most sacred revelation of an all-holy God, the Testimony or moral law which the Lord had given them. The Tabernacle was ordered to be made of beautiful wood, and there were to be curtains all embroidered in blue and purple and scarlet, and these were to be suspended from lovely pillars, and the tent was to have a door with hangings. There was also an altar, and there was to be an outer court. Over the Mercy Seat in the innermost part of the Tabernacle, there was continually a bright, shining light, which the Bible calls the Shekinah, and this was the outward and visible sign of the Lord's presence among the Israelites. We turn to our Bible, Exodus xxxi. verse 17, and read: 'It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever . . . and he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone written with the finger of God.'

These precious commandment tables were kept in the Tabernacle, *i.e.*, 'the dwelling' of God. In the Holy of Holies was placed the Ark of the Covenant. Wherever the Israelites went, they took with them their Tabernacle. It was their most precious possession. It was built somewhat in the shape of a tent, and could easily be taken down and built up again like the other tents the Israelites lived in. This Tabernacle was the forerunner of King Solomon's Temple, which we shall read about later on.

In Exodus xxxii. we are told that when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together and complained to Aaron, and said that it was no use their waiting any longer for Moses. They said, We will make us a golden calf (a memory of the Egyptian religious customs, or possibly of the Babylonian) and worship that. The Bible goes on to say that the women took off their golden earrings and orna-

ments, and that thus this idol was fashioned. When completed, they danced around it, and we know how wicked it was of them, because we remember distinctly that the Lord had just forbidden them, as He forbids us all, to worship idols.

Exodus xxxii. verse 15 : 'And Moses turned and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand; the tables were written on both their sides. . . . And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. . . . And it came to pass as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.'

The Lord called the Israelites a wicked and stiff-necked nation. Many fell in battle because the Lord hid His face and favour from them. Moses pleaded for the Lord's forgiveness, and interceded for his people. And God, who is full of goodness and mercy, and abundant in patience, heard Moses' prayers. Moses took the Tabernacle and pitched it without the camp. Every man was at his own tent door, and looked after Moses as he went into the Tabernacle.

Exodus xxxiii. verse 9 : 'And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door : and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.'

Exodus xxxiv. verses 1, 2, 5 : 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first : and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount. . . . And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant

in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.'

We find in life that the people who do evil are not always the ones who suffer most from the evil consequences; that it is more often the ones who are innocent of wrongdoing, and even little children unto the third and fourth generation, who will have to suffer for the sins which their forefathers have committed. This is not because our Lord is unjust. This is because nobody can ever do anything, good or bad, to himself or to herself alone. We live in a world full of other people, and whatever we do affects somebody else. If we do the right thing, we not only keep our own account clear, but we are the means of helping a fellow-creature. If we sin, somebody else is made to suffer, and this is often a person who is absolutely innocent. Now I hope we have made this passage, which has perplexed people sometimes, more easy to understand.

The Lord promised the Israelites to drive out before them all their enemies—the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And the Lord was most emphatic in His message to Moses that the Israelites should destroy all the altars, should break all the images, and cut down all the groves which belonged to these idol worshippers.

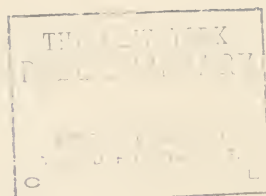
Here we have the instruction given by God Himself through Moses to the Israelites. It was their most sacred duty to fight against the false gods, and instead to proclaim the one and only God.

The Bible tells us about Bezaleel and Aholiab, gifted artists, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of beautiful things for the service of the sanctuary. Any work done can be inspired by God if we give ourselves to Him as His instruments. One really feels that the old Italians must have received into their hearts a great amount of similar wisdom, because their beautiful works of art seem to be inspired by the Spirit of God, so much of what they wrought was done unto the Lord, and that is why their works are not for a season but for ever.



Fresco

A SCENE FROM THE LIFE OF MOSES
THE SISTINE CHAPEL AT ROME
LUCA SIGNORELLI (1441-1523)



Just before passing on it behoves us here to say that in Exodus we find the record of the foundation of the constitution which made of Israel a united people, and one separate and different from all those around them. God spake: 'Israel is my son, even my first-born' (Exodus iv. verse 22). While in Genesis we read of individual members of a family, in Exodus we read about the transformation of a tribe or tribes, which were rescued from bondage in Egypt, into a nation.

We now come to the third book of the Pentateuch, called Leviticus, after the Levites. It is really a manual of ceremonial directions for priests and worshippers. The Levites were the priestly tribe among the twelve, and distinguished for fidelity and disinterestedness. In remembrance of God's mercy at the time of the Passover, on which occasion we recall that all the Hebrew firstborn had been spared, the Levites, the whole tribe of them, were specially appointed for the service of the Tabernacle. They became the priests who had to attend to all the offices in the Tabernacle of the Lord.

The fourth book of the Bible, which is the fourth division of the Pentateuch, is called Numbers. It is easy to find out why. It comes from the two numberings of the children of Israel, one near the beginning and one near the end of the wanderings in the wilderness. They were numbered in order that Moses might know how many people he had to look after. Moses had a large family to train for the Promised Land. The different tribes of Israel were stationed at different places around the Tabernacle.

In the first few years of the desert life of the Israelites the Lord had been willing to send them without much delay into the Promised Land, but the misdeeds of the people and their want of staunchness of character induced the Lord to postpone this step. He spoke unto Moses, and said (Numbers xiii. verse 2): 'Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan . . . and Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan. . . . And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land . . . and they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff.'

They reported that the country certainly was overflowing with milk and honey, a conventional expression to describe its richness ; nevertheless the people who dwelt there were strong, and the cities walled and very great. The Amalekites dwelt in the south ; the Hittites and the Jebusites by the sea and on one side of Jordan. Caleb and Joshua were for going up at once to possess the land. Both were brave soldiers, and they said that the Israelites had it in them to conquer the Canaanites. But the other men were timid. They reported evil. They said that the people were giants, sons of Anak, and far too strong for them to fight. 'We are all but as grasshoppers in comparison,' they said. Joshua and Caleb believed in God's promise, and the other ten spies did not. Thus it came about that once more the Israelites murmured and blamed Moses, and were eager to stone Joshua and Caleb. The glory of the Lord appeared in the Tabernacle. The Lord said to Moses, He wondered how long the children of Israel would think fit to provoke His anger ; how many more signs they would require before they believed in Him. The Lord said He would smite them all with a pestilence. Moses prayed for forgiveness for the Israelites, and God made a compact with them. To the people He said (Numbers xiv. verse 30) : 'Doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun. But your little ones . . . them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.'

Once again there were more faithless complainings on the part of the Israelites on account of having no water.

Verse 9 : 'Moses took the rod from before the Lord as he commanded him . . . And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank and their beasts also.'

The Lord reprov'd Moses severely for having struck the rock twice instead of once. Moses had lost his temper. As he was the chosen leader of the Israelites, the Lord expected him to exercise more control over himself so as to set a good example. Great as he was, he failed here, and a punishment had to be meted out to him. His punishment was that the Lord would not allow him to

bring the people to their destination in the land of promise. One cannot but feel extremely sorry for Moses, who had done wonderful work in carrying out God's purpose, and welding a horde of slaves into a nation.

Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, asking him to give permission to the Israelites to pass through his kingdom in peace ; but the king of Edom would not trust them, and so the children of Israel had to turn away and proceed on their journey by another route. They came across the Canaanites, who lived east of Jordan. These had to be fought against, and were defeated by the Israelites. No sooner was this accomplished than again discontent arose. The Lord sent a plague of fiery serpents ('fiery' means, whose bite caused fatal inflammation) among the people, which bit them, so that many died. This time they acknowledged their sin before the Lord, who took compassion on them. He commanded Moses to put a brazen serpent on the top of a long pole. All the people who looked with faith upon that were to be cured. Mothers might hold up their dying children's faces to this brazen serpent, and thus seek deliverance. A son might raise up his stricken father, and thus help him to recover health and strength.

In this connection let us remember our Saviour's words. When He was on earth He alluded to this very thing. He said that just in the same way as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness in the sight of all, so that whoever looked on that, man, woman, or child, should be healed of the poison of the serpent-bite, just so He Himself would be lifted up on the cross in order that whoever looked with faith unto Him should be saved from the death caused by the poison of sin.

The Israelites pitched in the plain of Moab, on this side of Jordan, by Jericho. This was the kingdom of Balak, the son of Zippor. Balak saw all the havoc the Israelites had wrought to other countries and kingdoms of Canaan. Naturally, Balak, king of Moab, and his people did not relish the idea of the Israelites coming their way. They were sore afraid of them. Balak was a heathen, like all except the chosen people. Balak sent messengers unto one of the famous soothsayers called Balaam, the son of Beor, to a place called Pethor, far away by the river Euphrates.

The king asked Balaam to curse the children of Israel. The sooth-sayer answered that before doing this he first desired to consult the Lord's wishes, so as to ascertain what it was he was required to do in this matter. Now Balaam also was a heathen, but a power was working within him which was put into his heart by God. All this was but half-known to Balaam himself, but so strong was God's spirit in him that he simply could not go against this inner voice. In spite of himself he had to act in accordance with it. The Lord forbade Balaam to curse the children of Israel. This was told to King Balak, who was disappointed and furious at being disobeyed.

He sent more messengers, and offered richer gifts, gold and silver, to Balaam. In other words, Balak tried his hardest to persuade Balaam to do his will. Nothing availed. Balaam would have liked to take Balak's gifts if he could have got them without openly disobeying God. Again and again Balak tried to win Balaam. He declared that he would take no refusal from anybody, except from Balaam himself. The latter now saw himself forced, really though only half-consciously by his own greed, to set out on a journey to King Balak. On the way the Lord sent an angel to meet Balaam. We are told that he himself could not see this angel.

'The ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way and went into the field, and Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord she thrust herself unto the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord she fell down under Balaam, and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me; I would there were

a sword in my hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am I not thy ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, and he bowed down his head and fell flat on his face' (Numbers xxii. verse 23).

This is an interesting example of the dramatic way in which the Hebrews described their religious experience. Of course, God's power to do anything is not questioned; the question is whether the story is meant to be taken literally or not. If not taken literally, the lesson is just the same. The ass may have been silent, and yet to Balaam's conscience the silence may have been loud with spiritual speech.

Balaam felt he had sinned, and asked the angel of the Lord for forgiveness, but he was told to proceed on his journey with the princes of Balak. He was told by the angel, 'Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.'

Balaam blessed Israel, for his eyes were open, for he saw God's will clearly, and felt the compulsion of God's spirit.

The fifth book of the Bible is called Deuteronomy, which means a copy or repetition of the law. The plains of Moab are the scene of the book. The time is just after the wanderings in the wilderness, and just before the passage of the Jordan, and the period occupied by the book is not more than forty days. The book chiefly consists of those discourses spoken by Moses before his death, describing the experiences of the forty years, with a final section including Moses' charge to Joshua, the Song of Moses, and the Blessing of Moses. Writing was employed in Palestine long before Moses' time, and there was nothing to prevent the great lawgiver of that period from leaving written works, though compilers may have arranged the documents at a much later date. The Book of Deuteronomy is full of Evangelical religion, and is frequently quoted by our Lord in a way that argues the highest estimate of its religious value.

In this book Moses repeats all that had happened to the children of Israel during the years that he had led them. He impresses

upon them to seek the Lord. All who earnestly do this shall find Him. Everybody is to keep His Commandments. The laws and statutes are laid down which are to be observed in the Land of Promise. Kindness to animals is enjoined; so is protection of strangers. God is a Loving as well as a Just and Righteous God. All children are to be taught diligently; however young they be, they are to be told of the Lord God (Jehovah). Young and old are to know that the Lord's Commandments are not far removed from us, nor too difficult for us to understand; that, on the contrary, they are quite near to us, even in our own hearts.

In chapter xxxi. verse 2, we read that Moses spake these words unto all Israel: 'And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.'

At last we draw near to the end of Moses. We read in chapter xxxii. verse 48: 'The Lord spake unto Moses . . . get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people.'

The great work of Moses was the uniting of the tribes in common loyalty as one nation, based on a common loyalty to One God. Moses was really the founder of the religion of Israel. He completed the work of Abraham. Abraham began that religion by his discovery that the voice of God could be heard and obeyed by the individual. Moses added the discovery that the voice of God could be heard and obeyed by the community, that a nation could be a friend of God, as well as a man. Moses showed that religion was necessary for the life of a community, as Abraham had shown it was necessary for the life of a man.

We ordinary people must not think that the clever people are the only ones who are expected to work for God. God has duties for all of us; none of us indeed is likely to be chosen to do notable things like the great men we read of in the Bible. But the Lord

speaks to you and to me, and the sooner we understand the better that the Lord has put us into this world to do something useful in His service.

Perhaps next day our hearts will lead one of us, at God's dictation, to visit that hospital we have so often passed by and never before thought of entering. Standing at some poor little child's bed, we shall see him lying there in pain and suffering. The nights are sleepless, and oh ! so long, and morning brings no relief. Then we shall read him a story, and tell him something out of this book, and we shall show him some pictures, the ones we have learned to love. We shall become friends, and we shall help each other to learn God's lessons ; such as patience, unselfishness, gratitude, one and all of them most valuable. All of us would be the richer and happier for such intercourse. In this way we shall be doing just our little best towards God's work, and He will deign to accept our gift. Next time we pass a hospital it will be with thoughts of, and sympathy with, the inmates.

It was God's wish that Moses should put the care of the Israelites into the hands of Joshua, the son of Nun, and Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him ; and the children of Israel hearkened unto him.

In our reading we have arrived at another book, called Joshua after the leader, whose deeds it records. The Book of Joshua is sharply separated from the Pentateuch in the Hebrew Canon ; it heads the Prophets, *i.e.*, the Former Prophets or Historians. It describes the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel. God's commands to Joshua were not to look to the right, and not to look to the left, but to go straight forward. ' Be strong and of a good courage ' was God's message to him.

The Lord promised to be with him wherever he went and wherever he led the Israelites. And the Lord fulfilled His promise. Joshua became a celebrated man. He was a great general, and led the children of Israel from victory to victory. As a first step to crossing the Jordan into Canaan proper, he sent out spies to gauge the strength of one of his enemies, the King of Jericho, whose city was close to the ford of the Jordan. In the meanwhile he ordered that the wives and the little ones and the cattle should all

remain behind. The men whom he sent out as spies arrived at the town of Jericho.

At that time there lived a woman in Jericho called Rahab. She had not lived a virtuous life, but an opportunity was given to her to mend her ways. She became a good woman and believed in the Lord. She looked upon the Israelites as being His own chosen people. The King of Jericho heard that his country was being reconnoitred by the Israelites, and that two spies were lodged in the house of Rahab. The King's men tracked them there, but Rahab pretended not to know what had become of them, and she sent their pursuers on a fool's errand. This was at the time of the shutting of the gate of the town, when it was dark. She had already brought the spies to the roof of her house, and had hidden them there under a heap of stalks of flax.

Meanwhile the King's followers pursued them as far as the ford of the Jordan; of course the pursuit was in vain. Rahab confided in the Israelite spies, and said that she knew right well that the Lord had given the land into their hands, so that terror was upon her and her people. All the miracles that the Lord had done for the children of Israel had come to the ears of her people. She begged the Israelites to do her a favour and to swear that as she had shown them kindness, they would show kindness to her and her house. She asked for the lives of her father and mother, brothers, and sisters. The spies agreed to this. Then she let them down by a cord through the window out of the town, for her house was upon the town wall. She advised them to flee to the mountains so as to avoid the pursuit from Jericho.

In order to distinguish her house from that of any other she had been told by the spies to hang out a scarlet cord—our chronicle calls it a thread—which she bound to the window. Rahab's expectations proved correct. The Lord protected Israel. He directed Joshua by what means to secure a victory. The priests were told to carry the ark, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and to what place to move it. The Lord ordered the children of Israel to follow it. The Israelites crossed the river Jordan as they had crossed the Red Sea. The waters divided before the ark and made a dry

way for it. The feet of the priests who bore the ark stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan.

And now Jericho was 'straitly' shut up. Israel encamped before the town. Joshua received orders from the Lord that they were to compass the city, and all the men of war and the priests bearing the ark. Joshua vi. verse 5: 'Then shall all the people shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city shall fall down flat.' Everybody was put to the sword except Rahab and her family, who were spared.

After Jericho had been taken the Canaanites were very much alarmed, and some of them desired to make peace. The people of a town called Gibeon succeeded by a stratagem in making a treaty with Israel. They sent an embassy to Joshua with worn-out and mended clothing, and mouldy bread and worn-out wineskins, and they told him they came from a far country to make a treaty with Israel, because they had heard what God had done for them. The Israelites made the treaty, and on the second day after found themselves at Gibeon, which was a city of the Canaanites. They were very angry, but Joshua insisted on their keeping true to the treaty. Some Canaanite kings, too, were even more angry with Gibeon for making peace with Israel. The King of Jerusalem called in four other kings, and got together a great army and besieged Gibeon. The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua for help. Joshua marched all night, and surprised the besieging Canaanites and routed them at the pass of Beth-horon.

Joshua x. 11: 'And it came to pass as they fled from before Israel and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah.' (That is, hailstones.) And now we have come to a famous and much-misunderstood passage, verse 12: 'Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher?'

It has been supposed that this passage means that the sun

actually stood still, which would mean that the earth ceased to move ; but the truth is, such a literal interpretation of this highly poetic Eastern language is typical of the dullness of our Western minds, which makes us so often misunderstand the meaning of the hyperbolic and figurative language of the Eastern poets, who wrote much of the Bible.

The real meaning is perfectly plain. Joshua's army had chased the Amorites up the pass of Beth-horon, and were chasing them down the other side of the pass, discomfited by a terrible storm of hail ; and Joshua prayed that the storm-clouds might not shut out the sun, but that the day might continue long enough to complete the defeat of the Amorites. The poetic passage quoted from the book of Jasher merely asserts that the day continued long enough for the people to avenge themselves upon their enemies. If this passage be interpreted literally, it would be only fair to insist on the same interpretation of other poetic passages. For instance : ' The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord ' (Psalm xcvi. 5) ; ' The stars in their courses fought against Sisera ' (Judges v. 20). The passages quoted by the Bishop of London in his admirable book on the difficulties of the Old Testament plainly condemn the folly of taking literally Joshua's words as recorded in the Book of Jasher.

The character of Joshua is a very fine one. He is always the practical religious teacher as well as the great general. He reminds us of General Gordon. The tenderness with which he brings home his sin to Achan never interferes with the inexorable firmness with which he punishes him.

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Painting

SAMSON
THE PINACOTECA AT BOLOGNA
GUIDO RENI (1574-1612)

CHAPTER VI

JUDGES—RUTH

WE have now come to the Book of Judges. The Judges were the leaders or governors, whom God raised up from time to time to assist the cause of national unity against the dissensions of the tribes, and against the tyranny of the heathen kings of the Canaanites. After the death of Joshua the Israelites had no single leader obeyed by all the tribes. The Israelites without a head gradually lost their hard-won unity gained under Moses and Joshua, and were almost swallowed up in the heathen Canaanitish population. The children of Israel forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtoreth. During this period there was often complete anarchy, that is lack of any ordered government at all. As the Book of Judges xvii. 6 says: 'Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.' Such was the result of worshipping idols, and intermarrying with the Canaanites, who, it may be observed, had not been exterminated as Moses had commanded.

The Lord saw the Israelites turning away from His Commandments, and at this He was deeply angered. As soon as they were left to shift for themselves misfortune overtook them. Their enemies defeated them; and we read of the Israelites falling into the hands of various heathen nations. Again the Lord in His mercy helped them. He raised up daring fighting men as leaders. One of the Judges raised up by God was a woman named Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth. She spoke for God to the people. Judges iv. 1: 'The children of Israel,' we read, 'again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and he sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Hazor, the captain of whose hosts was Sisera . . . who had nine hundred chariots of iron, and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.' Deborah, the prophetess, who was judging Israel at that time, called upon Barak to raise an army and over-

come Sisera, and deliver Israel from Jabin. Barak required Deborah to go with him, and she went. A great rising against Sisera took place, and the old idea of the unity of Israel came to the front, for six tribes took part in the war.

Another celebrated man we read of in this book is Gideon, also called Jerubbaal. He was one of the greatest fighting judges of Israel. One of Gideon's achievements is well worth recording, if it were only for the practical lesson to be obtained from the measures he took to select his men. Gideon had collected thirty-two thousand men to meet the vast host of the Midianites. God put it into his mind to urge all, who were afraid, to return from the trysting-place at Mount Gilead. Twenty-two thousand returned to their homes. The Lord guided Gideon to feel that even the ten thousand left were too many. Then the Lord told Gideon to march his men down to the water, and the test he gave was this: Every man who threw himself down on his knees to drink, yielding to his thirst and forgetting his duty to be ready for a surprise attack, was to be rejected, and every one who lapped water from the hollow of his hand, standing erect and keeping hold of his weapons, was to be chosen. Out of the ten thousand only three hundred endured the test and were chosen. Then Gideon planned a night attack on the Midianite camp with these three hundred men, and was completely successful.

The land of Israel after this rested in peace for forty years. Another judge and mighty man of valour was Jephthah. He was a man of Gilead. Through no fault of his, he was out of favour, but the Israelites, being once more engaged in war, remembered Jephthah's high qualities. When Jephthah saw himself forced to go to war, he vowed a vow. It was this: If the Lord thought fit to deliver the children of Ammon into the hands of the children of Israel, Jephthah would show his gratitude thus: 'Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering' (Judges xi. 31).

He went forth. The Lord heard his vow. Jephthah overwhelmed the Ammonites. But now, in the hour of victory, the greatest possible misfortune befell him. His own beloved daughter

was the first to greet her father on his safe return home from battle. She had come out to congratulate her father on his success. She had timbrels which she was playing joyfully, and in the lightness of her heart she was dancing. Little did she imagine what was in store for her and for her father. Jephthah, on setting eyes on her, could not contain himself for grief and anguish. He rent his clothes, and was in despair. He felt that there was no way out of this difficulty, for he feared to fail in keeping his word given to the Lord. He had now to tell his daughter what it was he had vowed. 'Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low: . . . for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back' (Judges xi. 35).

This dutiful and brave girl thought more of her father's not going back from his promise to God than she did of her own life. She consented to die willingly. As regards this vow of Jephthah's, several thoughts occur to us. Jephthah's knowledge of God was small, and his views of God mistaken. There had been a great falling off of religion in Israel during the time of the Judges. Jephthah seems to have regarded God with dread, but without love. He had promised the Lord to offer up to Him a burnt offering, or thanksgiving for his victory over the children of Ammon, and dreaded the vengeance the Lord would take on his country if he failed to fulfil his vow.

When Jephthah's days were done, he was followed by other judges. The Israelites still went on transgressing, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines. The Philistines were the most powerful oppressors of Israel, and probably came from Crete, and were not of Semitic race at all.

At this time there lived a man called Manoah and his wife. They were promised a son, and when he was born his parents called him Samson. The Lord's spirit came upon this child. When he grew up he became the strongest man in the land. His strength was supposed to be connected with the growth of his hair. As regards his character, he was a mixture; good and evil were ever fighting in him to gain the upper hand. He was dedicated to God from his birth, but, alas! he disappointed God. Called to deliver Israel from the Philistines, he thought nothing

of his high calling in comparison with the gratification of his own inclinations, and married a Philistine woman.

Whenever a man swerves from God's commandments, he has to suffer the natural consequence of wrong-doing. 'What a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Samson proved no exception to the rule. We are told that one day Samson met a young lion, which he succeeded in killing as easily as if this animal had been, not the king of beasts, but a weak little goat. Some time afterwards, coming back the same way, he saw that bees had been storing honey in the carcass of the lion. Samson, being hungry, ate of the honey. Joining his friends, he gave them a riddle to guess in connection with what had occurred. 'Out of the eater came forth meat; out of the strong came forth sweetness' (Judges xiv. 14).

Samson offered a challenge to his friends, that if they expounded the meaning of this riddle he would give them thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments, but if not they should give the same amount to him. His Philistine wife was a very inquisitive woman, and she left him no peace until he had made known to her the answer. This deceitful woman disclosed the answer to her countrymen, and Samson was furiously angry with her. He left her, and when he returned she had been given to his companion. Then he acted thoughtlessly and cruelly. He caught a number of foxes (jackals, R.V.) and tied their tails together; he then attached burning torches to their tails, and loosed these wretched animals into the fields of the Philistines, with the object of setting fire to the standing corn, to the vineyards, and to the olives, so as to destroy everything.

Presently it was his enemies' turn to take revenge on Samson; they got hold of him and tied him down. The Bible says: 'They bound him with two new cords' (Judges xv. 13). In this pitiable condition, the spirit of the Lord came mightily down upon him. Samson was given power to tear asunder his cords, as though they were but flax. With the jawbone of an ass he slew a thousand men. He then threw it away. He became very thirsty, and called on the Lord, and said that He had given him deliverance out of the hands of his enemies, but that he would die of thirst

unless the Lord gave him drink. Verse 19: 'Then God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again and he revived.' In our picture we see Samson looking a splendid figure, full of strength and vigorous manhood.

Samson judged Israel for twenty years. Another stirring event in his life occurred when he arrived at a place called Gaza. Here the Philistines lay in wait for him to do him harm; but he was too strong for them. 'He arose at midnight and took the doors of the gate of the city, . . . and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the hill which is before Hebron' (Judges xvi. 3).

Samson loved a woman called Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. The Philistines took advantage of this love affair of Samson's, and asked her to entice him and discover to them wherein his great strength lay, and by what means they might prevail against him, and make him prisoner. The Philistines offered Delilah eleven hundred pieces of silver if she succeeded. After Delilah had made three unsuccessful attempts, Samson each time mocking her, she at last succeeded in making him open his heart to her. The answer was, verse 17: 'There hath not come a razor upon my head.' Judges xvi. verse 17: '. . . if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. . . . And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. . . . And it came to pass when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call

for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house ; and he made them sport : and they set him between the pillars. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women ; and all the lords of the Philistines were there ; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women. . . . And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might ; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father.'

Thus died the strongest in body, but the weakest in character, of all the Judges. We read of others who followed, but we have given enough time to this book of the Bible, and must pass on to one of the sweetest stories the Bible has to tell us. It is all about an attractive and amiable young widow called Ruth. The book we have arrived at, a beautiful idyll, goes by her name. Ruth, who was a woman of the Moabites, had a loving heart. She did not wish to leave her mother-in-law alone while she was in great trouble, the latter having lost her husband as well as her two sons, one of whom had been Ruth's husband.

Naomi, the mother-in-law, thought that it was best for her to return into her own country, which she had left with her husband Elimelech, on account of famine there. Naomi arose with her two daughters-in-law, intending to go back home, because she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had supplied His people with bread. They went on their way to Judah. Naomi was old and

unhappy, and did not wish to become a burden to others; Ruth had sympathy for her and comforted her, just because of all the trouble that the old woman was experiencing.

Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law (Ruth i. verse 8): 'Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. . . . Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.'

They had left the country of Moab and had now arrived in Bethlehem, just at the beginning of the barley harvest, that is, the month of April.

'And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me go now to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz. . . . And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?' (Ruth ii. verses 1-5).

And the servant answered and said that Naomi had come from the country of Moab, and that Ruth had asked to be allowed to gather after the reapers, that she had continued from morning till even, and that she had tarried a little while in the house. Boaz

told Ruth to be sure to glean in no other field ; she was not to go away, but was to hold fast by the maidens of Boaz.

Boaz commanded his young men to allow Ruth to glean wherever she liked, and not to reproach her. Handfuls were purposely put in her way. She was able to take up a great deal, and at even she went back into the city, and her mother-in-law was delighted with the amount she had gleaned. Upon asking in whose field it was, and being told the owner was Boaz, Naomi exclaimed (verse 20) : ' Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.' Naomi told Ruth that Boaz was their next of kin.

Now, by all this we learn how well it is for us not to despair when trouble is upon us. How much better it is for us to be up and doing. Under no circumstances is there any excuse for us for idly wasting our precious time. This we are well taught by the beautiful story of Ruth. We are born into this world to make ourselves useful ; some of us are in one condition, some of us are in another. We are not meant all to be alike. One person has more, another has less, at his or her command. These sort of differences are of no importance whatever ; but, what does matter, and the thing which is required of us, is that each one of us do our duty, no matter whether it be in a high place or in a humble one, be we rich or be we poor, for outward conditions do not count in God's eyes, but God looks at the heart.

A humble position may be made admirable by the way the duties of it are discharged. The King on his throne has to set a good example. He and his ministers have a duty to perform to govern wisely. A teacher of the young has to exercise patience with pupils. A farmer has to plough and to sow and to reap in order that in due season, and with God's blessing, we may have bread to eat. A little girl has to be taken down to the schoolroom to the minute, so as to start lessons punctually. A little boy at school has to learn to be truthful and honest, dutiful to his masters, and fair to his companions.

We have spoken about the benefits of working in connection with Ruth, and now we must get back to her. Naomi had been delighted with Ruth's success. Her first idea, on seeing Ruth

come back laden with good things, was to thank and praise God for all His mercies. Well she knew that it was the Lord who was bringing all this to pass. Ruth and Boaz met at the threshing-floor; there, by Naomi's advice, when Boaz lay down by the heap of corn she went and laid herself at his feet.

When Boaz noticed her, she introduced herself to him as to her near kinsman and claimed his protection, that is, that he should take her to be his wife.

And so they were married, and Ruth's firstborn son was called Obed, and Obed was the grandfather of David. And thus through David Ruth was an ancestress of Joseph, the reputed father of Christ. Naomi, to whom Ruth had been such a faithful daughter-in-law, took charge of the child and nursed him, and so her old age ended happily.

CHAPTER VII

I SAMUEL (SAUL—DAVID)

THE book we have now to consider is called the First Book of Samuel. The history set forth in the first and second books of Samuel extends over about a hundred years. In that time Israel rose out of the state of disorder and decay described in the Book of Judges, and reached the unity and strength of a true national life. The interest centres first round Samuel, with whom the early part of the First Book of Samuel is occupied. Samuel was the son of parents whose names were Elkanah and Hannah. They were God-fearing people. For a long while Elkanah and Hannah had wished for a son. The woman had prayed earnestly to the Lord to fulfil her wish. When the child was born, his parents made a vow that, as a token of thanksgiving, Samuel should be brought up to serve the Lord.

Samuel means 'name of God.' His mother said she called him Samuel, 'because I have asked him of the Lord' (1 Samuel i. 20). 'Name of God' is surely a very beautiful name. He was one of the fortunate boys who have good parents. There is no blessing that children can have greater than the blessing of good parents. It makes all the difference whether or not we are cared for tenderly, and taught to know God. Thus we are given the opportunity of hearing about God's mercy and goodness to all men. Have we not reason to be grieved for those children who do not enjoy a similar blessing, whose parents possibly do not lead good lives, and are therefore not able to teach their children how to turn their own lives to good account?

Samuel's parents brought him up well. When he was still a small boy, they gave him to God. He ministered in the sanctuary at Shiloh before the Lord, where he had been placed in the care of the old chief priest Eli.

1 Samuel iii. verse 2 : ' And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see ; and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep ; that the Lord called Samuel : and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I ; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not ; lie down again. And he went and lay down.'

This happened three times. The old priest Eli knew now that it was God speaking to Samuel, and he instructed the boy to be attentive and to listen to what the Lord had to say to him. The Lord came and called as at other times, ' Samuel, Samuel ; ' and the boy answered, ' Speak, Lord ; for thy servant heareth ' (1 Samuel iii. 10).

Then the Lord told Samuel that He would punish the wickedness of Eli's sons, and the weakness of Eli their father in not restraining them. Samuel told Eli, and Eli accepted humbly the decision of the Lord thus revealed.

We always picture Samuel as we see him in our own National Gallery, as a child praying and listening to the Lord's voice. ' And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord ' (verses 19, 20).

In the next war we read that Israel went out against the Philistines to battle. The Israelites were smitten before the Philistines. A great misfortune befell them. The precious Ark, which represented the presence of the Unseen Heavenly King, Jehovah, had been brought out from Shiloh to aid the Israelites, and fell into the hands of their enemies, and with them it remained for seven months. Eli, the old chief priest, heard of this calamity. When the messenger ' made mention of the ark of God, he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died ' (1 Samuel iv. 18).

In the course of time the wickedness of Samuel's sons, whom, when he was too old to judge Israel himself, he had appointed in his place, caused general discontent among the people, who re-

sented being under such unjust rulers, for Samuel's sons took bribes, and gave bought judgments. At last the people assembled at Ramah and expressed a wish to have a king over them, just as all the other nations around them. 'But the thing displeased Samuel . . . and he prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee : for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.'

If the iniquity of Samuel's sons was the immediate cause of the demand for a monarch, yet it is evident that the example of other nations made the Israelites discontented with a purely religious ruler, and desirous of an earthly king. There was also the pressure of the Philistines, who at this period, and for some time after, were the most dangerous opponents of the Israelites, and made a king desirable from a military point of view. An earthly king amounted to a rejection of Jehovah, the Unseen King, who had brought them out of Egypt, and who had given them that great deliverance at the passage of the Red Sea.

Now let us ask ourselves the reason why an all-powerful God should think fit to give way to the wish of the wrong-headed Israelites. On the face of it, this appears most strange ; but with a little trouble we shall learn our lesson from this fact. God has given us free will which we can submit to His, or set up against His. We are naturally ignorant and self-willed. We must endeavour to cure ourselves of these faults. We must learn to pray not for what we think is required, but for what the Lord thinks best to send : to pray that the Lord will incline our hearts to do His Will.

Continuing our Bible reading, we are told in connection with the request of the Israelites for a king, that at this time there lived a man called Kish, who was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a mighty man of valour. He had a son whose name was Saul : 'A choice young man and a goodly' (1 Samuel ix. verse 2). In all Israel there was nobody statelier to look upon than he ; and in stature he was quite the tallest. Verse 2 : 'From his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people.'

You will find how Saul was chosen to be king by the Lord and by Samuel in 1 Samuel ix.

Saul, very early in his reign, became extremely popular, because he was successful in battle against Nahash and the army of the Ammonites at the siege of Jabesh-gilead, besides leading the Israelites to victory on other occasions. By divine authority he was commissioned to go against the Amalekites. These people had transgressed in their conduct towards the Israelites. Vengeance was to be taken upon them for this. Saul disobeyed God's commands. He twice failed in this way. By disobedience he brought upon himself God's displeasure. He forgot that he was reigning as King of Israel by the Will of God.

Samuel twice reprovved him ; but it was in vain. The sentence of rejection was passed upon him. Samuel's significant saying (1 Samuel xv. 22) : ' To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,' expresses the lesson of this particular occurrence, the sparing of the king of the Amalekites and the best of the spoil.

The Lord commanded Samuel to stop mourning over Saul. He had been rejected ; and God Himself had provided another king for the Israelites. He ordered Samuel to go to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, and the prophet came to Jesse to Bethlehem. One after another of Jesse's sons was brought in for Samuel, the man of God, by God's direction, to select from. Here we read that statement illustrative of what we have been talking about. The Lord guided Samuel's judgment thus : ' Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature ; . . . for the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart ' (1 Samuel xvi. 7).

For the new king God chose the very youngest and least experienced of all Jesse's sons. The youth was absent, feeding his father's flocks ; they sent for him and brought him. ' He was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, and anoint him ; for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren : and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward ' (1 Samuel xvi. 12, 13). Here was a plain shepherd-boy called to the highest place in the land.

We read in another passage of the First Book of Samuel xvi. 21 :

'And David came to Saul, and stood before him : and he loved him greatly ; and he became his armourbearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me ; for he hath found favour in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand : so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.'

Now we have once more to give our attention to the Philistines. They were determined to conquer the Israelites. They gathered together their armies to battle near a place called Shochoh, which belonged to Judah. Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. These stood on a mountain on the one side, and the Israelites stood on a mountain on the other side, and there was a valley between them. We read that there went a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, whose name was Goliath, of Gath. He was a giant, $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet high. On his head he had an helmet of brass. He was armed with a coat of mail, which was very heavy. On his legs he had greaves of brass (brass means copper), and between his shoulders was a target of brass (R.V. javelin). The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam. Thus equipped, he came out and shouted his challenge to the army of Israel.

The giant stood forth and renewed his challenge to the army of Israel. They were asked to choose a man and send him down to meet Goliath, who was boastful and perfectly self-confident. The Israelites were dismayed and greatly afraid. The three elder sons of Jesse had followed Saul to battle. David, being the youngest, was feeding his father's flocks at Bethlehem. Jesse bade David take parched corn to the camp for his brethren ; he was also to carry cheeses to the captain of their thousand.

David rose up early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper, and he took the provisions and arrived at the trench (barricade of waggons) just as the people were going forth to fight, and were shouting for the battle. David left his baggage in the hand of the keeper of the baggage, and ran into the army and saluted his brethren ; and as he was talking to them, up came the giant

Goliath. David made inquiries as to the state of the war: he weighed all, he made up his mind; he presented himself to Saul and said (1 Samuel xvii. 32): 'Let no man's heart fail because of him (*i.e.*, Goliath); thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.'

God's call had come to David. All were amazed; he, to offer to fight against such odds. He, a mere boy, with no experience in warfare! He seemed unlikely to be of the slightest use. He was judged to be too daring; he was rebuked, and his offer was refused. Undaunted, he persisted. He urged that his past life had qualified him for his task. Living out, as he had done, in God's beautiful open fresh air, he had become strong and healthy in body and in mind. While tending his sheep he had practised slinging till he had reached great perfection as a slinger; his eye had become so true, his hand so sure, that there was nothing within the range of a sling that could escape his aim. He told Saul that one day a lion and a bear had taken a lamb out of his father's flocks; and he had slain both the wild beasts, and he was sure this Philistine also would fall before him. David stood up erect, and calm, and determined. He declared that he had no fear whatsoever, for he felt the Lord's protection. Saul was thus persuaded to agree, and to say that David was to be allowed to go forward. Verse 37: 'Go, and the Lord be with thee,' were King Saul's parting words.

David's first idea was to arm himself as a warrior ready for battle. But he felt out of his element in such equipment; he felt he had no experience of the arms and the armour. David said to Saul (verse 39), 'I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them;' *i.e.*, he had never used such weapons. So he put them all away. He took instead his staff in his hand, and he chose five smooth stones out of the brook, which he put into a shepherd's bag. In his hand was a sling, and he felt at ease and master of his weapon. Above all, his faith in the Lord was firm.

The single combat began. The giant bore down upon David. The latter took a stone, slung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, so that he fell to the earth upon his face. All this had been done with a stone. David had no sword in his hand. He ran and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath, and slew him and cut off his head with it. As soon as

the Philistines saw that their champion was dead they fled. Women came out of all cities of Israel to accompany David, singing and dancing with joy, to meet King Saul, with tabrets and with instruments of music. And as they went along they sang to one another, 'Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands' (1 Samuel xviii. 7). Saul was very angry at this. He said, 'What more can he have but the kingdom?' And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

As we look at our picture we are struck with the pensive face of David. He does not exult in his success, nor allow himself to be flushed or excited by victory: he has complete control over himself even at this youthful period of his life, and serious thoughts are occupying his mind concerning the future of his countrymen. Jonathan, the king's son, watched David speaking to his father, and at first sight the souls of these two young men embraced and were knit in an eternal friendship. They became friends for the rest of their lives. David and Jonathan were as one soul, and the latter stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and of his garment and even of his sword, and his bow and his girdle, and gave them all to David as tokens of friendship. David behaved himself wisely in every way. Saul set him over the men of war, and everybody accepted his leadership: he was made much of on account of his success.

Soon we read that Saul became very jealous of him on this account. Verse 10: 'And it came to pass on the morrow that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul.' He tried to kill David. Saul cast a javelin to smite David against the wall with it. David was nimble and sprang aside, thereby avoiding the deadly stroke.

On several occasions Jonathan, David's bosom friend, helped David when Saul was pursuing him.

In the course of David's flight after one of his escapes he came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him, and he and Samuel went and dwelt at Naioth, *i.e.*, 'the house of learning,' the college or school of the prophets just outside Ramah. Samuel, the first of the prophets as well as the last of the judges, seems to have had a great deal to do with the training of the college of the prophets.



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THE TRIUMPH OF DAVID
THE UFFIZI GALLERY AT FLORENCE
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David now goes to Nob, and visits Abimelech the priest. He wandered on and came to the cave of Adullam, where everyone who was in distress or debt joined him, till he had four hundred men. Thence he went to Mizpeh, to the king of Moab, where he had his father and mother with him. By this time Saul had discovered where David was.

David remained hidden away in the wilderness and in strongholds, such as Engedi, hiding in the mountains as best he could; Saul seeking him all the time. But God preserved David from his enemy's pursuit.

In the meanwhile, Saul had to fight with his old foes, the Philistines. No sooner was the fighting over than he again went in pursuit of David in the wilderness of Engedi.

1 Samuel xxiv. verse 2 : 'Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats (*i.e.*, cliffs). And he came to the sheepcotes by the way where there was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the side of the cave.'

It thus came to pass that the Lord delivered Saul into the hands of David. Saul lay there asleep in the cave in Engedi. Here was an opportunity given to David of taking revenge; but this was far from his thoughts. He went into the cave and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, to show to him afterwards in order to convince him, on his awakening, that David had spared his life. David assured his men (verse 6): 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him.' Saul rose up and left the cave and went his way. David called after him, and, on telling Saul what had happened, the latter was much overcome and wept, and was ashamed of himself. He thanked David, and said that now he was convinced of David's goodness and of his own wickedness. Saul exclaimed (verse 20): 'And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.' David had repaid good for evil; a remarkable practical anticipation of our Lord's example and teaching, which goes far to show why David was a man after God's own heart.

We now hear of David wandering on to the wilderness of Paran.

Here he encountered a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel. The man was a great stockowner, rich in sheep and goats, and it was shearing-time. He was called Nabal, and his wife was called Abigail. 1 Samuel xxv. 3: 'She was of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance.' Nabal was 'churlish and evil in his doings.' You will learn how Abigail became David's wife in 1 Samuel xxv.

After Nabal's death the servants of David came to Carmel and told her that David had sent them to seek her to be his wife. She arose and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said (verse 41): 'Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.' Abigail hastened and rode upon an ass, with five of her damsels following her; and she went with the messengers of David and became his wife. This is an interesting episode in David's life as an outlaw.

But we must get back to Saul and see what happened next. After David's having spared his life, one would be inclined to think that Saul would have learnt his lesson, and mended his wicked ways. This was not the case. Saul continued to pursue David. Soon Saul was again at the mercy of David. Saul was in a trench (rather 'amid the waggons') asleep, 'the people pitched round about him' (1 Samuel xxvi. verse 5), at the hill of Hachilah before Jeshimon. His spear was stuck in the ground at his bolster, and his cruse of water was beside him. Both of these David took away, again as proof to show how easily he could have killed Saul.

David again showed Saul how he had spared his life, and how unjustly Saul was seeking his life. Saul acknowledged his wrongdoing and said (verse 21): 'I have sinned . . . behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.' Saul ended up by saying (verse 25): 'Blessed be thou, my son David. Thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail.'

David did not accept Saul's invitation to return, for he no longer trusted him, and they parted never to meet again. Saul upon hearing that David had gone to Gath, left off pursuing him. Meanwhile the Philistines gathered themselves together and pitched in Shunem, and Saul gathered all his men together and pitched in Gilboa. Saul began to feel the pangs of a guilty conscience; and

he was sore afraid. He inquired of the Lord, but received no answers, either by dreams or prophets. He was most melancholy, and he knew full well that he had forfeited the Lord's protection. In his oppressed condition of mind, the last thing he could think of was to seek and question a witch, though he had himself put away those who had familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land.

This woman belonged to a place called Endor. 1 Samuel xxviii. 8 : 'Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night.' The woman who had a familiar spirit (we would say a medium, LXX says a ventriloquist) was unable to give him any comfort. Saul's only companions were his self-reproaches and his pangs of conscience. Saul asked the woman (verse 11) : 'Bring me up Samuel.' When the woman saw Samuel, she recognised Saul, and said to him (verse 12) : 'Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.' And Saul asked the woman (verse 14) : 'What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel.' Probably the 'witch' described Samuel, and spoke his words.

Samuel warned Saul of his impending overthrow.

The end soon came. The Philistines fought against Israel. The Israelites were defeated, and many fell slain in battle on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines slew three of Saul's sons, one of whom was Jonathan. The battle went sore against the Israelites. The archers hit Saul, and he was severely wounded. Saul implored his armour-bearer to thrust his sword through him, and put an end to his sufferings; but the man's heart failed him; so Saul took his own sword and fell upon it.

We see that the request of the Israelites to have a king had not brought blessings on them. They had to pay for their wilfulness. In the First Book of Samuel we learn that the prophet Samuel, after he had come to be a very old man, died. In spite of their having chosen to have a king, Samuel had played a great part in Israel. In spite of his objections to the abandonment of the spiritual Kingship of God, he did more than any one to establish the monarchy. Guided by God, he chose and anointed the first two kings, Saul and David. He had himself long exercised ruling powers as a judge

over Israel. He was the best and the greatest of the Judges and the first of the Prophets. He welded together into a nation the scattered and disunited tribes.

He made religion a reality by founding the order of the prophets or speakers for God, who moved men to keep the old Mosaic faith as the priests had long ceased to do. The order of prophets, or preachers, went through the land from shrine to shrine, somewhat as mission preachers go from church to church in modern times. To Samuel the life of the nation seemed to be founded on fidelity to God; and the colleges of prophets which he established had a national purpose as well as a religious purpose.

CHAPTER VIII

2 SAMUEL (DAVID)

WE have now come to the Second Book of Samuel. The first chapter begins with a vivid account of the arrival of an Amalekite bringing the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan, and with a glimpse of David's exceeding grief on hearing of the death of King Saul and of his beloved friend Jonathan. David rent his clothes, the outward and visible sign of mourning. David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan is very touching and full of true poetry, the poetry of one who had yet to win a great reputation by his Psalms. The concluding lines of the poem are full of the aching void of a great love lost. 2 Samuel i. verses 26, 27: 'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.'

After Saul's death, Abner, Saul's chief officer, set up Ishbosheth, Saul's son, as king over Israel, and there was civil war till Ishbosheth was slain by two of his captains. After this all the tribes came to Hebron to David, to ask him to be king. 2 Samuel v. 1-9: 'We are thy bone and thy flesh. And they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.'

Anybody who visits Jerusalem to-day can still clearly distinguish the different ages of the work of the tower of David. There you see nearest the ground the huge stones which the Jebusites employed for their building. On the top of their work you trace the smaller bricks employed by the workers in the time of David. 2 Samuel v. 10: 'David went out and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him.'

David arose and went with all the people, thirty thousand men, to bring from Judah the Ark of God up to Zion. 2 Samuel vi. 5: 'David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all

manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.' David thus brought up the ark to Zion in safety.

Thus far David had been a true servant of God. At this time he was tempted from the path of duty. David was but a man, and therefore was not perfect. He did that which was wrong in the sight of God. He took to himself a woman he ought not to have taken, who was called Bathsheba, and he afterwards made her his wife. She was a married woman, and her husband Uriah was a faithful soldier of the King; and his death was deliberately arranged by treachery of the king, and complicity of Joab his general, in order to free Bathsheba from her husband, so that David might be able to marry her. This was clearly a most wicked thing to do, and David had to bear the consequences of his sin. The Lord brought it home to his conscience by means of His prophet. Nathan, the prophet, was a trusted adviser of the king. The Lord sent him to the king, and made him speak in a parable. This means that he told him a story, in order to bring what he had done home to his mind.

Nathan said (2 Samuel xii. 1): 'There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him: but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'

So far David had shown the greatest interest in this story. Little did he think what was coming. Nathan looked him full in the face and said (verse 7), 'Thou art the man!' Nathan tells David that on this account the sword shall never depart from his

house. We read of his sons falling out among themselves, brother slaying brother, and one of them conspiring against his own father, so that there was strife and bloodshed in his family.

Now we have to continue the history of David's punishment, and learn what unhappiness he had prepared for himself. Amongst his many sons there was one in particular called Absalom, whom he loved most tenderly. He was beautiful and attractive and a popular favourite, and was distinguished by his very long hair. This son caused his father David his greatest sorrow. Absalom had killed his brother Amnon in revenge for his ill-usage of his sister and fled to Geshur, the kingdom of his grandfather. Joab acted as an intermediary to induce the king to forgive Absalom, and brought him back to Jerusalem. There Absalom dwelt two years without seeing the king's face, because he had murdered his brother. At last the king forgave Absalom, and received him back into favour. Absalom now used his position to win the hearts of the people from the king. After four years' time Absalom judged that the moment had come to strike. He asked the king's leave to go to Hebron to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, and he said, 'Go in peace' (2 Samuel xv. 9). At Hebron he raised the standard of rebellion. He had already sent secret emissaries throughout all Israel, saying (verse 10): 'As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.' That is to say, he was to be proclaimed king simultaneously all over the land.

The bad news reached David, and he at once decided to flee with his servants from Jerusalem. An episode of the flight throws light on the character of David. David had a bodyguard of Philistines, which came after him from Gath, and the commander was a distinguished Philistine, Ittai the Gittite. David, about to fly, thought of the safety of Ittai and his bodyguard, and advised Ittai to leave him and join Absalom. This was a very generous offer, depriving David of the best of the few men who still held to him, and a very thoughtful, delicate act of unselfishness which made it easy for Ittai to join Absalom without the slightest reflection on his fidelity to David. But Ittai was equal to the king in magnanimity. He answered (verse 21): 'As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall

be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.' The king's generosity had strengthened Ittai's devotion, and instead of losing his bodyguard David had them with him, heart and soul, however dark his prospects. Here we see the secret of David's extraordinary success in dealing with men. He appealed to what was best in them by showing them what was best in himself.

Then father and son met. The battle took place in the wood of Ephraim. David's men completely defeated Absalom's men, and twenty thousand of the latter were slain. 2 Samuel xviii. 9: 'Absalom met the servants of David, and Absalom rode on a mule' (a sign of his kingship), 'the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.'

The king had only one thought in his heart and one question on his lips (verse 29): 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' Then Cushai (*i.e.*, the Ethiopian) answered: 'The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.' And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went thus he said: 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' (2 Samuel xviii. 33).

Here we have the completion of David's punishment; the results that had followed out of the sin with Bathsheba.

Before going on with any more of the history of David, it will be well to have a little talk together about something the Bible speaks of. We know it is said in the Bible concerning David that he was a man after God's own heart. When we realise that he sinned much as others did before and after him, we cannot but pause to think why the Bible distinctly calls David a man after God's own heart. By no means let us lose our chance of ascertaining what this signifies. God loved sinful David. We know that he strayed from God's commandments. Through trials he had to be purified.

A glance at David's character will give us a deeper insight into the reasons for accepting him as the man after God's own heart. Dean Stanley, an excellent judge of character, says, 'In the com-

plexity of the elements, passion, tenderness, generosity, fierceness—the soldier, the shepherd, the poet—the statesman, the priest, the prophet, the king—the romantic friend, the chivalrous leader, the devoted father—there is no character in the Old Testament at all to be compared to that of David.’

Thomas Carlyle, in his *Heroes and Hero Worship*, says, ‘David . . . had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer and ask, “Is this your man according to God’s own heart?” The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults? What are the outward details of a life if the inner secret of it—the remorse, temptations (often baffled), never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? . . . David’s life and history, as written for us in those psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man’s moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will recognise in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, sore baffled, down as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended; ever with tears, with repentance, true unconquerable purpose, begun anew.’

All men are sinful: even the great ones, patriarchs, lawgivers, judges, kings, prophets, all transgress the moral law. While on the one hand we deplore it, on the other hand it is for our encouragement. We learn that the people in the Bible are not different from us in nature. The old familiar Bible characters have everything in common with us who live to-day.

The very psalms we read most eagerly and learn and love to-day bear the name of David. Out of the fulness of his heart the Psalmist poured out all he felt towards his Creator. As a shepherd-boy, he probably acquired the experience embodied in Psalm xxiii. ‘The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.’

We all love the Book of Psalms in our Bible, and when we have time we ought to learn our own special favourites off by heart.

Then when you go and sit with that dear old woman over the hill, in that pretty clean cottage of hers, and read to her, you will see how she too appreciates the psalms. Her wrinkles become smooth ; her face lights up with a smile ; and she confides to you that you have chosen her very favourite one. It is lovely to have some one to share things with. That makes all the difference in one's life. That dear old woman, sitting in her high-backed armchair at her fireside with her white cap on, and three-cornered shawl, handed down to her from her grandmother, has seen a long life passing by. She has had sorrow, and has become acquainted with joy. She has lots to tell you about. Her husband was a sailor in the long ago : and she gave him God-speed on many an occasion, and God protected him for her to give him many a welcome back home.

On one memorable occasion God thought fit to welcome the sailor home above unto Himself : for he had been faithful and he deserved his rest. It was a winter's night. Cold and strong blew the wind : high and wild tossed and foamed the sea waves. Her anxious heart grieved for her man, to God she turned, she prayed and read and learned how God is strong to save : how He can calm the storm not only of His natural world, but of a human heart. Ever since that night she is a saddened woman ; but peace has come to her. She can in confidence lift up her eyes and look out to the calm sea and deep blue sky ; both lie smiling before her. She is waiting just a little while longer, and knows there is beyond for her God's own glorious Haven where her dear one is expecting her, and where there will be a meeting to part no more. Together you and she will be singing hymns ; she, with her shaky and trembling voice ; you, with the freshness and sweetness of youth. Your endeavours to bring cheer and comfort to this old friend of yours will reach the throne of God on high and will be acceptable to Him.

CHAPTER IX

I KINGS (SOLOMON—DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM— ELIJAH—AHAB)

WE now begin the first of the two Books of Kings. These relate the history of the kings of Israel, from the accession of Solomon to the Babylonian captivity. We read about the united kingdom under Solomon ; then later on how it was divided, and fell into two parts ; then how the kingdom of Judah alone remained, the kingdom of Israel being entirely swept away.

I Kings i. verse 1 begins thus : ‘ Now king David was old and stricken in years.’ Before his death he appointed the best of the sons who had been spared to him. His name was Solomon, and he became perhaps the most powerful of the kings of Israel.

When messengers came to him to congratulate him on his son’s accession, King David bowed himself upon the bed. ‘ Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die,’ and he charged Solomon his son, saying (I Kings ii. 2) : ‘ I go the way of all the earth : be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man ; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways.’

David’s reign was ever afterwards looked upon by the nation as the golden age of Israel, and the promise of a still more golden future. What were David’s achievements ? First, his achievements as a soldier and statesman.

In the period before his fall, which was the most successful period of his reign, he carried his conquests into Asia as far as the banks of the Euphrates. He organised a mighty army ; the host which was commanded by Joab, the captain of the host ; and there were besides a bodyguard of picked mercenaries, at one time at least largely composed of Philistines, headed by Ittai, the Gittite, of whom we have already read.

David had more than the power of Napoleon for inspiring personal devotion, as was shown in the way his mercenaries kept true to him in Absalom's rebellion in the darkest period of reverse, and in such episodes as the way his mighty men risked their lives against the Philistines to give him a moment's pleasure when they fetched the water to him in the cave of Adullam from the well of Bethlehem by the gate.

But David gave to the nation not only a mighty empire won by the sword. In a very true sense it may be said he made the tribes into a nation, or at least completed the process begun by his master in statecraft, Samuel. The monarchy he established was not an Eastern despotism. The king's power was limited by the power of God. David felt himself to be God's representative. This kind of monarchy was what Samuel had worked for, for Saul was rejected for acting independently without regard for God. David was not always successful in keeping to his high ideal, but he aimed at it continually in spite of failures and falls. This high aim was what made him long remembered as Israel's greatest king, greatest certainly from a religious point of view.

The many misfortunes which followed David's fall, and made the latter part of his reign a period of so much depression, culminate in the narrative of the last chapter (2 Samuel xxiv.). David was moved by pride and ambition, in spite of the remonstrance of Joab, to number Israel from Dan to Beersheba at this time. This was done in the pride of David's heart, and on that account was not acceptable to the Lord. His anger was kindled against Israel. David had lent himself to wrong-doing: and his heart smote him. He acknowledged his sin. A prophet called Gad came before David, and told him that God had ordained that he should be punished for his wrong-doing. The Lord gave him a choice of three punishments. Either a seven months' famine was to waste the land; or David was to flee three months before his enemies; or a three days' pestilence was to be sent. Preferring to fall into the hands of the Lord rather than of man, the pestilence, the sword of the Lord, was David's choice.

2 Samuel xxiv. verse 15: 'So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there

died of the people from Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men. And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough; stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing place of Araunah the Jebusite. . . . And God came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.'

David and Araunah had a talk together about the buying of this threshing floor. Araunah wanted to make David a present of it, but this the latter would not consent to. He said, 'Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing' (2 Samuel xxiv. 24). So he bought it for fifty shekels of silver, and Araunah gave him oxen for burnt sacrifices and threshing instruments for firing. This identical threshing floor can be seen, it is said, at the present day. It forms the centre of the interior of the exquisite Mosque of Omar in the middle of the Temple area in Jerusalem. The natural rock of the primitive threshing floor is there, with a gallery to walk in all round the rock. A Turkish Sultan built this mosque over two hundred years ago, in order to preserve this historical site. To this same threshing floor tradition tells us that Abraham brought his son for sacrifice. On this same rock Solomon's temple stood. On this same rock Herod built his temple. Wonderful exceedingly is the place with its unique wealth of sacred associations.

1 Kings chapter iii. : 'And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.'

As yet there was no house built on purpose for worship. The people sacrificed and burnt incense in high places, as being nearer Heaven. Solomon loved the Lord and walked in the statutes of David; and one day he went up to Gibeon to sacrifice, and at Gibeon the Lord appeared to him in a dream by night, and said, 'Ask what I shall give thee' (1 Kings iii. 5). Solomon said the Lord had

showed his father David great mercy in every way, and that now he had come to be king he wished to do his duty. 1 Kings iii. 7-9 : Solomon said, 'I am but a little child : I know not how to go out or to come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen ; a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad : for who is able to judge this thy so great a people ?'

Was not this the very best possible thing King Solomon could have asked for ? He felt that he had so much to learn : he could only accomplish his task by being given God's help. He desired most ardently to become good and wise for a good purpose and to do good.

As regards Solomon's request the Bible says (1 Kings iii. verse 10) : 'The speech pleased the Lord. . . . And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life ; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies ; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment ; behold, I have done according to thy words : lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart.'

Thus Solomon found favour in the eyes of the Lord. But Solomon was human ; and by his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter he had already begun his transgressions. This means he was tempted and fell grievously. With all his splendour he was weak in the pride of the flesh. Solomon had to be taught the lesson of humility. That was what he lacked. This weakness was at the root of his character, and proved to be his great failing. His success became too much for him, and he lost self-control and moderation.

In the early part of his career he had an opportunity given him of displaying his wisdom in a very remarkable way. We will see now what this was. Two women had come to King Solomon. Each of them had had a baby ; one baby was living and was brought before the king, and one was dead. Both women claimed the living child. They had come before the king for judgment, and he was to settle which was the real mother. One woman of course was speaking the truth, the other a falsehood. How was King Solomon going to find out the truth, and restore the live baby to the rightful

mother? He orders a sword to be brought; he commands one of his men to cut the live baby in two, and give each woman a half. We shudder to think what is going to happen. Then one of the two women implores the king to spare the life of the child; rather than have it cut in two she prefers giving it up to the other woman. The other woman, on the contrary, says, 'Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.' Here was the wished-for revelation. Solomon had brought it to pass in this way. By the real mother's unselfish love of her child, contrasted with the callousness of the other woman, everybody was convinced which was the true mother. No time was lost in giving her back her own child. In consequence of this judgment Solomon's fame spread through all the land.

All Israel saw that it was the Lord who was working in King Solomon for their good. Solomon appointed officers all over the country to administer justice, and the people were contented and prosperous. King Hiram of Tyre sent servants to Solomon when he heard that they had anointed him king instead of David. Solomon drew King Hiram's attention to the fact that on account of his many wars David, his father, had had no time to build a house unto the name of the Lord his God. Solomon said that as he was enjoying rest on every side he proposed to build a house for the Lord. He asked King Hiram to hew him cedar trees out of Lebanon; he said their servants should work together. Hiram was delighted to comply with Solomon's request: he promised that his Sidonian servants should bring down timber of cedar and timber of fir from Lebanon unto the sea; he would order it to be conveyed by sea to whatever place Solomon might appoint, and Hiram would cause it to be discharged there. This place is now known as Jaffa. In return Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food for his household, and twenty measures of pure oil year by year.

There was peace between these two monarchs, and they made a league together. Solomon sent a levy of thirty thousand men to Lebanon to work there. He began to use forced labour—a fatal course—very likely suggested by Pharaoh's daughter, who was accustomed to it in Egypt. Threescore and ten thousand that bore burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers worked in the moun-

tains. And there were officers over the work to rule over the people who wrought. Then the king commanded them to bring great stones, and costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.

This temple was to be most costly and most beautiful. It was to be similar to but double the length and breadth of the Tabernacle. To realise its glory we must turn to the sixth and seventh chapters of the First Book of Kings. After seven years it was completed, and then Solomon built himself a beautiful house, and that is all described in chapter seven.

1 Kings viii. verse 1: 'Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel unto King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion. . . . And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place into the oracle of the house to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. . . . And it came to pass when the priests were come out of the holy place that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.'

This was God's sign of His approval of what had been done. All the Israelites who gathered in the Temple that day were once more reminded of and impressed with the fact of God's Presence with them and amongst them. God, we see, is a living force. In all creation there is not one man, woman, or child who has not God at his side, if only he stands at attention and is ready for God to speak to him and to direct him.

He is always accessible. He never fails us. We find the Lord everywhere. Surely this is most wonderful. A church or temple built to His honour and glory is God's house on earth. Solomon was content that he had succeeded in building a most beautiful place of worship. At the same time he was wise enough to know that the most beautiful place on earth built by man's hand can never be good enough for God, or worthy of His majesty and might.

Solomon exclaims (1 Kings viii. 27): 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens

cannot contain thee ; how much this house that I have builded.' Solomon asked the Lord's blessing, and he asked him to make him and his Israelites worthy of the great favour that they were all receiving at God's hands.

Solomon, the great king, was on his knees before the Mighty King of Heaven, praying with all his heart. He rose to his feet and blessed the people, and he and the children of the covenant offered up a sacrifice to God Almighty.

And God appeared to Solomon a second time at Gibeon, and He told him that his prayer was heard. Solomon, on the whole, had reigned well so far, although there were already signs of the falling away which followed. He built a navy for the Israelites, and he sent his ships trading on the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and they came back laden with gold from Ophir, which was probably in East Africa, gold which may have been brought from the ancient workings of surface mines which exist to-day in Rhodesia. Solomon built many cities, amongst others Gezer and Beth-horon, and Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness. This latter place, we believe, is the Baalbec of to-day, near Damascus.

There lived in those days a woman of great renown, the Queen of Sheba, an ancient kingdom in South Arabia. She had heard of the fame of Solomon. The Bible says she wished to prove him with hard questions. She wished to see for herself if the report of his wisdom, his goodness, and his wealth were true. She wanted to make his acquaintance, so she journeyed to Jerusalem with a great train ; with camels laden with spices, and much gold and precious stones, all of which she presented to King Solomon. When she saw the house he had built, 'and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it : and behold, the half was not told me Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighteth in thee,

to set thee on the throne of Israel : because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king to do judgment and justice ' (1 Kings x. verses 5-9).

King Solomon was endowed with some of the literary talent of King David, his father. King David's special book in the Bible is called the Book of Psalms ; King Solomon's two books, the Book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs. In the case of both royal poets, it is not intended to assert that they are authors of the whole books. The books are merely associated with their names, as reputed authors of portions of them. King David's authorship of a portion of the Psalms is, of course, far more probable than King Solomon's of the books connected with his name.

Now we have thus far learned something about the three first kings of Israel, about Saul, and the two greater kings who followed, David and Solomon. We must look them all up in our Bible and read about them there, because there is so much we have not time to examine into together here.

Let us look for a moment at the difference that we see when we compare other books with our Bible. There are some books that tell us about plants, some about animals, some about curing the sick ; there are others that teach us most useful knowledge, how best to understand and employ our native language ; others about kings and queens and lawgivers. There are books that tell us about distant lands and foreign peoples. Why, we could go on for ever, summing up the many, many books which have been written ; all very useful and edifying no doubt, in their different ways. But see how great are their limitations, how little they can tell of the way of life. Many books there are, alas ! not worth the trouble, or the time, which the poor housemaid has to spend in dusting them. Many books become old-fashioned and out of date, and are of no use. New discoveries make them valueless.

Now let us turn to our Bible. This Book remains of value through all ages, it is always new in spite of its antiquity. It is always of use, of the very greatest possible use : indeed, we can never afford to be, or to go, anywhere, without our Bible. If we travel, let our first thought be like General Gordon's, to pack up our Bible in our bag. Having once known the companionship and

the comfort of our Bible, of God's own inspired and precious Book, we can never dream of facing life without it.

I want here to tell you about a Welsh girl. She had been taught out of God's Book, but she was too poor to possess a Bible of her own, and, in order to hear it read to her, she had to walk many miles across her native hills. One winter the snow was so deep and the weather so severe, that this dear child could not face the snow-drifts: she had to remain at home, and stay away and go without her Bible. A kind creature heard of her disappointment, and helped her. All this happened years ago. Bibles were much more expensive than they are now, and this child's yearning for the Word of God was the means of drawing grown-up people's attention to the need of reducing the Bible in price.

Out of this came the formation of the Bible Society. We see hereby how God puts power into the hand of a simple young girl. It is not by any means always grown-up people who are of the most importance in this life, or who alone bring about things for good. Now, are you not quite pleased to know this? Old people may be sometimes taught a great deal by a little child. Do you think this is very strange?

We said just now that we would speak about wealth, and find out what that was. Well, it is a very agreeable thing to have money, and a good thing, provided that we use it aright. God gives to some people wealth, to others poverty. A golden rule for a rich person is that he should not be selfish. A rich person is never intended to spend his money wholly on himself. He has to realise how gracious the Lord has been to him to let him be rich. It is expected from such a person that he will do his duty, that he will think of those people around him who are without money. A rich man or child has to say, 'I must give money to poor children so that they may not starve,' as it was in the time of the famine which we read about in former chapters. We are not to spend all the money which we happen to possess in any one year. While good fat years of plenty are upon us, we must save up and have some to spare, as Joseph had in Egypt in the days of old.

The First Book of Kings, like all the books of the Bible, is a truthful book. Though written by Israelites, it tells the truth about

the drawbacks to the prosperity of the Israelites, and to the greatness of King Solomon. It tells us that, in spite of all his blessings and privileges, he became an idolater: 'For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites' (1 Kings xi. verse 5); and 'then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon' (1 Kings xi. verse 7). This was the result of the king's polygamy. He married many wives of different nations, and to please his wives he joined in the immoral worship of their evil gods, such as those that have just been enumerated.

Solomon's reign ends with an ominous forecast of the approaching breaking up of his kingdom. Solomon reigned over Israel forty years. 1 Kings xi. verse 43: 'And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.'

Rehoboam went to Shechem, and there all Israel made him king. Jeroboam and all the congregation came to Rehoboam, and told him that his father had made their yoke grievous, and asked him to lighten their yoke. He asked for three days to think it over, and consulted first the old men who had stood before Solomon, and they advised him to speak good words to the malcontents, and that then they would be his servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, and consulted with the young men instead. By the young men's advice he declared that, whereas his father had made their yoke heavy, he would add to it. His father had chastised them with whips, but he would chastise them with scorpions. The ten tribes were thoroughly discontented, and said: 'To your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David' (1 Kings xii. verse 16). Judah and Benjamin alone remained faithful to Rehoboam.

Thus Solomon's empire broke up. But Jeroboam did not remain loyal to God. He did not shape his life according to the commandments or the will of Jehovah, the Lord of Israel. He trusted in himself. For reasons of policy he introduced calf-worship, setting up one golden calf in Bethel and one in Dan.

Rehoboam died, and was buried with his father Solomon, and his

grandfather David, in the city of David. The next king of Israel was Omri, but 'Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him' (1 Kings xvi. verse 25). He removed the capital to Samaria, ruins of which town exist to the present day. His son Ahab, who succeeded him, was even worse than his father, owing to the influence of his masterful wife Jezebel, who brought about the introduction of Baal-worship—the worship in which she had been brought up—into Israel.

Ahab's reign was remarkable for the career of one of the greatest of prophets, Elijah, a man of Gilead. Elijah appears on the scene as from the first a bold opponent of Ahab and Jezebel, relying on his position as the instrument of God. The note of authority rings out in his utterance at his first recorded interview with Ahab. 'As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word' (1 Kings xvii. verse 1). The Lord saw fit in this way to punish the land, in consequence of the spread of idolatry.

And now we will give the first stories of God's wonderful workings for Elijah. 1 Kings xvii. verse 2: 'And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and evening. . . . And it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks that I may go and dress it for me and my son that we may eat it, and die. And

Elijah said unto her, Fear not : go and do as thou hast said : but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until that day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah : and she, and he, and her house did eat many days. . . . And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick ; and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I done with thee, O thou man of God ? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son ? And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son ? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah : and the soul of the child came unto him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother : and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.'

There are certain things which we must admit to be what is called supernatural. This means somehow beyond our ordinary human experience, things that we, while here on earth, cannot give the reason for, because our minds cannot fully comprehend God's workings. God is Infinite, whereas our minds are finite. Let us remember the creation of the world by God is the great foundation miracle, and this, we have already pointed out, is the fact which stares us in the face, the explanation of which the wisest men can only guess at, a fact which prepares us to find the world full of miracle.

Elijah some time after was directed to go and again interview the wicked king Ahab. The prophet told the king that the Lord

would send rain upon the earth : for the long drought had caused a sore famine in Samaria. When the prophet approached the king, the latter said unto him : ‘ Art thou he that troubleth Israel ? ’ (1 Kings xviii. verse 17.) We see that Ahab wanted to blame the prophet for the drought in the country. Elijah answered Ahab, 1 Kings xviii. verse 18 : ‘ I have not troubled Israel ; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel, unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table. So Ahab sent . . . and gathered the prophets together.’

Elijah now directs the prophets of Baal to take a bullock and prepare it for sacrifice, and make ready. He says that he also will prepare another bullock himself. He tells the prophets of Baal to call on their gods : Elijah would call on his God, and ‘ the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken ’ (1 Kings xviii. verse 24). Verse 26 : They (the prophets of Baal) ‘ called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. . . . And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord : and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces : and they said, The Lord, he is the God ; the Lord, he is the God.’

After this miracle Elijah directed the children of Israel to take

the prophets of Baal, and not let one escape. They took them and brought them to Elijah, and he slew them down by the brook Kishon.

It was to save the whole nation from falling to pieces that Elijah slew the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal.

1 Kings xviii. verse 41 : 'And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink ; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. . . . And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah ; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.'

Ahab told his wicked wife Jezebel all that had happened, and how the false prophets had been slain. She resented the slaughter of her four hundred and fifty prophets, and hated Elijah. She sent him a message that she would have him killed by the next day.

1 Kings xix. verse 3 : 'And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree ; and he requested for himself that he might die ; and said, It is enough ; now, O Lord, take away my life ; for I am not better than my fathers.'

1 Kings xix. verse 5, continues. 'And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat ; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there ; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah ? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts : for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with

the sword ; and I, even I only, am left ; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not in the wind : and after the wind an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake : and after the earthquake a fire ; but the Lord was not in the fire : and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood at the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah ? ’

Oh ! the peace that came to him once more. Elijah knew again that this still small voice meant that the Lord was present with him. This still small voice that had spoken not to the outward ear, but to the spirit’s hearing in the depths of the soul, was the same voice that had spoken to Abraham and called him to leave his home beyond the Euphrates to found the nation of which Elijah was now the chief prophet. It was the same voice that had spoken to Moses on the same mountain, long centuries before, and had called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and afterwards had given him again in the same mount the Ten Commandments. It is the same still small voice that has spoken to all men and women since, and guided safely all who listened to and obeyed it. It is the same still small voice that speaks to you and me now.

The fulness of God’s time had come. Elijah had had two kinds of food. The angel had brought him food for his body, and God had supplied him with food for his soul. All of us live on both these kinds of food, in the same way as Elijah. Our inner self is far hungrier and needier than our outward. To sustain its life the body is satisfied with some milk, some bread, and some fruit. The plainer the food is with which we supply our body the better remains our health, and the better able are we to cope with all the demands made upon us. And now let me tell you of all the things our inner man has need of. He hungers after righteousness ; he thirsts for living waters ; he requires faith, pure thoughts, good actions ; he hungers after truth, courage, patience, unselfishness ; he thirsts for kindness of heart, charity—well, we have not half-finished summing

up all his necessities yet ; but we must return to our narrative, and so must pass on.

1 Kings xix. verse 15 : ' And the Lord said unto him[†] (Elijah), Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus : and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria : and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel : and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.'

The Lord told Elijah that the Israelites would suffer severely at the hands of these men ; for instance such as escaped from the sword of Hazael should be slain by that of Jehu. The Lord went on to say that there were left to Him still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose mouth had not kissed him. Elijah departed according to God's word, and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. Elijah passed him, and cast his mantle upon him. Thus the old prophet called the young prophet, who rose to take his place. Elijah had another meeting with Ahab, and predicted the king's doom, because Ahab had worked evil in the sight of the Lord. He also foretold Jezebel's doom.

King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah joined forces against the Syrians, but Ahab's hour had come. In the battle, although Jehoshaphat had stood by him and Ahab had disguised himself in order to escape the enemies' attention, the latter king had to die. 1 Kings xxii. verse 34 : ' And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness : wherefore he said to the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host ; for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day : and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even : and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. . . . So the king died, and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria ; and the dogs licked up his blood ; and they washed his armour ; according unto the word of the Lord which he spake.'

CHAPTER X

2 KINGS—I AND 2 CHRONICLES—EZRA—
NEHEMIAH—ESTHER

IN the Second Book of Kings we continue to read of the evil doings of Israel. They trusted in Baal and forgot their own true God. The more we read the Bible the more we are convinced of the long-suffering patience of our Heavenly Father.

We read in this book of these two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, going from Gilgal down to Bethel, then on to Jericho and down to the Jordan. 2 Kings ii. verse 8: 'And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; and he took the mantle of Elijah . . . and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.'

This was taken by the people to indicate that Elisha too was inspired with the spirit of God, and they believed in him.

About this time the Israelites were at war with the Moabites. Mesha, their king, had revolted against Ahab. A great number of stones and other monuments with inscriptions have been discovered which fully confirm the truth of the portions of the Bible which they illustrate. No other ancient book in the world has such a mass of independent corroboration. Such a remarkable confirmation we find in the Moabite Stone. It was erected in 850 B.C. by Mesha, king of Moab, to commemorate his victories over Israel. It was broken up by the Arabs, and a portion was found in 1868 in the ruins of Dibon. If you ever go to Paris go to the Louvre, to the Jewish Court, and there you will see the Moabite Stone. The inscription differs from the Hebrew of the Old Testament. It belongs to the primitive Hebrew writing in which probably many of the earlier books of the Old Testament were originally written. King Mesha tells us on the Moabite Stone that in the reign of Omri and his son Ahab, Israel oppressed and occupied Moab forty years. We read in the book before us (2 Kings iii. verse 4), that Mesha, king of Moab, 'rendered unto the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams with the wool: but it came to pass when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.'

Elisha performed many miracles. We read how he multiplied the poor widow's oil. Her husband had died, and she told the prophet that he knew her husband had been a true servant of the Lord. They were poor, and the creditor had come to take away her two sons to be bondmen. Naturally the poor widow was greatly distressed; she said that all she possessed in her house was one pot of oil. Elisha told her to go and borrow vessels from her neighbours, and when she had obtained them she was to shut the door upon herself and her sons, and she was to fill all the vessels full from the one pot of oil. The miraculous supply of oil proved inexhaustible. The man of God then told her to sell her oil and pay her debt, and with what remained she was to feed herself and her children.

There is a very charming story connected with an event in Elisha's life. I know, my young readers, you will love to hear about it. It is once more a most powerful example of the influence

a boy or girl may possess and use for good. You must by no means wait to be useful until you are grown up, you must always be on the alert. You cannot afford to be dilatory. There is work for you to do for God and for your fellow-man, which is marked out by God for you and for no one else to accomplish. Your place is ready waiting for you, ready to be taken, to do some work for God at once. Well, the little maid the Bible tells us about here is not even known to us by name, but nobody ever forgets her, once they have read about her ; and you and I will always think lovingly of her.

Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria, and he took captive many Israelites, men, and women, and children, amongst whom was our little maid. She must have been a very neat and useful little person, who could turn her hand to anything. Naaman was quick to observe this. She became his wife's maid-servant. He was very sick of leprosy. There was then, as there is now, no cure for this disease. His death was merely a matter of time. Our little maid declared that she knew and was certain of a remedy for this stricken master of hers. Now what had this clever little person thought of ?

Our little maid, a mere child, had grasped the tremendous truth, the biggest thing even an older person can ever think about ; that God is the ultimate source of all help, physical as well as spiritual. 2 Kings v. verse 3 : 'She said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria ! for he would recover him of his leprosy. One went in and told his lord, saying, thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.'

Naaman accordingly went with his horses and his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. The prophet sent his messenger to the sick man, and Naaman was told to go and wash in Jordan seven times, and that then his flesh would come again to him and he should be clean. Naaman's pride revolted against the humbleness of the means the prophet had appointed for his cure, but ultimately, persuaded by his servants, he went and dipped in Jordan and was healed of his leprosy. This cleansed his poor diseased body ; but this was not the only thing that occurred. We are certainly meant to keep our bodies clean, but still more our souls. An Italian proverb has it that a clean soul lives in a

clean body. God wishes to cleanse everybody's soul with living waters.

2 Kings v. verse 15: Naaman said, 'Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.'

We now read of Elisha's death. It was a time of continual war. The Lord, according to His promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, still helped the Israelites, in spite of their persistent and repeated misdeeds. In this Second Book of Kings we read of King Jehoram's general, Jehu, being anointed king at Ramoth-Gilead by Elisha's messenger. Jehu at once drove his chariot to Jezreel and there was met by King Jehoram in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. Jehu killed the king.

Jehu, after killing Jehoram first, and then his friend King Ahaziah, drove to Jezreel, and as he entered in at the gate, Jezebel, who had painted her face and tired her head, looked out at a window and said (verse 31), 'Had Zimri peace who slew his master?' Jehu looked up, and told the servants of the palace if they were on his side to throw her down. 'So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and they trode her under foot.'

Jehu's vengeance on the family of the wicked Ahab did not cease here. He sent to the elders of Samaria and ordered them, if they were on his side, to cut off the heads of the king's seventy sons, and the elders did so, and sent the seventy heads in baskets to Jehu.

When Queen Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab, saw that her son, Ahaziah, was dead, she rose and destroyed all the seed royal. One child escaped her, Joash by name. The boy Joash was crowned by Jehoiada, the priest; and Athaliah, who came in at this moment crying 'Treason!' was slain after she had been removed from the Lord's house.

Meanwhile, in Israel, Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, began to reign, and was succeeded by his son Joash, and he, in his turn, by his son, Jeroboam the Second. Jeroboam the Second proved to be the most powerful monarch who had occupied the throne of the northern kingdom. He reconquered the neighbouring tribes and nations, and his empire did not fall far short of the wide extent of David's. In his long reign there was great material prosperity as well as great

military success ; but with the prosperity came luxury, and with the luxury injustice and oppression of the poor by the rich.

At Bethel Amos foretold the approaching captivity of the Israelites, and soon after this the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried away ten tribes captive to Assyria, where they disappeared finally like raindrops in the sea. Hosea's prophecies were like those of Amos, directed against the prevalent godlessness and immorality in the northern kingdom. Unlike Elijah and Elisha, Amos and Hosea were prophets who committed their prophecies to writing.

'And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David : and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead' (2 Kings xvi. verse 20). This was more than seven hundred years before the birth of Christ. Hezekiah was a great and good king, and he 'did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did.' Not the least of the many things to his credit is the close friendship which existed between him and the prophet Isaiah. 'He trusted in the Lord God of Israel ; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses.'

Here it would be most interesting to read the entire chapters of 2 Chronicles xxix., xxx., and xxxi. In these chapters is described the cleansing of the Temple of God ; how Hezekiah brought in the priests and the Levites to carry on in the best possible manner the solemn services in the House of the Lord. The reign of Hezekiah was the golden age of prophetic vision : the age of the greatest of all the prophets, Isaiah of Jerusalem.

We read now of a severe illness which assailed Hezekiah. The king was 'sick unto death' (2 Kings xx. verse 1). The prophet Isaiah advised him to put his house in order because he was going to die. The poor sick man turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and this is what he said (2 Kings xx. verse 3) : 'I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.'

Hezekiah had to be taught that what he had been the means of accomplishing was by no means through his own merit, but thanks rather to the Lord's power for good, working in him. When humility reigned in his soul, then, and not before, did the Lord deign to listen to his prayer, and grant the fulfilment of it. The word of the Lord came to the prophet Isaiah, and he was able to tell King Hezekiah that the Lord had seen his tears and heard his prayers, and would heal him, and would grant him a further lease of life of fifteen more years. In humbleness of heart, Hezekiah acknowledged his weakness. The Lord strengthened him and consoled him, and his recovery took place.

At the end of Hezekiah's reign we read (2 Chronicles xxxii. verse 27): He 'had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.'

Finally we read in 2 Chronicles xxxii. verse 33: 'Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead. Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem.' Unhappily, he 'did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.' 'He built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim and made groves and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. . . . Also he built altars in the house of the Lord' (2 Chronicles xxxiii. verse 2). And he made his children pass through the fire, and observed times and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards, 'and wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord.' So 'Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead' (2 Chronicles xxxiii. verse 20). Amon sinned like his father, had a short reign, and was killed by his own servants. Now we come to a boy king, whose name was Josiah, Amon's son. He was only eight years old when

he came to the throne. He reigned for thirty-one years. He walked in God's ways.

Josiah, in the eighteenth year of his reign, repaired the Temple, appointing men who did the work faithfully. During the work Hilkiah, the high priest, found the Book of the Law in the House of the Lord (621 B.C.). This was carried to the king, and Shaphan, the scribe, read it to the king. The contents of this book point to its being the book of Deuteronomy.

Josiah at once recognised that the commandments and ordinances in this book had not been kept, and he rent his clothes. Josiah sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and all the people small and great (2 Kings xxiii. verse 2), 'and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord, and the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord. 'Moreover the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.'

This putting down of the high places, reaching even to Bethel, which characterised Josiah's reformation, accords well with the fact that the reformation proceeded from the reading of the Book of the Law, which we have taken to be Deuteronomy, for this exclusive regard for a central sanctuary and objection to a local worship as at the high places is a central feature of that book.

Josiah's sons and successors were mere empty semblances of kings, vassals of the ruling power in Jerusalem in their days, the power of Egypt. The first of these kings, Jehoahaz, was deposed by Pharaoh-necho, who made Eliakim king (who also was the son of Josiah) and turned his name to Jehoiakim. The last-named king 'gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh,' and levied for the purpose a regular land-tax, which supplied the sum that was paid to Pharaoh.

On the Euphrates a great change had taken place. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, overthrew Assyria, and by his victory over Egypt at Carchemish became the ruling power of the world.

At last Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. This time the city and the Temple were destroyed, a great number of the

inhabitants slaughtered, and all but a few of the rest were carried away into captivity.

Jerusalem had now been practically destroyed. But a few Jews who had been left to cultivate the ground under the government of Gedaliah, the patron of Jeremiah, dragged out a poor existence. Apparently the last remnant of the children of Israel was swallowed up by the huge heathen population of Babylon. There was no reason why the exiles of Judah should survive a captivity of the same kind as that which had caused the final disappearance of the Ten Tribes. But when all seems darkest to human eyes the Lord can still deliver those who trust Him, as the exiles in Babylon were in a few years' time to learn.

The next two books in the Bible are called the Books of Chronicles. The two books were originally one. The English name stands fairly for the Hebrew, but the Greek title is 'Things passed over'—that is, a supplement. Large parts of Chronicles were clearly borrowed from Genesis, Samuel, and particularly from the First and Second Books of Kings. Chronicles has not the historical value of Kings, and its authority is inferior. As we have already made an extensive use of Chronicles in this chapter, a further examination of its contents has not been thought necessary.

The account of the Temple services has its value as a part of the history of public worship, and the author's treatment of the events in the nation's history reveals a distinctive standpoint—the priestly point of view.

The next two books, Ezra and Nehemiah, are closely connected with Chronicles, being practically a continuation, the end of Chronicles being found repeated in the opening of Ezra, and certain other points of resemblance being common to all three.

The Book of Ezra is the chief record of the history of the Jewish people from their first return from Babylon, under Zerubbabel, to the renewed movement of return, seventy-eight years later, under Ezra.

Ezra i. verse 1: 'Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, . . . saying,

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth ; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem.' The proclamation went on to urge all Jews who were willing, to join the expedition to Jerusalem, and to help to build the House of the Lord there. The chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, with the priests and Levites, arose to go up to Jerusalem, and all who were about them helped them with gifts. Cyrus, the king, brought forth the vessels of the House of the Lord carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, and gave them back to Sheshbazzar, prince of Judah, as representative of the Jewish nation. In order to understand the sacrifices demanded by the Return, we must remember that the Exiles in Babylon had by this time attained a position of comfort and security which they had to abandon, in order to build again the ruins of Jerusalem.

The Book of Nehemiah was joined to the Book of Ezra in the Jewish Bible and treated as one work. Both were placed before Chronicles, which, as we have seen, formed with these books a connected whole. The Temple foundations were laid by Sheshbazzar, who headed the first return. Thus we see how God's marvellous scheme of redemption of Israel was successfully being carried on, in spite of all vicissitudes and all sinfulness. A delay of sixteen years took place, owing to adverse influences brought to bear upon the Persian king, and then there was a fresh step forward. A great movement of exiles took place under Zerubbabel, a descendant of King David. This migration from Babylon numbered over forty-two thousand. A great deal was expected from this migration, and first the complete rebuilding of the Temple. But this was long delayed. They went each to his own city and let the House of God lie waste, says Haggai. In the autumn they all gathered to Jerusalem, and erected an altar, and offered burnt offerings to the Lord, 'but the foundation of the Temple of the Lord was not yet laid' (Ezra iii. verse 7).

They were stirred to action at last by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Then they relaid or renewed the old foundations amid the sounds of cymbals and trumpets, praising the Lord after the ordinance of David. Many of the ancient men who had seen the

first house, when they saw the foundations of this house, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted for joy.

After the completion of the Temple, a long break of sixty years appears in our records. The records begin again in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra vii. verse 8). In that year, Ezra the scribe comes before us as a leader in the restoration of the new Israel.

Thirteen years after Ezra, we read of the mission of Nehemiah, a high officer of the Persian court, and a devoted servant of God. He heard from certain men of Judah, that 'the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire' (Nehemiah i. verse 3). Then Nehemiah tells us that he wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed to the God of heaven.

'So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.'

King Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah permission to journey to Jerusalem, and to see what could be done to ameliorate the condition of the Jews. He was made Tirshatha, or governor of Judah and Jerusalem, with the full powers of a high Persian official, and he accordingly arrived with an escort of Persian horsemen, which must have greatly impressed every one in Jerusalem. Nehemiah succeeded in obtaining the people's help, and began by endeavouring to rebuild the walls of the city of Jerusalem and to repair the different gates, and he did admirable work for his nation.

After the walls were repaired, Ezra helped Nehemiah to complete the restoration of the new Israel.

Ezra had brought from Babylon the Book of the Law, probably the books which we know as the Pentateuch. And he and Nehemiah gathered the people together to an open space before the gates of Jerusalem, and there, from a pulpit of wood in the open air, he read aloud the Book of the Law to the people. Ezra read from dawn till noon, and went on reading for a week, and the Levites explained the laws to the people, *i.e.*, translated into the popular dialect the Hebrew original.

At a great day of humiliation beginning with a solemn fast, the people, under the leadership of Nehemiah, confessed their sins and failures, and made a public repentance, and entered into an oath and bound themselves by covenant to walk in God's law which was given by Moses, the servant of God. Nehemiah x. verse 30 : 'And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons : and if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath, or on the Holy Day : and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt. Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the House of our God.'

This brings before us Nehemiah's definite purpose, to form the new Israel by a return to the old kingship of God, which they had found to be so ill-replaced by the rule of an earthly king. The new Israel was to be intensely national. It was to be a Church—but a national Church. Hence the rigid rules for separation from the people of the land, the engagement to refrain from mixed marriages, and from buying and selling on the Sabbath day. To keep completely separate from all admixture with the people of the land was absolutely necessary, if the ideal of a new Israel was to be realised.

Nehemiah, as we have seen, took all possible precautions to make this separation permanent. This idea of a rigidly separate people became intensified in process of time into a bitter prejudice on the part of the Jews against the Samaritans, which we find in full force in our Lord's time.

Nehemiah returned to Babylon, and when he came back to Jerusalem found many of the abuses he had provided against still flourishing, and dealt with them with his accustomed vigour.

He found also the Sabbath day broken even in Jerusalem. Nehemiah xiii. verse 17 : 'Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day ?' Prompt in dealing with this, as with other abuses, he commanded that the gates should be shut and that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath. Thus the New Israel, the Jewish Church, started on its way, and with all its faults

made real progress, if we compare its state with the state of Israel sunken in idolatry and immorality in the days before the Captivity. The New Israel was based on a written book : the Book of the Law, the Pentateuch, brought by Ezra from Babylon.

Whereas the Old Israel depended on the living voice of the Prophets, the New Israel depended on the written law. That law, accepted as a standard of religion by the Jews of the Return under Ezra and Nehemiah, required to be explained. Hence, while maintaining the sanctuary at Jerusalem, it soon became necessary to have centres for the explanation of the law in other towns and villages. Thus arose the synagogues. Every village had its synagogue ; most towns had several. The synagogue system was in full possession in our Lord's time. He and His disciples entered into the synagogue, as we go to church. The synagogues' services, like ours, had set prayers, two lessons, and a sermon. Thus through the synagogues our churches date back to the days of Nehemiah.

Reading our Bible, we have noticed that most of the books have names of men. Only two in all the Bible are called after women. Ruth was one of them, and we remember how much we enjoyed reading about her. Now we come to the other book called by a woman's name, Esther. The name Esther signifies a star (Persian, 'stara'). In the Hebrew language Esther's original name was Hadassah—*i.e.*, myrtle. A curious feature of the Book of Esther is that the word God is not once mentioned. But, all the same, the book teaches us some valuable lessons. The Jews held this Book of Esther in great regard, for reasons that we shall presently see.

Esther was a Jewish exile of a family of the tribe of Benjamin. She was an orphan, and was brought up by her cousin Mordecai (who adopted her as his daughter, both her parents being dead). He lived in Shushan, the palace, and was attached to the court of the Persian king, Ahasuerus. Ahasuerus reigned from India to Ethiopia, and he is believed to be the Xerxes whom boys will remember at once, as well known in Greek history, who ended his expedition against the Greeks by losing the battle of Salamis, 480 B.C. On one occasion the nobles of Persia and Media were all assembled before him, and he was holding a great feast. King Ahasuerus had a queen whose name was Vashti. The feast was a deliberate occa-

sion for heavy drinking. On the seventh day, when the king had taken too much wine, he sent for the queen to show her beauty to the people and the princes. This was a gross breach of Eastern manners, and an insult to the queen. The king had become coarse and senseless with drink, a degradation of the Divine likeness, which is a grievous sin.

I do not know if you have ever seen in a country lane or elsewhere, a man rolling about from side to side, so that you had to get out of his way. Strange to say, there are people who consider such a sight a matter for laughter and amusement. Why it should strike them in this way you and I cannot conceive. We think that it is one of the most pitiable and disgraceful things that can happen to any human being. This wretched drunken man is one of God's creatures. He is created in God's own image. Think if you can grasp to the full extent what too much beer-drinking, or spirit-drinking, or wine-drinking has turned him into. Instead of his being higher than all animals and having dominion over them, as the Creator particularly ordained, the poor degraded man, enslaved by drink, has fallen lower than they are. Your donkey, and your pet rabbit, and your kitten, and your pony, and your dog never take too much to drink. They have a certain limited measure of reason which guides them and which they obey. The drunken man had the gift of higher or human reason given to him, the gift that lifts him to the foremost position among God's creatures, and he has thrown away that precious gift for the sake of strong drink.

From our digression about drinking we return now to King Ahasuerus, who had disgraced himself and insulted his wife because he was drunk. In this condition he had ordered, as we have seen, his queen to do something generally considered ignoble, which she refused to do. The seven princes of Persia and Media, who were the king's chamberlains, through their spokesman Memucan, advised the king to make an example of Vashti for her disobedience, to get rid of her altogether by an irrevocable decree, and to fill her place with another who should be better than she. One young woman out of all the virgins in the realm was chosen by the king to be queen in Vashti's place. This was not till some years after, for Vashti was disgraced in the third year (i. 3) of Ahasuerus (Xerxes),

and Esther was made queen in his seventh year (ii. 16), the interval being occupied by the king in the expedition against Greece, from which he returned after his great defeat at sea. His choice fell upon Esther, whom the king loved above all others, so that he set the royal crown upon her head and made a great feast to all his princes, even Esther's feast.

Meanwhile the king had promoted Haman to be the foremost man under him in his kingdom, and every one bowed down before Haman and revered him, with the exception of Mordecai. In his wrath against Mordecai because he bowed not down, Haman plotted to destroy the people of Mordecai, the whole of the Jews in Persia, and obtained letters from the king to all the provinces to destroy all the Jews, young and old, and to take their spoil for a prey. Thereupon Mordecai put on sackcloth with ashes and gave himself up to lamentation. Presently he was able to make known the whole plot of Haman to Esther, and the impending destruction of the Jews. He urged her to go in unto the king and make supplication to him for her people. Esther replied that whoever came in unto the king without being called, the king's law doomed to death, except one to whom the king held out the golden sceptre that he might live. 'But I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.' At last Esther decided to risk her life for the sake of her people, and sent a message giving her decision to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.'

Thoroughly conscious of the great danger she was in, Esther set out on her perilous adventure. She came into the inner court of the king's house, and saw the king sitting on his throne, and when the king saw her standing in the court he held out to her the golden sceptre, and she drew near and touched it. Look at her in our picture, just as the king held out his sceptre, at the decisive moment of her fate. Esther v. 3: 'Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.' Esther invited the king to



Painting

ESTHER BEFORE AHASUERUS
THE PITT Gallery AT FLORENCE
PAUL VERONESE (1528-1588)

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a banquet, together with Haman, at which she promised to present her petition. At the banquet the king asked Esther: 'What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee.' Esther, in reply, asked the king and Haman to another banquet on the morrow, at which her petition would be presented.

That night the king could not sleep, and commanded the book of the chronicles (or records of his reign) to be read to him. There he found it written that Mordecai had given information against two of the king's chamberlains who had plotted against their master. What reward, the king inquired, had Mordecai received for this great service? Nothing had been done for him, it appeared. Just at that moment Haman came in to ask the king about his project of hanging Mordecai on the gallows that had been erected for him. The king asked Haman, What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Haman had no doubt the king meant Haman himself, so he advised that he should be arrayed in royal apparel, and put upon the horse the king was accustomed to ride on, with the crown royal upon his head, and led through the streets of the city by one of the king's most noble princes. Thereupon the king said to Haman that Mordecai the Jew was the man the king delighteth to honour, and Haman was to lead him through the city. This was done, and Haman returned mourning to his house.

Then followed the banquet which Esther the queen had prepared for the king and Haman. At the banquet the king asked, 'What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee.' Esther replied that her petition was for her own life and the life of her people. The king asked who dared to threaten them, 'And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.' The king in his wrath walked into the palace garden, and when he returned found Haman praying for his life to the queen. Then the king's indignation found voice, and as he spoke the attendants covered Haman's face, which was the preparation for execution. And one of the chamberlains suggested the gallows that Haman had made for Mordecai. 'Then the king said, Hang him thereon,' and they hanged him thereon.

That day the king gave the house of Haman to Queen Esther, and took off his ring which he had taken from Haman and gave it

to Mordecai. Then Esther entreated the king to stop the massacre of the Jews while there was yet time. The king could not reverse the letters sent by Haman, but wrote in his own name, and sealed with the king's ring, letters to all parts of the kingdom, empowering the Jews to defend themselves and to slay their enemies, and take their spoil for a prey.

Thus Mordecai was raised to the highest position in the king's house, and the Jews smote their enemies with the sword, and even in Shushan the palace they slew five hundred men. Thus the Jews triumphed over their enemies; and Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen, as a festival in memorial of this great deliverance, confirmed the days of Purim in their times appointed. . Esther ix. 32 : 'And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.'

The Jewish feast of Purim was held on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar (February—March), and followed a fast on the thirteenth day, called the fast of Esther. The Book of Esther, which was highly esteemed by the Jews, was called the Roll, as the favourite one of the Five Rolls, of which the others were the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes. It was read every year at the feast of Purim. The book is a record of a woman's noble patriotism, which made her not only risk her high position as queen but her very life to deliver her oppressed countrymen. Though God's name is never mentioned in this book, the workings of an unseen but mighty Providence are felt throughout it.

CHAPTER XI

THE BOOK OF JOB

THE Book of Job is one of the greatest religious poems of the world. It displays throughout a leading characteristic of Eastern thought, a consciousness that there are things beyond the range of man's following, and that God and the counsels of God are the chief of these. Psalm cxxxix. verse 6 : 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.'

This poem of Job is thrown into the form of a dramatic composition, part of it in verse and part in prose. The Prologue, or introduction, and the Epilogue, or conclusion of the book, are written in prose as distinguished from the dialogues, which are in verse. Though the poem itself was probably written at a late date, it is based on an exceedingly ancient tradition. Job was a real historical person, probably in the age of the patriarchs. He lived in the land of Uz, possibly on the borders of Idumæa and Arabia. The Arabs still claim the Hauran to be the land of Job. And this well accords with the allusions of the poems, and with the robber bands of Sabæans from Sabæa (Sheba) in South Arabia, with the desert streams and rocks, and with the whole circumstances of the pastoral life described. Job was what we should call to-day a wealthy Arab Sheikh. He owned great numbers of sheep, camels, oxen, and asses. He was, of course, not a Jew, and the scene is entirely outside of Palestine, and the worship is of the simplest patriarchal kind. There is no direct reference to the laws and customs or beliefs of the Jews. There is not an allusion to Jewish history. Job's God is not the God of a chosen people, but the God of all mankind. If we take the Book of Job to be a consummate work of art, written in its final form at a late date, possibly during the Captivity or soon after the Return, we are better able to understand the depth and complexity of the religious problems it raises, problems which could

hardly have had any existence in this developed form for a man living in patriarchal times. Contrast the absence of any questioning of God's dealings which we find in Abraham with the questioning, problem-haunted mind which we find in the Book of Job. Job was a man of high and noble character, and deeply religious, for in the Prologue we read that his sons and his daughters were feasting, and when this was over Job 'rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually' (Job i. verse 5). Intercession for others is one of the true signs of deep-rooted religion, and this, we see, was one of the habits of Job's daily life.

The Prologue introduces us to Job at the time of his prosperity. The opening words of the Prologue are (chapter i. verse 1): 'There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.'

In the scene in Heaven, which is part of the Prologue, we read the following (Job i. verse 6): 'Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.'

Of course it is obvious that this scene in Heaven is a dramatic picture, figurative and imaginative, and not to be taken literally. At the period when the Book of Job was written in its final form,

it is perfectly evident that the idea of Satan was not the same as ours is to-day. Satan represents to us our experience of evil as gathered up in the conception of one evil spirit; and part of our experience, the beginnings of evil, is that temptation comes to us from without. In some cases temptation assails us with a knowledge of our weakness, and a malignity that seems to point to a person at our side who has evil intentions against us.

The conception of Satan is subject to the law of gradual development in the Old Testament. It becomes definite and clear only in works written after the Exile. For example, in 2 Samuel xxiv. verse 1 we read: 'And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go number Israel in Judah.' And David, thus moved by the Lord, compelled Joab to number the people. The result of this numbering was a terrible judgment from the Lord on the nation. Threescore and ten thousand died by the pestilence which David had chosen, as the best choice of the three punishments offered by the Lord through David's seer, Gad. This account in the version of the same story after the Exile, 1 Chronicles xxi. verse 1, takes the following form: 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.'

The altered form may be thus explained. In the earlier period of the history of Israel, even till after the return from the Exile, there was no difficulty felt in ascribing everything, good and bad alike, to Jehovah. The Hebrew's vivid consciousness of God saw God in everything and everything in God. Gradually his conception of God, as the All-powerful Cause of all things, was modified by a new conception of God as All Good. The difficulty of accounting for the presence of evil in a world ruled by an All-powerful and All-good God began to exercise more pressure, and Satan, originally an angel of God sent to try men, became more and more the responsible cause of evil.

Probably the earliest mention of Satan by name in the Bible is to be found in Zechariah iii. 1: 'And he shewed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing on his right hand to resist him.'

Now, in the scene in Heaven given us in Job, Satan takes his

place among the sons of God, and gives an account of his actions, and takes his orders from God. But here God is not in accord with the spirit of his malicious angel. God supports Job's character and cause. Satan (the adversary) attacks both. God desires the vindication of Job's righteousness; Satan, the exposure of its speciousness. Good-will to the righteous man is the characteristic of God in Job; ill-will is the characteristic of Satan. But God and Satan are not represented as distinctly hostile powers. Satan gives account of his doings to God, and requires permission from God before he can assail Job, and is obliged to keep to the conditions God has laid down. But the subject is a very deep one. We have only put forward a few suggestions towards a better understanding, while it is certainly the teaching of the Bible—more fully developed in the New Testament—that Satan exists as a centre of evil influence. This is part of the great Problem of Evil, and our best attitude towards that problem is a frank acknowledgment of human limitations. The wisest course with all such problems is to adopt the attitude of St. Paul, so well expressed in 1 Corinthians xiii. 12: 'Now we see in a mirror darkly (R.V.), but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know (fully) even as also I am (fully) known.'

To return to Job. First a messenger came to Job to say that the Sabæans had carried away his oxen and his asses, and slain his servants with the edge of the sword. While the first messenger was speaking, another arrived to say that fire from God had fallen from heaven (lightning) and burnt up the sheep and the servants. Before he had done, another came and said that three bands of Chaldæans had fallen on the camels and carried them away, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword. While he was yet speaking came another, and said that while his sons and daughters were feasting, a great wind from the wilderness blew down the house upon their heads, and the young men were dead. Here is the grand way in which we see Job receiving the terrible news and accepting it as from God (Job i. 21): 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

Satan meanwhile was beginning to realise that he had not so

easy a task as he had supposed. He found that he was powerless to overcome Job. Nothing seemed to move the righteous man from his fixed principles; Job remained steadfast in his belief in God. In response to Satan's assertion that if God touched Job with disease he would curse God to his face, God gave Satan permission to touch Job, and Satan went forth from God's presence and smote Job with sore boils, *i.e.*, with a terrible form of leprosy, called elephantiasis. 'Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse (R.V. renounce) God and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' (Job ii. 9).

Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, heard of the evil which had come upon him, and 'made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him. . . . So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great' (Job ii. 11).

Job felt their silent sympathy very deeply, and his anguish burst forth in an exceedingly bitter cry for the deliverance of death. He longs for the place where 'the wicked cease from troubling,' and where 'the weary are at rest.' He wishes that he had never been born. His friends begin at first very gently to hint at the view they hold of his sufferings. Their view is the popular view of the time, and it was mainly for the purpose of combating this view, and showing it to be untenable, that the Book of Job was written.

That view may be briefly put thus: It holds that God is the Absolute Ruler of the Universe, and that men are always punished and rewarded exactly according to their deserts in this life. All suffering, according to this view, is a penalty for sin, and all prosperity is a reward for goodness. Hence Job's friends conclude that his exceptional sufferings are the punishment of exceptional sin, and they press him, gently at first, and gradually more urgently, to the only course that will meet his position, as they see it, namely, that he should make a clean breast of his guilt and frankly confess his sin. Job continues to defend himself. He is perfectly convinced, that though not free from the general imperfection of man,

he is unconscious of any special guilt, and his sufferings are, in his opinion, far too severe and exceptional to be explained as due to his share of the general imperfection of man. But so deep is his sense of his sufferings that he goes beyond the mere cry for the deliverance of death with which he began, and bitterly arraigns God for the cruel bondage to which he is subjected. His friend Bildad replies with the strongest disapproval of Job's attitude (Job viii. verse 3): 'Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; . . . if thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. . . . Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers.'

Job, in his reply to his friends, admits that no man can be just before God. God's power is so great, that no man, however innocent, can successfully plead before him. But so far from God's justice discriminating between the guilty and the guiltless, he smites all alike. Job ix. verse 22: 'This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked: he covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if not, where, and who is he?' (R.V., 'if it be not he, who is it?') He goes on to wonder what is the purpose for which God afflicts him. He arrives at the agonising thought that all God's favours in the past were only poured out, that He might torture him in the end. The more Job asserts his innocence and arraigns God's justice, the more plainly and frankly do his friends condemn him. Eliphaz says (Job xv. verse 4): 'Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God. For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty. Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee.'

Then he goes on to draw a lurid picture of the man with an evil conscience, too long to quote here, but drawn with extraordinary power. At last, after several further speeches, intended by his friends to arouse Job's conscience, they directly accuse him of the

great and flagrant sins they have before only hinted at, and suggested. The whole long series of speeches requires to be studied in detail, and is full of passages that will repay such study.

And now comes the grand climax of the poem. The Lord himself appears and answers Job. Chapters xxxviii. and xxxix. : 'Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind,' &c. &c. This theophany, or manifestation of God, goes on in a succession of questions, each of which carries home to Job the sense of his own significance and ignorance, and the sense of the omnipotence and Omniscience of God. Then Job, overwhelmed, briefly answers (Job xl. verse 4) : 'Behold, I am vile ; what shall I answer thee ? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken ; but I will not answer : yea, twice ; but I will proceed no further.'

This first speech of God completely convinces Job of the transcendent greatness of his Creator, and he feels and owns his presumption in daring to contend with God. The teaching of Jehovah's speech is plain. If Job cannot understand the mystery of the visible world, how can he hope to understand the mystery of God's government of the world, and especially the great mystery of His government of man ?

The second speech, though it contains the celebrated descriptions of Behemoth (elephant) and Leviathan (crocodile), falls short of the first. It is perhaps not too much to say with a great Hebraist, 'The first speech of Jehovah transcends all other descriptions of the wonders of Creation, of the greatness of the Creator, which are to be found in the Bible or elsewhere.'

Job is completely convinced by the words of the Almighty and brought to a right frame of mind, a deep humility that leaves no room for the old doubts of God's justice. Job xlii. verse 3 : 'Therefore have I uttered that I understand not' (says Job to God) ; 'things too wonderful for me which I know not . . . I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

The dialogues between Job and his friends solve the main problem of the book by showing the falsity of the traditional theory that all suffering is a penalty for sin and all prosperity a reward for goodness ; and this solution is approved by the Almighty Himself. Speaking

out of the whirlwind the Almighty teaches the lesson, as true essentially to-day as when it was written, that it is impossible for finite man with his necessarily limited vision to enter into the counsels of God, or to judge the justice of the dealings of God with man. The minor question which is also answered is this: Can man love and fear God disinterestedly? The history of Job shows that he can.

The Epilogue which immediately follows brings Job's troubles to an end. God commends Job and accepts him, and severely condemns his friends. Then Job, forgiving all their charges, prays for his friends. Job ends happily (xlii. verse 12): 'So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. . . . After this Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his sons' sons, even four generations.'

We have said that the first speech of Jehovah in the Theophany in the Book of Job (chapters 38 and 39) is described by a great Hebraist as of transcendent grandeur. A yet more remarkable testimony to the worth of the whole book comes from a great independent judge of literature, Thomas Carlyle: 'I call that book, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels indeed as if it were not Hebrew: such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or noble sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble book: all men's book. It is man's destiny and God's way with him here on earth; grand in its sincerity and in its simplicity. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.'

The problem of the suffering of the righteous in this world is with us still, and when we see undeserved misfortunes crowding on the head of one who has done nothing to deserve such punishments, we sometimes feel at a loss to understand this mystery of God's government. But we have guidance Job did not possess to enable us to retain our trust in God's love and care in the face of what seems to us so contrary to such faith. We look to the Cross of Christ, and there we see what must have seemed to those who

saw the Crucifixion the cruellest injustice, the cruellest infliction of unspeakable suffering on The Sinless One.

Anybody who had the questioning mind of Job and saw the mockery of the Trial of Christ and the atrocious injustice of His Crucifixion might well have asked, standing by the foot of the cross, 'Why has the Father He trusted in thus forsaken His Son?' Yet we, who see now that the Son won His perfect victory through those sufferings, that, as the old Fathers said, 'He reigns from the Cross,' can understand that the suffering was necessary to the victory, and also how it is that the Apostle boldly describes this supreme instance of permitted injustice as the supreme instance of Divine love. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should . . . have everlasting life' (St. John iii. verse 16).

CHAPTER XII

PSALMS—PROVERBS—ECCLESIASTES—THE SONG OF SONGS

WE have come now to the Book of Psalms, the well-known collection of religious poems that bear that name. The word Psalms came to be employed for these religious poems in this way. The translators of the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Bible, used the Greek word *Psalmos* (which means, first of all, the music of a stringed instrument) to translate the Hebrew word *Mizmor*, which means a song with an accompaniment of instrumental music. The whole collection was called Psalms, or the Book of Psalms, by our Lord (Luke xx. 42). In the Hebrew Bible the title of the Book of Psalms is 'Praises,' a title which probably was due to the use of the book in the services of the Temple. Another Hebrew title of the book was 'Prayers.' The Psalter, a later word for the Book of Psalms, originally signified in Greek a stringed instrument. Most of the Psalms have titles, but the meanings of the titles are very uncertain, and often have to be admitted to be conjectural.

We have already explained the word Psalm (*mizmor*), the title prefixed to fifty-seven psalms, generally with the addition of the name of the author, who is usually David. 'Song,' a general term for canticle, occurs in the titles of thirty psalms. A word which occurs very frequently in the Psalms, though it does not occur in the titles, is the word 'Selah,' which is generally taken to signify a direction for the stringed instruments to strike up. The word occurs seventy-one times in the Psalms; elsewhere in the Old Testament only three times, in Habakkuk iii. There are many other titles in the Psalms, but we must be content to mention only a few. A 'song of degrees,' or goings-up, is the title of fifteen psalms (cxx.-cxxxiv.), which seem to have been a separate collection. The probable meaning comes from the use of the word to go up, to signify the making of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the great festivals.

The songs of the goings-up would signify the songs sung at such pilgrimages. Some of the titles refer to the authorship, or to the source from which they were taken.

There are one hundred and fifty Psalms. Of these one bears the name of Moses. Seventy-three psalms (nearly half the number) the name of David, but this only means that they belonged to a collection, and bore King David's name as the most illustrious of its authors. Ten psalms bear the name of the sons of Korah, which means, not that the sons of Korah composed each psalm as joint authors, but that each psalm which bears this title comes from the collection of the sons of Korah. Probably this is also the case with the twelve psalms which bear the name of Asaph, who was one of David's chief musicians. Two psalms bear the name of Solomon. Owing to its use in the daily services of the Church, people are far more familiar with the Prayer-book version of the Psalms than with the version in the Bible. The Prayer-book version is much older than the Bible version. The former version comes from the Great Bible, of which the first edition was published in 1539, and which itself was a revised form of Mathew's Bible, published 1537. The version of the Psalms in Mathew's Bible was written by Coverdale, and based on the Latin and German versions. From the last edition of this Bible, in 1540, the Prayer-book Psalter is taken. Our familiar version of the Psalms in the Bible of 1611 is more accurate than the Prayer-book Psalter, but much less musical and melodious. The Prayer-book version, from its regular use in devotion, has helped to form the religious habit of mind in the nation, and it is through it that the Hebrew Psalmists have exercised, and do still exercise, their marvellous influence on the religious consciousness in England to-day.

The Book of Psalms has been, with reason, called the heart of the Bible.

The Psalms are religious lyric poetry, and the writers of this poetry prepared the way for Christ, as truly as did the prophets. In two aspects especially the Messiah is set forth in the Psalms.

First, as the Kingly Messiah. In the kingdom of David, which was the ideal kingdom of Israel, the king regarded himself, and was regarded, not as an Eastern autocrat, but as God's anointed, ap-

pointed by God as His Viceroy, in which capacity he was promised the sovereignty of the nations. The Messianic king is regarded as God's son and representative in Psalm ii., and in Psalm xviii., David's great Psalm of Thanksgiving, where David says: 'Thou hast delivered me from the striving of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.'

Secondly, the Messiah is regarded as the Suffering Messiah. If the minds of men had to be prepared for the Kingly Messiah, much more had they to be prepared for the Suffering Messiah. Suffering of the good for God's sake had to be shown to be the way to victory, the way of deliverance for mankind. In a very wondrous way the foreshadowings of the sufferings of Christ in the Psalms give a picture of the Messiah that was to be found true many centuries after, even in minute details. This does not seem to have been perceived by the Jewish Church. It was Christ Himself who first revealed to His disciples that His sufferings had been fore-ordained. Among the Psalms that speak of the Suffering Messiah, the twenty-second Psalm is pre-eminent. It foretells the Passion, and our Lord's use of the first words on the Cross at the most solemn time of His suffering: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' marks it out unmistakably as pointing to Him, and fulfilled in Him.

One more group of Psalms we may glance at here. As we can see now, they point to the central event of the world's history, the Incarnation. Those are the Psalms that look forward to the coming of God Himself, both as Judge and Redeemer. Take, for example, the words of such a psalm as Psalm lxviii. verse 18: 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' This is applied to our Lord by St. Paul in Ephesians iv. verse 8.

Thus the Psalms prepared the minds of men for the Coming of Christ. A difficulty which tries many, and tries them repeatedly, owing to the regular use of the Psalter in church, is to be found in the many expressions in which the Psalmist entreats God to destroy his enemies, or rejoices when that destruction is accomplished. Of course, such prayers for vengeance are by no means confined to the

Psalms : there are numbers of them in the Book of Jeremiah. The explanation is that they belong to the Old Dispensation—the Rule of the Law, which is based on the principle of retaliation—and not to the New Dispensation, based on the Revelation of an All-loving God given at a later date in Jesus Christ. Our Lord clearly revealed that the Old Dispensation was inferior to the New. His words are unmistakable. Matthew v. verse 43 : ‘Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.’

In the days of the Old Testament writers, as we have before observed in dealing with Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Isaac, a man’s family was regarded as a part of the man and as rightly included in any retribution for his wickedness. The rights and responsibilities of the individual members of the family as independent from the father, did not then exist.

These prayers for vengeance, be it remembered, belong to the Jewish Church, which realised God’s universal justice, but not His universal Love.

A word more. The Psalmists wrote as men who longed intensely for God to assert His power and to rule on the earth. That was the truth which was most necessary, and most deeply realised in their time. Their passionate longing for Divine Justice to assert itself was right. The mode in which they expected the Divine Justice to assert itself was misconceived by their human blindness ; human nature being steeped in imperfection. Furthermore, though they did not regard death as complete annihilation, they regarded the after-life in ‘Sheol’ as a life of sadness in a Shadowland. Therefore they regarded the assertion of God’s justice as to be effected here on earth, now or never.

A few last words as to the value of the Psalms. Our Lord’s habitual use of them shows what a comfort and support they were to the most hardly tried and the only Perfect Life. Not only did He use the Psalms upon the Cross, and sing with His disciples the great Hallel Psalm (cxiii.–cxviii.), at the Last Supper, but with the words of a psalm on His lips He died.

After His Resurrection again, our Lord instructed His disciples when He appeared to them in the upper room, as to the way in which the Psalms, as well as the other writings of the Old Testament, had prepared for His Advent. Our Lord's teaching and example turned the minds of the Christian Church to the Psalms, and to the study of them we owe the Magnificat, the Benedictus, and the Nunc Dimittis.

St. Paul urges on his converts at Ephesus the use of the Psalms. Ephesians v. verse 19: 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.' Also in Colossians iii. verse 16: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.'

We now pass on to the Book of Proverbs, which is always associated with the name of King Solomon. We read in 1 Kings iv. 32, of Solomon's fame as a writer of proverbs and songs: 'And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five.' Part of the Book of Proverbs is plainly stated to be his, that is, to be at least a collection made by him, or of which he was the most distinguished author, namely, the portion beginning at chapter x. 1: 'The proverbs of Solomon,' and ending at chapter xxii. 16. This is undoubtedly the centre of the book.

The purpose of the Book of Proverbs is to teach the art of living well; the wisdom of daily life is the wisdom advised and extolled.

The whole book ends with a beautiful passage of praise of the virtuous woman. It is plain, from the contents of the book itself, the plainest source from which to seek information, that the Book of Proverbs is a compilation of sayings by different authors. It is a part of the 'wisdom-literature' of the Jews. It is full of practical morals, with very few references to religious beliefs, which are taken for granted. It studies and illustrates the principles of human conduct, and traces out to their consequences the practical results of right and wrong doing. Considerable knowledge of external nature as well as great knowledge of human nature is displayed, and in this connection we may remember that in 1 Kings iv. 33, it is said of Solomon that 'he spake of trees,

from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall : he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.' For the proverbs themselves we refer our readers to the book, especially to the section headed, 'The Proverbs of Solomon,' chapters x.-xxii. verse 15, which are proverbs properly so called, and chapters xxv.-xxix., which are very similar.

We next come to a book which bears as its title the name of Ecclesiastes, the translation into Greek of the Hebrew word *Koheleth*, meaning the preacher, or orator, or teacher, which is the name repeatedly given to Solomon in this book. It is composed of meditations on individual social life ascribed, by perfectly legitimate because perfectly transparent literary device, to the great king Solomon. The writer begins by putting into Solomon's mouth the conclusions to which his study of life had brought him : 'Vanity of vanities . . . vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun ?' (chapter i. verses 2, 3).

Is life worth living ? and how best is happiness to be attained ? are the questions of permanent interest which the writer has set himself to answer, and if his answer is not satisfactory, and never confident, he at least retains his faith in the government of God.

The conclusion at which he arrives is given thus in chapter ii. 24 : 'There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour.' Yet, even here, in his complete disillusionment, he recognises the government of God ; he accepts the world as it is—as ruled by God—saying : 'This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God' (verse 24). He believes in God, but it is not the joyous, confident belief of a David, but the admission of a world-worn and a world-weary spirit, that does not think life in any way worth living.

He seems to be convinced that there is no future life to balance the injustice of this life, and this want of belief in a future life is perhaps one of the chief secrets of his continual depression. To understand our author it must be remembered that at the time he wrote the hope of immortality was at best a dim intuition, for our

Lord Jesus Christ had not yet brought immortality and life to light by His Gospel. Chapter iii. verses 18-20: 'I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.'

The Epilogue ends with the well-known passage, wisely laying down the one thing needful for man. Chapter xii. verses 13, 14: 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'

The Song of Songs, commonly called Canticles, which is the exact translation of the Hebrew title of the next book, meaning the finest of songs, was publicly read in the Synagogues at the great festival of the Passover. It is a poem and evidently a dialogue. There are three principal characters—Solomon, the Shulamite maiden, and her shepherd lover. The religious and moral purpose of the poem is to bring out the importance of human love between man and woman as given by God, and the duty of regarding it seriously. This is the first meaning of the poem. The plan of it is as follows. Solomon had gone on a royal progress to the north of his kingdom and met with a Shulamite maiden (probably a form of Shunamite, from Shunem, a town in Issachar) and brought her to Jerusalem, where he hoped to win her love and persuade her to give up her country home for life at his court. She had, however, already given her heart to a young shepherd, and the great king's attentions failed to make her forget or abandon him. In the end she was allowed to return to Shunem, where she was restored to her lover. In the eighth chapter the lovers appear arm in arm, and declare the supreme value of genuine love over all that can be purchased by rank or money.

This is the direct interpretation of the Song of Songs, and is the interpretation of some of the best commentators, and this appears

to be the primary meaning. But a secondary interpretation may be added to this, with a gain in the richness of the meaning. The heroine's lover represents God. Solomon represents the attractions of the world unable to win the hearts of God's faithful servants from Him. There is also another interpretation, more familiar from the chapter-headings in our authorised version, by which the poem is made to be a prophetic description of the love between Christ and His Church, and this has been varied by the view that it is the love of the individual soul for the Lord, and the Lord's love for the individual soul, which is represented. Such allegorical meanings are quite legitimate as secondary interpretations of the meaning of the poem.

The reading of this book on the eighth day of the feast of the Passover, the feast which commemorated Jehovah's deliverance of His people from a strange lord and master in order to unite them to Himself, points to the fact of the general Jewish acceptance of the allegorical interpretation of Jehovah as the Beloved, and His people as His loved one.

According to the paraphrase of the Targum, the history of Israel is represented from the Exodus to its redemption in Messianic times, when the final union of God and His people will be realised. A later Jewish view is very beautiful. It regarded heaven as the union of man with God, and death as the kiss of God which seals that union. It held that the Song of Songs was the highest expression of that union.

The poetry of the Song of Songs is exceedingly beautiful. The author's eye is penetrating and sympathetic. He knows his eastern land well. He was evidently well acquainted with the many places alluded to: with Kedar, Engedi, Sharon; the hills of Gilead, Hermon, Mahanaim, Carmel; with northern Palestine, and especially with the neighbourhood of Lebanon, which is mentioned repeatedly. His feeling for nature is singularly spontaneous and warm, and his joy in the beauty of nature brings vividly before us scene after scene of his experiences in northern Palestine, and especially in Gilead, east of Jordan.

As we read his poetry, instinct with the magic of the East, living and breathing pictures shape themselves before our eyes.

We see the doves in the clefts of the rocks, or beside the water brooks ; we see the gazelles upon the mountains or feeding among the lilies ; we see the goats on the hills of Gilead. We walk with the shepherd lover as he invites his love, in the words of the poet (Song of Songs ii. 10-13) : ' Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land ; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

There are beautiful descriptions of gardens in this poem, such as this in which the poet makes his shepherd lover compare the beauty of his betrothed to a garden in the borders of Lebanon. Chapter iv. verses 12-15 : ' A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse ; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits ; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron ; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense ; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices : a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.'

This passage, as well as others in the Song of Songs, has been freely used by Tennyson in the lyrics of *Maud*. Without this great poem, even if it were only interpreted in its primary sense, the Bible would be distinctly the poorer. The writer of the Song of Songs sets forth in concrete form one important aspect of that central and essential doctrine of the Bible—St. John's doctrine—1 John iv. 7, 8 : ' Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.'

CHAPTER XIII

ISAIAH

OF the private life of Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, we know but little. The public life we have already considered to some extent in our remarks on the Second Book of Kings. We know from the sixth chapter of the book which bears his name that he was called upon to be a prophet in the last year of the reign of King Uzziah, *i.e.* 740 B.C. He prophesied during the reigns of the next three kings—Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. So close was his relation with the court in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah that it has been supposed that he was of noble family, and the contents of his book point to a man who had had the highest education of his time. As a statesman as well as a prophet he tried to guide the foreign policy of Judah, especially during the two critical periods of the nation's life—in the time of the attack by the confederate kings, Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria, mentioned in chapters vii. and viii. ; and in the invasion by Assyria, mentioned in chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii.

In the first crisis he found that King Ahaz refused his advice, and insisted on relying on Assyria instead of Jehovah. In the second crisis he succeeded in encouraging Hezekiah to resist Sennacherib's summons to surrender. The deliverance which Isaiah promised in the name of the Lord, contrary to all probabilities, actually took place.

An event of far-reaching influence—the expansion of the great Assyrian empire—conditioned the whole of his ministry. When Isaiah received his call to be a prophet and commenced his ministry, the long reign of Uzziah (about fifty years) was drawing to a close. Both the northern kingdom and the kingdom of Judah, that of Uzziah, had attained a high level of prosperity and wealth. In the northern kingdom, another long reign, that of Jeroboam II,

had extended the limits of the empire to the limits of David's kingdom, while Judah, when Isaiah began his ministry in 740 B.C., had reached a very high level of military power, as well as of wealth.

Isaiah ii. verse 7: 'Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots.' But this great growth of territory and wealth in Israel and in Judah was followed by changes against which Isaiah and other prophets continually raised their voices. The rich nobles got rid of the old peasant proprietors, who had been the backbone of the nation, in order to form great estates; and the peasants, thus got rid of, became a new class of lawless and destitute men. The eviction of peasants was carried out by the corruption of justice, and great landowners not only took the place of peasant proprietors, but did so by means of the grossest abuses of the forms of justice.

Isaiah v. verse 8: 'Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!'

Moreover, the nobility with the growth of wealth developed luxury and immorality, the women as well as the men of the upper classes incurring the severest denunciations of the prophet, which may be found in such a passage as Isaiah iii. verses 16-23, where one may read a good account of the fashions of the time.

The habits of the men are denounced with equal severity in Isaiah ii. verses 12 and 22. And the drunkards of the northern kingdom, among whom are the prophets and priests, are scourged with no less vigour in chapter xxviii. verses 7, 8: 'But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.'

The signs of national decay were to the prophet's eyes foreshadowings and warnings of the coming of a terrible day of divine judgment. But in Jerusalem, as well as in Samaria, the kings and their courts lived in fancied security, trusting in their wealth and

prosperity, and shutting their eyes to the dark storm-cloud of the Assyrian empire gathering in the north-east. Such was the very similar condition both of Judah and Israel at the time when Isaiah came on the scene as a prophet.

Probably the great earthquake, which took place in the reign of King Uzziah, and is referred to in the book of Amos (chapter i. verse 1), impressed Isaiah's mind, and suggested the picture of a great day of the Lord, in chapter ii. verse 20: 'In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.'

When Isaiah appeared on the scene, Amos had already, two years before the earthquake, uttered his terrible denunciation of Israel at the great Temple of Bethel, and, as Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, said to King Jeroboam, 'the land is not yet able to bear all his words' (Amos vii. verse 10).

Hosea had continued the work of Amos in the northern kingdom almost up to the time of Isaiah's appearance in Judah. We can better understand Isaiah's account of the Vision of God at his call, when we remember that the great King Uzziah, who had done so much for Judah in his long and successful reign, was just dead, or at the point of death; and this vision was the vision of the true King of Israel, Jehovah, who remained though the earthly king was gone, and whose spokesman Isaiah was called upon to be.

The call of Isaiah, which is magnificently described in the sixth chapter, was evidently to Isaiah the great event of his life. The vision represented in concrete form a great spiritual experience, and the prophet became conscious of being called by an All-holy, majestic, and terrible God to give all his life to be His messenger to Israel.

The word of Jehovah to Isaiah at his call contained the essentials of the message he had to bear; the prediction of a terrible judgment, always including hopes of restoration for the remnant, the few that still listened to Jehovah.

And the defence that the services of the Temple were carried

out with great lavishness and pomp is indignantly swept away by the prophet (Isaiah i. verses 13-18).

We now come to the beautiful parable of the vineyard, addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah. The prophet tells to his countrymen a simple story of the experiment of a friend of his ('my wellbeloved') with his vineyard, and asks for a verdict. His countrymen assent to their own condemnation before they see that the parable is pointed against themselves. At last the prophet throws off all disguise and explains the true meaning of his parable. It begins, 'Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.'

Now we pass to a celebrated passage which describes the sign given by the Lord through the prophet to King Ahaz, who refused to ask a sign because he had no intention of giving up his plan of throwing himself into the arms of Assyria, which Isaiah was doing his utmost to prevent. On King Ahaz's refusal the prophet said, 'Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings' (Isaiah vii. verses 13-16). This passage naturally brings us to the consideration of the most important part of Isaiah's prophecies, the prophecies concerning the Messiah and the Messiah's kingdom. These Messianic prophecies point to the glorious future when Messiah shall reign—the Golden Age when the highest ideals of humanity shall be realised through a Divine Person, and the kingdom He shall establish in the hearts and lives of men. Of course the later and fuller meaning which the light of the Incarnation has shed upon this passage in Isaiah vii. need not blind us to the original meaning of the sign, the meaning which it would convey to King Ahaz and to Isaiah's other contemporaries, a meaning which may be summarised as a promise of speedy deliverance from the threatened invasion of Judah by the confederate kings, Rezin and Pekah. All the allusions in the passage convey primarily this original meaning.

The first of the Messianic visions we shall take is that found in chapter ix., which comes like sunrise in the darkness and desolation of a foreign invasion. 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this' (Isaiah ix. verses 6, 7).

Next in the order of the Book of Isaiah comes this prophecy of the Advent of the Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom. Isaiah xi. verses 1-9: 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. . . . And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.'

This is the prophecy of the Golden Age brought in by the coming of the Messiah. The remarkable point in this prophecy is that the Golden Age is seen as belonging not only to men, but to animals. It is the first vision of that Universal Kingdom of Love on the earth in which the Messiah Himself when He came declared 'not one sparrow falleth to the ground without my Father.'

We come next to the great prediction of the Righteous Reign of the Messianic King. Chapter xxxii. verses 1-3: 'Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.'

The last chapters of the Book of Isaiah (xl.-lxvi.) now claim our attention. They contain some of the most truly inspired passages in this book. The later authorship is now generally accepted by Biblical scholars. Be that as it may, the writer is one in no degree inferior in spiritual vision and inspiration to the writer of the preceding chapters. We know for certain, that whatever the exact

date of these prophecies (they were apparently written between the advent of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon), they are the work of the highest spiritual inspiration, and quite worthy of their place as the second part of this beautiful book of prophecy. The fine Prologue is a fitting introduction to the wonderful collection of prophecies that follows.

Isaiah xl. verses 1-11: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. . . . He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young' (R.V. give suck).

This picture of the Good Shepherd represents the care with which the homeward journey of the Exiles was to be shepherded by the Lord. This is perhaps the earliest use made in the Bible of this image of the Good Shepherd—an image which is used also by Ezekiel, and in the New Testament is freely and still more beautifully used by the Lord Jesus. The Messianic element in these later chapters of the Book of Isaiah which we are now considering has its distinctive features. The first and chief of these is the picture of the ideal servant of Jehovah, which is repeated with various modifications four times. In some passages Israel is the servant of God, but the meaning is not sufficient in others.

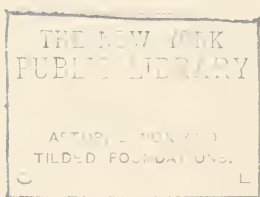
The ideal servant is also spoken of in chapter xlix. verses 1-6. This passage deals with the call and preparation of the servant of Jehovah by his Lord, and the meaning is more clearly satisfied by taking it to be a picture of the ideal Israel than in the case of the former passage. In chapter lii. verse 13, we enter on the last and most wonderful of the pictures of the servant of Jehovah.

In the former passages the Servant has been described as carrying out a mission resolutely and confidently as a prophet of God. In this passage the Servant appears in a new and marvellous aspect,



Fresco

THE GOOD SHEPHERD
THE CATACOMBS OF CÆLESTINE AND PONTINE AT ROME
(1ST AND 2ND CENTURY)



as the Man of Sorrows, the bearer of the sins of the transgressors. The details of the picture are so minutely accurate as to make this the most wonderful prophecy in the Old Testament, a literal prediction of the Passion and Death of the Suffering Messiah.

'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

The great mystery of the efficacy of vicarious suffering is a prominent part of the picture. The special point of this great sacrifice is that it is voluntary. The Servant Himself, innocent of sin, suffers for sinners and does so willingly, in order to deliver them from the power of sin. The fifty-fourth chapter is a continuation of the prophecies of consolation which began in chapter xlix. Its subject is the happiness of Zion in the future, when united to God by an everlasting covenant.

The fifty-fifth chapter is an invitation to individuals to come and take the salvation freely offered. The tenderness of this gracious invitation has been rarely equalled elsewhere even in the Bible. It begins: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. . . . For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

The sixty-first chapter begins with the words on which our Lord preached His first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth. Isaiah

lxi. verses 1, 2 : ' The spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.' Our Lord quoted this passage as a prediction of Himself and His message, and it is noticeable that He stopped in the middle of the sentence, omitting the last eight words of our quotation.

God's tender pity for His rebellious children, declared so movingly by His Prophet Isaiah for His children at Jerusalem, was expressed hundred of years afterwards still more movingly by One far greater than Isaiah. Matthew xxiii. verse 37 : ' O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! '

Can anything in the world be of greater encouragement and comfort than to know from Isaiah, and still more perfectly from our Lord, that God regards even His black sheep as His sheep still ; seeks to bring them back to His flock, keeps a place for them in His fold, and considers no pain and trouble that the Shepherd can bestow too great to employ in rescuing one single lost sheep. The compassionate seeking of the Good Shepherd for the lost sheep, the welcome of the loving Father for the Prodigal, is the strongest means for drawing rebellious souls back to their God, to receive the forgiveness and deliverance from the power of sin which He is longing to bestow.

CHAPTER XIV

JEREMIAH—LAMENTATIONS

THE chief scene of Jeremiah's ministry was at Jerusalem. He first appeared in the fifteenth year of Josiah's reign, 625 B.C., five years before the year in which the Book of the Law was found by Hilkiah in the Temple. This was the great event which influenced all Jeremiah's teaching. The reading of this book made a deep and lasting impression on Jeremiah. His prophecies are full of quotations from it, and the great sin of idolatry which he denounces so powerfully is the object of the severest condemnation in this Book of Deuteronomy.

It will be remembered that Josiah and his people had entered in the most solemn way into a public engagement to keep God's Commandments, and this covenant had been made after Josiah had gone up to the house of the Lord and read in the ears of all the people the words of the book which had been found there. A great reform had followed, in which the king, at any rate, was thoroughly in earnest. It was before this reform, while the land was sunk in the godlessness, idolatry, and wickedness which King Manasseh had fostered, that Jeremiah received his call to be a prophet of the Lord. Hezekiah, it will be remembered, had carried out a great religious reform under the influence of Isaiah; but Manasseh had made the condition of Judah and Jerusalem worse than they had been before. In particular, he had led the nation into the grossest idolatry. He had set up a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house of the Lord. He had made his son pass through the fire to Molech. He had set up altars for all the host of heaven in the courts of the house of the Lord. Josiah, the son of Manasseh's son Amon, carried out, as we have seen, a vigorous reformation, but it is quite evident from the prophecies of Jeremiah that the reformation was chiefly external; successful enough against the

visible symbols of idolatry, it left the people still completely demoralised, to judge from the pictures of their condition which are found in Jeremiah's prophecies. The reformation of life and morals needed to satisfy God's laws, and to rescue the nation from destruction, did not take place. The nation continued on the broad and easy way that leads to national disaster.

From Jeremiah's call, as described by himself in the first chapter, we learn that in his great humility he was, like Moses, very unwilling to accept it. Jeremiah i. verses 6-10: 'Then said I, Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. . . . And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.'

He was told to stand in the Gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim this word: 'Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah' (verse 2), and then follows a long prophecy delivered in the Gate of the Temple. The first object of this address was to awaken the people from their false security. The Holy City, and even the Temple itself, could not save those that forgot the true God and worshipped false gods.

Mingled with the many predictions of woe for Jerusalem were tender lamentations, for Jeremiah's was a deeply emotional nature, and the ruin which he saw coming upon his nation filled him with grief.

We know more from the thirty-sixth chapter concerning the way in which the prophecies of Jeremiah took a written form than we do concerning the book of any other prophet. By the command of God, Jeremiah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, was ordered to write upon a roll of a book the words which God had spoken 'against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations' (verse 2). Jeremiah dictated the prophecies to his attendant, Baruch, who wrote them down from his mouth. He sent Baruch to the House of the Lord upon the fasting day, to read the words that he had written. Baruch read the roll of prophecies 'in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, in the ears of all the people' (Jeremiah xxxvi. 10). This was in the

ninth month, *i.e.*, December, of the next year following the beginning of the writing.

King Jehoiakim, hearing from his princes what Baruch had been doing, ordered the roll to be brought to him. It was read to the king and his princes in the winter-house. After three or four leaves had been read, the king cut the roll with his penknife, and cast it into the charcoal fire in the brazier. After the burning of the roll, Jeremiah was ordered to write another roll. Jeremiah xxxvi. verse 29: 'And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?'

The message of the Lord, that the king of Babylon was to come and destroy the land of Judah, brings us to the chief external fact which influenced the ministry, and cast its shadow across the pages of the prophet. That fact was the growth of Babylon into the great world-power in Western Asia. What Nineveh had been in the days of Isaiah, Babylon was in the days of Jeremiah. Just as Isaiah had had to fight against an Egyptian party at Jerusalem, which sought to enlist the help of Egypt against Assyria, so Jeremiah had to use all his powers to oppose the intrigues of a similar party, who wished for vassalage under the Egyptian king rather than a tributary position under the Chaldæans.

It was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the same year in which Jeremiah dictated the roll to Baruch, that Nebuchadnezzar completely broke the Egyptian power by his victory over Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish. Jeremiah at once perceived the whole significance of the battle, as his ode of rejoicing (forty-sixth chapter) to greet the king of Babylon plainly shows. From this time on Jeremiah began to teach that safety for Jerusalem lay in accepting the overlordship of Babylon. The intrigues first of one king and then of another, to obtain assistance from Egypt against Babylon, led directly to the first captivity in the reign of Jehoiachin.

The last king of Judah, Zedekiah, was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, and took a solemn oath of allegiance to the Babylonian king. In the ninth year of his reign, however, Zedekiah, too weak

to resist the pressure of the Jewish princes who advocated resistance against Babylon, entangled himself in a treasonable alliance with the king of Egypt, and this was followed by the second siege of Jerusalem. During this siege, Jeremiah exerted himself to urge submission to the Chaldæans, and provoked the bitterest persecution at the hands of the princes of Judah, who had brought about the alliance with Egypt. After the capture of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was very well treated by the Chaldæans, and allowed to take his choice of living in Babylon or remaining in Jerusalem. He chose to remain, but was carried away captive into Egypt by a body of Jews, who had revolted against the rule of Babylon.

Of Jeremiah's prophecies it may be said that, though full of the announcement of woes against the wrong-doers, they do not forget Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant. 'Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.'

Nor do these prophecies altogether omit the comforting thought of the coming of the Messiah, of which the following is perhaps the clearest example. Chapter xxiii. 5: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.'

But undoubtedly the highest point in Jeremiah's inspiration is to be found in the prophecy of the New Covenant, which in depth of spiritual intuition surpasses not only his other conceptions, but all those of the other prophets. Chapter xxi. 31-33: 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. . . . After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

The intensely emotional nature of Jeremiah is accountable for his prevailing melancholy, even more than the very trying circumstances in which his lot was cast. He frequently breaks into complaints and lamentations, and although he tries repeatedly to induce

his countrymen to repent of their sins and turn to their God, there is often a note of despair in his prophecies, as of one who is only too certain that his country must soon meet its doom. Jeremiah's other characteristics are spirituality, truthfulness, self-sacrifice, and fearlessness. With unceasing fortitude, he spent his life battling against odds which would have filled another with despair. He fought a losing battle with unshaken resolution, and his character was disciplined by defeat into the likeness of the loftiest humanity.

The secret of Jeremiah's strength was his child-like trust in God. Jeremiah regarded himself as a little child in the hands of God. He had a very humble opinion of himself. He replied to God when he was called to be a prophet, 'Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child.' We have heard much the same words uttered by King Solomon; you may remember them. We see how both these great men did not rely on their own strength, but how both relied on and asked for the help of God, Who can make the weakest strong for good. Pray to be made strong for good.

The Book of Lamentations or Dirges is closely connected with the subject-matter of the Book of Jeremiah, with the sufferings and sorrows that came upon the people of Judah and Jerusalem, in consequence of the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans in 586 B.C. In the Book of Jeremiah we read of the circumstances which led up to the capture, and of the capture itself. In the Book of Lamentations we read of the feelings of those who had seen the capture and the destruction of the city and the Temple, and who sought to find some adequate expression for the catastrophe which oppressed them. The Lamentations are the expression of genuine and heartfelt grief, such grief as a tender-hearted man like Jeremiah could not help feeling for the misfortunes of those whom, in spite of all their sins, he loved as being his countrymen.

The book is obviously in its subject-matter a supplement to the Book of Jeremiah; the differences between these two of style and treatment are accounted for by the differences of subject and purpose. Though constructed with the most careful art, these Dirges breathe the most moving pathos. They deal with a common theme, but each develop a different aspect of it; the first words of each poem indicate this. The desolation of Jerusalem is the subject

of the first words of the first chapter : 'How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people !'

The subject of the second Dirge is God's judgment on His People. 'How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger' The third Dirge deals with the nation's complaint and its consolation : 'I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.' The consolation which the latter part of this Dirge develops is based on the thought of God's compassion, and the gracious purposes of His Visitation. It ends more hopefully, with a confident appeal to God. In the fourth Dirge, the Past and Present of Zion are contrasted. It begins : 'How is the gold become dim ! how is the most fine gold changed !' The contrast between the Past and the Present is dwelt upon touchingly. In vain had the people fixed their hopes on Egypt, or on Zedekiah. The cup of humiliation shall be passed on to Edom : 'The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion' (Lamentations iv. verse 22). The fifth Dirge is an appeal to God's compassion to consider the affliction of His people and help them. The Dirge begins : 'Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us : consider, and behold our reproach.'

In all these five separate poems or dirges the writer speaks in the name of the nation. There are apparent echoes of Ezekiel in the poems, but as Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah, and must have been his fellow-citizen at Jerusalem, before he was carried away captive with Jehoiachin to Babylon, there is nothing astonishing in this. The burden of these exquisite elegies might be expressed in the well-known line of a great English poet, 'But, ah : the heavy change, now thou art gone,' though the object of their lament is, of course, a nation, and not an individual.

It is pathetic and touching that the Jews in Jerusalem at the present day have their Friday afternoon service every week, standing at the foot of the huge wall, which entirely divides and shuts out from their view the site of their temple of old. With book in hand, they recite the Lamentations, and bewail the loss of their privileges ; while they still hope that a better fate may be in store for them sooner or later.

CHAPTER XV

EZEKIEL

THE Book of the Prophet Ezekiel is the work of a contemporary of Jeremiah, by whose writings he was evidently influenced. The early part of his life was passed at Jerusalem, where Jeremiah was then prophesying. Ezekiel was one of the priests of the Temple, and his perfect acquaintance with the ritual, as well as with the architecture of the Temple, shows that he must have carried on the duties of a priest for a considerable time. He was carried away captive to Babylon, with King Jehoiachin and the élite of the nation, in the first captivity, 597 B.C., and was placed with a colony of Jews at Tel Abib, by the river Chebar, probably a tributary of the Euphrates, or possibly one of the canals. The Jewish exiles in Babylonia were not prisoners. They lived their own life as a community, apart from their heathen neighbours, as the Jews of the Mellah, themselves originally exiles from Spain, live in a Moorish town to-day. Ezekiel was married, and lived in his own house, and the elders of the Jewish community used to come and sit with him and listen to his words. He received the call to be a prophet in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, 592 B.C., and his prophetic work lasted at any rate twenty-two years, the last date in the book being 570 B.C. From his home on the Chebar, Ezekiel watched the conduct of the king and people of Jerusalem, gradually drawing down upon themselves the avenging power of Babylon. The interest the exiles felt in Jerusalem and its fortunes was intense. They were evidently in direct communication, and knew all that was going on, and they also knew how the attitude of the king of Judah was regarded in Babylon. From the time of his call up to the Siege of Jerusalem, 587 B.C., Ezekiel prophesied the approaching destruction of the once holy city, a destruction which he ascribed chiefly to its idolatry (*cf.* chapter xvi. verses 20-23).

To return to the Book of Ezekiel. The contents may be divided into three sections, dealing with the following subjects: (1) The impending Fall and destruction of Jerusalem; this includes chapters i.-xxiv. (2) The prophecies of judgment on foreign nations, against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt; this includes chapters xxv.-xxxii. (3) A picture of the future of Israel after its restoration, the Kingdom of God, a new Temple, and a new people, consisting of chapters xxxiii.-xlviii.

The religious teaching of Ezekiel, in spite of his elaboration of imagery or allegory, was eminently sane and practical. The doctrine on which he put special stress was the freedom and responsibility of each separate soul before God, and he showed in the clearest way that neither the burden of sin inherited from a man's parents, nor the sins of a man's own past, can interfere with the action of God's forgiveness and pity towards the penitent sinner.

Perhaps that part of Ezekiel's book which produced the most immediate and definite effect is the great ideal set forth in the vision of chapters xl.-xlviii. This is a picture of the Kingdom of God in its perfect and final state, as Ezekiel was inspired to see it. It is the life of Israel redeemed which he sees in this vision, and it is not intended to tell us how Salvation is to be reached, but it is intended to show us a vision of Salvation already realised, and a people already saved.

There are a number of other visions in Ezekiel, painted with great care, but generally encumbered with detail and over-elaborated as compared with the masterly work of Isaiah. The Book of Ezekiel begins with a vision of Jehovah to the prophet. Ezekiel i. 4 and 26-28: 'And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. . . . And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appear-

ance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.'

We can only conjecture what appearances in the natural world suggested to Ezekiel the intricate details of his elaborate picture. The sight of a thunder-cloud breaking out in a storm of lightning against the glory of a sunset sky, seems best to satisfy the language. The thunder-cloud was regarded as the chariot of Jehovah, as in Psalm xviii. verse 10: 'And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.' And Psalm civ. verses 3, 4: 'Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.'

The details of the vision, the living creatures (*i.e.*, the cherubim), the wheels, the firmament, and the throne, are only symbols to suggest that which the whole vision is intended to convey—a manifestation or coming of God. God comes in His chariot of storm-cloud, and the cherubim are probably personifications of the storm-cloud, as the seraphs are of the lightning, and they are conceived as bearing up the Presence of Jehovah on their wings. See also Isaiah xix. part of verse 1: 'Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud.' Also Psalm xcix. verse 1: 'The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.' Psalm lxxx. part of verse 1: 'Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.' The cherubims are thus regarded as symbols of Jehovah's presence, and for this reason Solomon set two great cherubims within the inner house (*i.e.*, the innermost sanctuary of the Temple). 1 Kings vi. verses 23-28.

The firmament above the cherubims, and the throne above the firmament, represent the absolute supremacy of God over heaven and over all things. The wheels may possibly have been suggested as representing by their whirling the movement of the whirlwind and tempest in which God comes. The eyes of which the living creatures are full represent life and power. We shall be helped to realise the glory of the vision Ezekiel saw, if we have observed the

beauty and majesty of God's sunsets, and are able to recall our impressions while we read Ezekiel's words.

The vision of the valley of dry bones is very fine in conception, and well worked out. The symbolism of this vision teaches the great truth that God can put fresh life into the dry bones of any nation—as, for example, of the dead nation of Israel—and bring the living nation again to their own land. Ezekiel xxxvii. verses 1-14: 'The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then he said unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you

in your own land : then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.'

The ideas of the Old Testament have had their influence on the New. This is especially the case with Ezekiel, and is nowhere more apparent than in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, and Ezekiel's influence is also noticeable in our Lord's parable of the Lost Sheep and in the allegory of the Good Shepherd.

CHAPTER XVI

DANIEL

THE Book of Daniel is divided into two distinct parts. The first six chapters, written in the third person, tell the story of Daniel. The last six chapters give an account written by himself of his visions, and are written in the first person. Daniel, with his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—better known to us by their Chaldæan names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—were taken away from Jerusalem to be trained, at the king's court in Babylon, in the learning of the Chaldæans, in order that they might be capable servants of the king when they were grown up.

The Prince of the Eunuchs was kindly disposed towards Daniel, who resolved that he would not defile himself by eating the strange king's meat and by drinking his wine. By his exemplary conduct he had won the affection and esteem of the Prince of the Eunuchs, and Daniel and his companions obtained consent from the steward (Melzar, A.V.), whom the Prince of the Eunuchs had set over them, to try a ten days' experiment of a diet of pulse and water. The experiment was a complete success. The four Jews obtained leave for the future to eat pulse or herbs and drink water. The effect of being teetotalers and vegetarians for God was that these boys grew up with good looks, strong bodies, and clear and fine minds—an example to the children of our day, who can make the same choice with the same results. These exiles attained much learning and much wisdom, and Daniel had rare understanding in interpreting all visions and dreams. The king, Nebuchadnezzar, had them all four brought into his presence, and he communed with them, and there was none found like unto them. The king had them examined, and in all learning the king found them ten times better than any of his own magicians and astrologers.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which troubled him. To find

again a fugitive dream for the man who had dreamed it and forgotten it was a desperate quest. The king's wise men were set the impossible task of telling him what the dream was that he had forgotten. They asked the king to tell them the dream and they would give the interpretation. The king said he had forgotten the dream: 'The thing is gone from me;' but he required nevertheless, that they should find the dream and show it him, on pain, if they failed to do so, of immediate death. They told him that what he asked was beyond the power of man. No magician or astrologer could do this; no one could do it 'except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.' The king waxed wroth. A decree went forth that all the wise men of Babylon were to be slain. Daniel, with his three friends, was included amongst the number. 'And they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.' They met together, and Daniel desired of the king that he would give him time, and he would show the king the meaning and the interpretation. The Lord granted the prayer of Daniel and his three companions. The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision, and Daniel blessed and thanked and praised God. Strengthened by prayer, he went to the king. Daniel explained that he took no credit to himself for knowing more than the other wise men of Babylon. He pointed out that he was but an instrument of God, chosen to work for Him; that the Lord had merely made him His mouthpiece. Daniel then went on to discover the lost dream, which was the difficult thing: to interpret it when discovered being comparatively easy. By this wonderful revealing of that secret thing, the lost dream, the heathen king was obliged to acknowledge that the God of Daniel was indeed the One and Only Real God; a God of gods, and a Lord of kings. Daniel was richly rewarded by the king. He became ruler of all the wise men in Babylon, and the chief of the eunuchs of the whole province of Babylon. History repeats itself. Joseph in Egypt had had similar distinction bestowed upon him. At Daniel's request, his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, were set by the king over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

Now, in spite of Nebuchadnezzar having acknowledged the Lord of Daniel as supreme, he had not the singleness of heart to walk in the Lord's ways. He sinned very grievously. He ordered a

golden image to be made. This he ordered to be set up where the mounds of Dura are seen to-day. A herald announced the king's decision. Daniel iii. verses 4-6: ' To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.'

Everyone obeyed except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the three companions of Daniel, who was himself apparently absent at this time. This failure of theirs to obey his order was reported by certain Chaldæans to the ears of the king. He had the three Jews brought before him, and asked them if they did really refuse to worship the golden image which he had set up. He offered them a last chance, that if, when the signal was given by the music, they fell down and worshipped the image which he had made, all would be well; whereas, if they refused, they would be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. They refused, and Nebuchadnezzar 'commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.'

This was done, and the heat of the furnace was so great that it slew the mighty men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego into the midst of the flames. Then Nebuchadnezzar saw a sight which astonished him. Chapter iii. verses 24, 25: 'Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O King. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God' (a son of the gods.—R.V.)

Then the king spoke to the three men whom he had cast into the fire, and called them to come forth from the furnace, and they came forth, and all who were there saw that the fire had no power on them; not a hair of their heads was singed, nor was there the

smell of fire upon them. Nebuchadnezzar was completely convinced by this miraculous deliverance. He blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, whose grand fidelity had been thus rewarded, and he made a decree, sentencing to death anyone who blasphemed against the God of these three devoted Jews, whom he promoted to a high place in the province of Babylon.

In chapter iv. you will read how the king dreamed of a great tree that would be cut down in all its glory; and Daniel prophesied from it that the king himself would lose his kingdom for a while and would be driven into the fields to eat grass like a madman, but that he would soon recover.

And this came true, after which the king praised the Lord for his recovery: 'Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.' At the end of the time predicted, his understanding returned to the king, and he praised and blessed God for His mercies, and he was established in his kingdom, and 'excellent majesty was added' to him.

In the fifth chapter we have the story of Belshazzar's feast. Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, made a great feast in the palace, to a thousand of his lords, and when he had drunk wine he ordered them to bring the vessels which had been taken away from the Temple at Jerusalem, and they drank from the sacred vessels; the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them. While they were impiously drinking wine from these golden cups, these heavy drinkers were suddenly appalled by a sight which met their eyes. 'Fingers of a man's hand came forth, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace' (chapter v. verse 5). Then the king was filled with terror, and his knees smote one against another. He sent for the wise men of Babylon, and offered the reward of a robe of scarlet, and a chain of gold, and the third place as ruler in the kingdom, to the man who would read the writing and interpret it. All the king's wise men came, and none could read the writing. At last the queen proposed to the king to send for Daniel, who, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, had been master of the wise men. Daniel was brought to the king. The king repeated his offer to Daniel,

whom, it is evident, he had never met before, from his opening words, verse 13 : ' Art thou that Daniel . . . whom the king my father brought out of Jewry ? ' Daniel somewhat sternly rebuked Belshazzar for lifting himself up against the Lord of heaven, drinking from the vessels of His house, and praising his idol gods, and he finished his rebuke by giving the interpretation of the mysterious writing. Chapter v. verses 25-28 : ' And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing : MENE ; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL ; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES ; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.' Verses 30, 31 relate the execution of the sentence : ' In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldæans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.'

With the sixth chapter we come to the last of the stories which make up the narrative portion of the Book of Daniel. King Darius promoted Daniel to be one of the three presidents appointed to be over the one hundred and ten satraps, to whom he confided the government of the kingdom. This naturally produced the intensest jealousy of Daniel in the other presidents and satraps, who were Persians or Medes. They sought an opportunity to lay an accusation against Daniel, but found none. They then laid a plot, and persuaded the king to make a decree that forbad, on pain of death, anyone to ask any petition of God or man for thirty days, except of the king. The king, having signed the writing, it was impossible to revoke it, ' according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not ' (verse 8).

Chapter vi. 10, 11 : ' Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house ; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.' The conspirators then went to the king, and asked him whether he had signed this decree. He said that he had, and they then accused Daniel of disregarding the decree.

Verse 14: 'Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.' But Daniel's enemies came to the king again, and pressed him to carry out the decree. The decree provided that he who disregarded it should be cast into the den of lions. The king at last yielded reluctantly to the inexorable law, and Daniel was cast into the den. The king called after him with a last faint hope that his God would deliver him. Then the stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and the signet of his lords. The king passed the night in his palace fasting and sleepless, grieving for Daniel.

Then the king arose very early in the morning, and was exceeding glad to find that he was unhurt.

The king then punished Daniel's accusers by doing to them what they had forced him to do to Daniel. They were thrown into the lion's den, with their children and families, for in the East at that time, if the family of a criminal had been spared, the criminal would not have been considered to have been fully punished, his family being regarded as part of a man.

We now enter on the second part of the Book, consisting of the series of visions seen by Daniel. These visions are largely occupied with great political changes in the world—the rise and fall of kingdoms, and a sequence of events in history which need not detain us long. An important vision is one that tells of the advent of the Messianic kingdom. Chapter vii. 13, 14: 'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

Of these words, the 'Ancient of days' clearly represents God the Father. 'One like the Son of man,' who comes with the clouds of heaven, has been always held to be the Messiah. This is firstly the Jewish, and secondly the Christian, interpretation. And this

view is for Christians made decisive by the application of those words by our Lord to Himself.

Matthew xxvi. 64: 'Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'

There are many more passages to the same effect, and Christ called Himself, and is repeatedly called in the New Testament, 'the Son of man.' This passage, be it remembered, was the very centre of the Jewish Messianic Hope, long before the birth of Christ and long before the time of His Ministry, and it was unmistakably taken by our Lord as spoken of Himself. On no other explanation than the Christian explanation can any adequate meaning or adequate fulfilment of this prophecy be pointed out.

The Book of Daniel, with its predictions of the Messiah and the Messianic age, with its warmth of religious feeling and its unfaltering fidelity to God, did much to prepare the minds of pious Jews for the coming of the true Messiah. The spirit of the Book of Daniel resembles closely that of the writings of the older prophets. Its inspiration is essentially one with theirs. Its vision of the Messianic future is not less clear, though the details of the picture it represents are different. As a prophet, Daniel not merely foretells history but interprets it. The book deals with the empires of the world on a large scale, and shows that the course of the empires of the world is ordained by God, and that the history of the world is gradually carrying out the Divine purpose. Finally, the Book of Daniel stands as an inspiring force behind the last book of the Bible, the Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine.

CHAPTER XVII

HOSEA—JOEL—AMOS—OBADIAH—JONAH—MICAH—NAHUM—
HABAKKUK—ZEPHANIAH—HAGGAI—ZECHARIAH—MALACHI

WE have considered the Greater Prophets. We now turn to the Lesser Prophets. They are twelve in number, and though they are commonly called the Minor Prophets, their prophecies are many of them distinguished by deep spirituality and intense devotion to the moral law, and are often remarkably suited to the circumstances of our own time. They contain, moreover, passages of noble poetry, such as the great third chapter of the Prophet Habakkuk, which is one of the finest lyrical odes in Hebrew literature.

We shall take these prophets in their order in our English Bible, which is not always the order in which they lived. We begin then with Hosea.

Hosea prophesied during the latter part of the reign of King Jeroboam the Second of Israel, and in the reigns of his successors. Remarkably high and pure was Hosea's conception of the tender and forgiving love of Jehovah for Israel, learned, no doubt, from his own experience. When he called upon Israel to repent, he made his appeal on the ground of the proofs of Jehovah's love, to which Israel's history bore witness.

Hosea was directed to marry a bad woman named Gomer, probably for more than one purpose. He had to seek to reform her by kindness and forgiveness, and in so doing his own character was to receive a necessary discipline for his high office of prophet, or speaker for God. He was intended to learn by practical experience the natural love of Jehovah towards unfaithful and erring Israel.

This stress laid upon the forgiving love of Jehovah to Israel is Hosea's special distinction, and he turns to it again and again, even from his severest denunciations. Hosea is the prophet of the

Decline and Fall of Israel. What his elder contemporary, Amos, saw from afar, Hosea saw close at hand : the destruction that was hastening upon the demoralised kingdom—demoralised not only by direct idolatry, but also by the calf or bull worship of Jehovah at Bethel. Hosea's prophecies have a tenderness of deep emotion which is peculiarly his own.

For instance, chapter xiv. : ' O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord : say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously : so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us ; we will not ride upon horses : neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods : for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely : for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel : he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return ; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine : the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.'

Joel, who lived and prophesied at Jerusalem, follows Hosea in the order of the arrangement of our Old Testament. His theme is God's judgment, and may be expressed in the words of Abraham, pleading for mercy before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, ' Shall not the judge of all the earth do right ? '

Of Joel we know nothing, except that his father's name was Pethuel. The occasion of the prophecy was a plague of locusts, and a drought, which caused great famine and distress (this visitation is very vividly described), and it symbolised to the prophet the day of Jehovah ; a visitation in judgment, which possibly a full repentance might avert. Repentance seems to have taken place, for from the second chapter we have a full description of God's gracious change of treatment which that repentance had made possible.

The name of Jehoshaphat has a meaning, namely, Jehovah hath judged or judges. The valley of decision means the valley of judgment. Joel realises at an earlier date than the author of Jonah that

the Creator cares for His creatures, and that humanity ought to follow His example. This is the meaning of Joel i. verse 20: 'The beasts of the field cry also unto thee.' As a specimen of his prophecy we may take chapter ii. verses 28-32: 'And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.'

A portion of this passage was quoted by St. Peter, in his sermon recorded in Acts ii. verses 16-21, and a comparison of the original passage, with St. Peter's use of it, will give us an example of the fact that the same spirit moves through both Testaments, and inspired the old Jewish Prophet as well as the Apostle of Christ.

The next prophet to claim our attention is Amos. He is the earliest of those prophets whose writings we possess, and whose date we know. He prophesied in the eighth century before the Birth of Christ. Uzziah was king in Judah, Jeroboam the Second was king in Israel, and it was a period of great peace and prosperity in both kingdoms, especially in Israel. Jeroboam the Second had carried on the expansion of his territory till it almost equalled the extent of David's kingdom at its largest. It was a time of great wealth and luxury and of general self-satisfaction in both kingdoms, and, as usual, when there is extreme luxury in the upper classes there was extreme poverty in the lower, and in spite of regular services and magnificent ceremonial there was a widespread reign of godlessness, showing itself especially in a growing contempt of the moral law. It was at this time that Amos appeared at Bethel, the chief sanctuary of the popular worship of Jehovah under the form of a bull, and announced the judgment that was rapidly approaching (Amos ii. verses 10-16).

Amos belonged to Tekoa, where he was a shepherd, and had received the call of the Lord to go and prophesy at the king's chapel at Bethel, which was to Israel the religious centre that the Temple at Jerusalem was to Judah. Amos continued his ministry in the northern kingdom in spite of the opposition of the priests and rulers. He declared fearlessly that all the wealth of Israel and all the conquests of King Jeroboam would not save them from the coming judgment, nor would all their burnt-offerings win them acceptance with God; but for their evil doings they would be carried into captivity beyond Damascus. A clear and striking prophecy, many years before Assyria came on the scene, of the invasion by Shalmaneser, and the carrying into captivity by Sargon, which finally extinguished the northern kingdom and the ten tribes.

There is a considerable resemblance between the time of Amos and our own time. In England, as in Israel, prosperity is unexampled, and national wealth advances by leaps and bounds. Our territory, like theirs, was never greater. The services of religion are as well maintained in England as they were in Israel, but the religious census reveals in us something of the godlessness from which Israel suffered. The growth of vast fortunes in the hands of the few, and the public opinion which tends more and more to regard the possession of money as the supreme object and the chief distinction and chief aim in life, together with the growth of extreme poverty in the many, as an accompaniment or result of the growth of extreme wealth in the few, are signs that may be interpreted to mean that we need the voice of an Amos to awaken the nation from its slumber of self-complacency. God's unchanging laws are the same now as when Amos delivered his message, and the disregard of those laws will produce the same national results now as then.

In his prophecies Amos has left us many examples of the dignity and strength of a great simplicity, illuminated with a great self-forgetful purpose. This is a fine climax, which shows his easy power of expression (chapter iii. 3-8): 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and

have taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?' Two other good passages in Amos are chapter v. 7-12, and chapter ix. 1-6.

The subject of the prophecy of Obadiah is the impending ruin of Edom. It is the shortest book of the prophets, consisting of only twenty-one verses. The cause of Obadiah's declaration of God's wrath against Edom is the wrong that Edom had done to Jerusalem in the day of its calamity.

The date of Obadiah can only be conjectured from internal evidence, as nothing is known of the prophet himself. The verses point quite naturally to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans in 586 B.C., and to the way the Edomites rejoiced at the defeat of the Jews, and helped the Chaldæans to cut off the flyers. A comparison of Jeremiah (chapter xlix. verses 7-22) with Obadiah reveals the fact that one must have borrowed from the other, or both have borrowed from a prophecy older than either. The latter is probably the explanation.

The name of the Prophet Jonah is a much more familiar one than any of the four prophets we have been considering, for we have all of us heard of Jonah and the 'great fish.' He is mentioned in the Book of Kings. 2 Kings xiv. verse 25: 'He (Jeroboam II.) restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.' Gath-hepher was in Zebulun, and a popular tradition still locates his grave near Nazareth. He foretold, as we have seen, to Jeroboam II. his success in the struggle with Syria. These prophecies are not preserved.

The Book of Jonah differs greatly from the books of any of the other prophets. It is not a collection of prophecies, but a narrative, or succession of scenes in the prophet's life. The story cannot be better told than in the actual words of the Bible in the first

chapter of Jonah, where you will read of the adventures of Jonah, who was unwilling to go to preach in Nineveh.

Why was Jonah unwilling to preach repentance and the coming judgment of God to Nineveh? He was loath to do so because he was a Jew, and in his Jewish exclusiveness dreaded that God (see chapter iv. verse 2) might pity Nineveh, and have mercy upon it, and thus Jonah's prophecies of God's judgment would not be carried out. The story tells us he shipped at Joppa for Tarshish in Spain. A great storm arose. The sea became calm after Jonah was thrown overboard by the sailors. The story goes on that the prophet was swallowed by a great fish, and, in response to his prayer to God, was cast up by the fish, after three days, upon the dry land. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, with the same command. This time Jonah went to Nineveh, and at his preaching, the burden of which was 'Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown' (chapter iii. verse 4), the people of Nineveh repented, believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth.

Thus Jonah's mission came to an end. His prophecy that in forty days Nineveh would be overthrown did not end as he expected, and Jonah was bitterly disappointed. Chapter iv. verses 1, 2: 'But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.'

But, happily for Jonah, his conscience responded to the voice of God. It spoke to him and said, 'Doest thou well to be angry?' (chapter iv. verse 4). Jonah felt that his anger was not pleasing to God, and he began to realise that it was as unreasonable as it was wrong. It had all the time been the Lord's wish, and His wise purpose, that Jonah's preaching to the people of Nineveh should have the desired effect upon them, namely, that of causing them to repent of their wickedness and so receive forgiveness, before it was too late. We see, therefore, how Jonah had, against his will, been made to do the very thing the Lord had willed from the first. Surely it was best for Nineveh to repent and be saved, instead of being overthrown, and hundreds of thousands destroyed, and much cattle.

The tender consideration for animals in the last words of this passage, 'and much cattle,' ought to be noticed. There is a gradually growing revelation throughout the Old Testament of the ex-

istence of a duty of man towards God, as regards his treatment of the animals which God has placed in his care and keeping. God has given man dominion over the animals, to be used in conscious imitation of God's merciful dominion over man.

Having brought to an end the narrative of Jonah, we may now give a little time to the interpretation of this story. The incident of the 'great fish' is what catches most people's attention, though it is the least important part of the book. First of all let us point to the obvious and almost universal inaccuracy by which this book is supposed to say *whale*, when what it really says is 'great fish.' The story of the swallowing of Jonah by the fish is taken by some as a literal history, by others as an inspired parable. In support of the latter interpretation, by which Jonah represents the Jewish nation swallowed up by Babylon and afterwards delivered, such a passage as Jeremiah li. 44 may be quoted, where God says: 'And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up.' But, as a matter of fact, the incident of the 'great fish' is not essential to the religious and moral teaching of the Book of Jonah. This will be seen if a deliverance from drowning by an unexpected ship were substituted for the incident of the fish: God's lessons would still remain the same. And what are these lessons? They are manifold. There are the lesser lessons as well as the ones of greater importance. For example, that true repentance and true fear of God bring salvation from God. This is shown in the case of the sailors; again in the case of Jonah himself, and again in the case of Nineveh. Another lesson is the teaching that a prophecy is conditioned as to its fulfilment, depends on conditions, and is not absolute, so that an inspired prophecy of judgment, which would be carried out if there were no repentance, may be stopped by repentance.

But by far the most important lesson conveyed in the Book of Jonah was that God's gracious purposes were not confined to the Jews alone, as they were then too commonly supposed to be, but belonged to the heathen also, if they would turn away from their sins and turn to God with a true repentance. Jonah himself represented the popular, but false, doctrine that the Gentiles were outside the pale. He tried not to preach to Nineveh at all, and when his

preaching moved them to repentance, and they were forgiven, he was deeply angered, because the doom of destruction he had declared was not carried out. The closing words of the book pronounce the final condemnation upon this narrow Jewish belief, and in the brief reference to the sparing of the animals disclose a marvellous vision of God's all-embracing fatherly love, one of the most remarkable anticipations in the Old Testament of the revelation of God in Christ.

The next prophet, Micah, was younger than Isaiah, but a contemporary. Unlike Isaiah, who was a power at court, Micah lived among the poorer classes, and knew from experience their wrongs and their needs. He was a native of Moresheth, a small town of the maritime plain near Gath. A man of the people, he sympathised with all the troubles of the people, and this sympathy is his distinguishing characteristic.

The teaching of Micah is purely religious and moral. He did not aim at influencing the policy of the nation, as Isaiah did. He saw idolatry and godlessness among the princes and the people of Judah. And he saw no less the injustice to and oppression of the poor growing among the upper classes ; and he saw with clearness the judgment coming on the nation for the wrongs of the poor. When he mentions Babylon, it is only as one of the chief cities of the Assyrian Empire. He declares in the plainest way the punishment which must follow all the evils which deface Judah and Jerusalem. 'Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.'

But together with his vision of a coming judgment, he has a clear vision of the nation's restoration. Zion is to be clothed with even greater beauty than before. It is to become a spiritual centre for the whole earth. The fulfilment in Christ of such a passage as the following is perfectly plain to us, who see the actual establishment of Christ's kingdom on the earth. Chapter iv. verses 1-4 : 'But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills ; and people shall flow unto it. . . . And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations

afar off ; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'

We cannot leave Micah without giving one of his best passages, one of the most beautiful and spiritual of the definitions of religion in the prophets. Chapter vi. verse 8 : ' He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? '

Nahum was an Elkoshite, a native of a village which has never been clearly located. The prophecy of Nahum is directed entirely against Nineveh. As regards the date of Nahum's prophecy, we have our sole but sufficient guidance in the work itself. The capture of Thebes in Egypt by the Assyrians under Assurbanipal shortly after 664 B.C. is alluded to as just having occurred. The destruction of Nineveh by the hordes of the north and the Babylonians had not yet taken place. That fixes Nahum's date as after 664 B.C. and before 606 B.C. The dignity and force of Nahum's poetry approaches often very nearly to that of Isaiah, *e.g.*, he says (chapter i. verse 3) : ' The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked : the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.'

Habakkuk was a prophet of whom we know nothing save the contents of his great work, the great vision which he saw from the watch-tower of faith. He prophesied probably at the beginning of the Chaldæan supremacy, during the reign of Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, or his successor Jehoiakim, perhaps about 600 B.C. In 604 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish, and Jeremiah had at once seen that Western Asia must fall into the hands of the Chaldæans, who had three years before destroyed Nineveh. Habakkuk throws his prophecy into a dramatic form—a dialogue between God and himself. He begins by pleading with God on account of the wickedness and lawlessness of the land. Jehovah replies that His judgment on Israel is at hand (chapter i. verses 5-8) : ' Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously : for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldæans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march

through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves.'

Habakkuk, like Jeremiah, sees that Chaldæa is the instrument of God; but he also sees that the idolatry, ambition, and violence of Chaldæa will be chastised in due time. Habakkuk was one of the greatest among the Minor Prophets for power of imagination and splendour of language, and has left some notable sayings, such as, 'The just shall live by his faith.' It is difficult to surpass the magnificent manifestation of God described in the third chapter, verses 3-15, which is a lyric ode intended to be sung to music. Selah, meaning 'strike up,' indicates this as it does so frequently in the Psalms. Note the first words of verse 11: 'The sun and moon stood still,' there we have exactly the statement of what occurred at the Valley of Beth-Horon at the word of Joshua. Few would be so foolish as to take noble poetry like this literally; there is a truth of poetry as well as a literal truth, and to take a truth of poetry literally is to falsify it.

Zephaniah's prophecies have for their date the reign of King Josiah, clearly before the great reformation in his eighteenth year, when he put down—probably under Zephaniah's influence—the idolatry attacked and exposed by Zephaniah. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah, and apparently his was the first prophecy after the pause of fifty years which succeeded the death of Isaiah. All we know of this prophet is contained in the opening of his Book, and we may refer to the first sixteen verses as a representative portion of his prophecy (Zephaniah i. verses 7-16): 'Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-

gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. . . . The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord : the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.'

We pass on to Haggai. We read about him in Ezra, and about his work. He was a contemporary and fellow-worker with Zechariah. His prophecy is dated the second year of Darius Hystaspes, 520 B.C. The main object was to stir up the returned Exiles to rebuild the Temple. The Temple was still unbuilt, it may be remembered, sixteen years after the Return. God's displeasure at this neglect had been, Haggai points out, shown in a great drought and a consequent great failure of crops. The definite result of Haggai's activity was the carrying out of that rebuilding.

See chapter ii. verses 1-9, which are a fair specimen of his writing, and contain a vigorous appeal to perform a definite and urgent duty.

Zechariah was, as we have seen, the contemporary and colleague of Haggai, and his prophecies were delivered at the same time and for the same purpose. The joint efforts of Zechariah and Haggai were marked by immediate results, for a month after their prophecies, which were simultaneous, followed the laying of the foundation of the temple. The first eight chapters give eight visions of the night granted to this prophet, and intended to encourage the Jews, and especially Zerubbabel, the leader of the people, and Joshua, the head of the priests, to go on with the building of the Temple. The chief points in each vision are shown to the prophet by an angel.

The first of these visions is given in the first chapter, verses 8-18. It tells of a man riding upon a red horse among the myrtle trees. It has a hopeful prophecy : ' Therefore thus saith the Lord ; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies : my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.'

The fourth chapter contains the vision of the golden candlestick (or lampstand), representing the restored community.

Chapter vi. begins with a vision of the four chariots of God, sent forth to execute God's judgments in the earth. One chariot has red horses, the second black, the third white, and the fourth grised (*i.e.*, grey) and bay horses. These chariots, the angel explained, are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. The one which goes northwards is to satisfy its wrath on Babylon. In this chapter the prophet prophesies of the Branch, saying, 'Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord' (verse 12).

The immediate meaning of this is commonly referred to Zerubabel, but the ultimate meaning has been seen to refer to the Messiah, who is also referred to in chapter iii. verse 8: 'for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.'

The eighth chapter is a picture of the Messianic Kingdom, the spiritual nature of which the following passage clearly indicates (viii. verses 16, 17): 'These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.'

In the ninth chapter we have a celebrated passage predicting the Advent of the Messiah as the Prince of Peace (verses 9, 10): 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.' Part of this prophecy is used by St. Matthew in describing our Lord's entry into Jerusalem riding on an ass's colt, to show that that entry was that of the Messiah, predicted by Zechariah centuries before in the passage we have just given. St. Matthew xxi. verses 4, 5: 'All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken

by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

The distinguishing characteristic of Zechariah (though chapters ix. to xiv. are very commonly taken to be by another author than Zechariah, and certainly are very unlike the other chapters in their Messianic subject-matter and point of view) is the clearness of his predictions in his later chapters of the coming of the Messianic Age, ushered in by the coming of the Messiah Himself. The prophet uses the great Messianic Hope as a motive to urge on the rebuilding of the Temple, and then God would take up His abode in His Temple. He seems to make the arrival of the Messianic Age and the Messiah dependent on the rebuilding of the Temple. With God in His Temple, the Messiah might be expected soon. The key to the whole Book viewed as a unity is the Messianic Hope, and the Central Figure is the Messianic King. The last two verses of chapter xiv. express very beautifully the prophet's ideal of holiness, which is to come, in every part of common life: 'In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.'

The last writer in point of time, as well as of place, in the Old Testament is the Prophet Malachi, which is perhaps not a proper name, but a word signifying 'My Messenger.' When Malachi wrote, the Temple had already been rebuilt, and public worship was regularly carried on in it. The love of idols was gone, and the evils which he assails were not the old evils of idolatry, oppression of the poor, or gross immorality, but rather such errors as delays and neglect of the people in paying the sacred dues; intermarriage with foreign women; degeneracy in the priests. These are just the evils we have seen mentioned in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and they point to the same date as that of those two reformers. In the eighth verse of the first chapter we read that a Persian governor was ruling over Judah, which was now a Persian Province, and this evidence, too, is in favour of a date not long before the second arrival of Nehemiah, 433 B.C. It is evident from the contents in the second and third chapters that there was a good deal of questioning of the Divine Government of the world. People complained

that righteousness seemed to find no greater favour with God than unrighteousness, and accordingly they neglected to pay tithes, and make their offerings. The priests, too, dared in their neglectfulness to present inferior and unclean offerings to God, which they would not have dared to offer to the Persian governor. To the complaints of the people Malachi replies that the day is coming when God will own those which belong to Him and punish the wicked.

Chapter iii. : ' Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me : and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in : behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.'

Thus we have come to the end at once of the prophets and of the Old Testament. The books of the prophets are full of beautiful thoughts and wise teaching. It is wonderful to think how God inspired this unique succession of men, many of them of humble origin, to carry His message, not only to their own times, but to the far-off after ages ; not only to the Jews, but to the foremost nations of the modern world. The writings of the prophets stand out brightly against the gloomy background of the past, and still retain the power of illuminating men's lives in the present. The influence of their teaching possesses its pristine educating power. The reading of their works is able still to focus our spiritual eye on the Divine Being, the Master-mind of which the whole visible universe is the expression, whose mercy and love, even to the rebellious, foreshadowed and pointed to the coming of the Great Deliverer, who was to accomplish the Purpose of the Eternal, and establish the Kingdom of God on the earth.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE ORIGIN AND CANON OF THE SCRIPTURES—THE MANUSCRIPTS—
THE VERSIONS—OUR ENGLISH BIBLE—INTERVAL BETWEEN
THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW—THE PREPARATION FOR
CHRIST'S COMING—THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE—THE
SYNOPTICS—THE FOURTH GOSPEL

WE have given some account of the thirty-nine Books of the Old Testament, written mostly in Hebrew, a few passages only in Aramaic. The second part of the Bible we are about to enter on is the collection of writings known as the New Testament, which are all in Greek except some few words of Aramaic. It seems a fitting place here to explain the familiar word 'Testament,' which, like many familiar terms accepted without being inquired into, is very commonly not rightly understood. The word 'Testament' (a disposition of property by will) was chosen to represent a word in the original Hebrew 'Berith,' in the Greek 'Diathekè' (more accurately translated by the word 'Covenant'), in order to represent the absolute authority of God in His Covenant with man. And so 'Testament' became the title of the books containing God's Covenant or promises of blessings, which became man's inheritance in the death of Christ. The Old and New Testament should be understood in the sense of the Old and New Covenant, that is, the agreements made between God and His people under the Jewish and under the Christian dispensation.

The question occurs to us, How did the Old Testament come into existence? At first no doubt the earliest religious experience was handed down by word of mouth. It is not very probable, though quite possible, that the Patriarchs used the Babylonian

method of records—clay tablets, on which, while the clay was soft, the cuneiform writing was impressed. In process of time various collections of the traditions and the religious songs—at first perhaps oral, then written—began to be made. There are many references to other books in the Old Testament, such as the Book of Jasher, quoted in Joshua, and ‘the book of the wars of the Lord,’ quoted in Numbers, which point to the fact that the Old Testament, in its present form, is composed of materials drawn from earlier collections. This brings before us the fact that there were other writings of the Jew besides the Old Testament. There were in fact a great many, and the latest of these writings, not contained in the Old Testament, have come down to us and are known as the Apocrypha. Why is this distinction made? The simplest answer is that the general consent of the Jewish Church gradually decided to make this separation.

Now as to the New Testament. It is a collection of twenty-seven books. The Jewish Bible, the Bible used by our Lord and His disciples, the books of our Old Testament, became quite naturally the Bible of the early Christian Church. Round the Jewish Scriptures gradually accumulated a large number of Christian writings. Those which stood the test of the experience of the Christian Church, which was guided as our Lord had promised by the Holy Spirit, were gradually accepted as canonical. The reverence for the Jewish Scriptures felt by the early Christians was far too deep for any one of them to write a line with the deliberate intention of adding to them. It was the immediate necessities of the Church which called the writings of the New Testament into existence. In the case of the New Testament, as we have seen in the case of the Old, a large quantity of apocryphal writings, such as the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas, had to be rejected as inferior. The rejection of the one body of writings as apocryphal and the acceptance of the other as canonical, was made by the general consent of the Christian Church. The selection of the books finally included in the New Testament was very gradual. The position of some of the books of our New Testament was long a subject of doubt. As late as A.D. 325 Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, divided the books into three sections: books uni-

versally acknowledged; books disputed; books spurious. The section of the disputed books includes those known by the names of James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Hebrews, Revelation.

Clearly we owe the Old Testament to the Jewish Church. Members of that Church first wrote the books by the inspiration of God. The Church itself afterwards selected the books by the same inspiration, and the same process in the Christian Church gave us our New Testament. Whereas the Old Testament spreads over many centuries, and represents the collected religious experience of inspired men during many years, Abraham's date being probably about 2250 B.C., the New Testament was all written in the course of less than a century.

In the New Testament the Gospels come first, because they are by far the most important books of the collection. But the Epistles of St. Paul were the first to be written. The first of these was the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, generally dated between A.D. 49 and 53. At first all teaching in the Christian Church was by word of mouth. This oral teaching by the mouths of the Apostles was for some time felt to be amply sufficient, even in the case of instruction as to the foundation facts of the Christian religion, instruction as to the Life, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord. This dependence on memory was also the rule at that time among Jewish teachers, and it will be remembered that our Lord Himself wrote nothing, nothing at least that has come down to us. He trusted to the memory of His disciples to preserve His teaching, and it is thanks to them that we can still read our Lord's own words. As the Church increased in numbers, and the labours of St. Paul and later missionaries carried the Gospel to distant lands, and especially as heresies began to appear, the need of a written form of the Apostolic tradition began to be felt, notes of the Apostles' teaching began to be made, and narratives based on these memories of the Gospel History began to be circulated. This we know from the classical preface of St. Luke, i. 1-4: 'Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding

of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed' (*i.e.*, catechised).

We have no copies of the New Testament older than the fourth century. The cause of this absence of early copies is partly, perhaps, because they were written on perishable materials, but it is due chiefly to the deliberate destruction of the Scriptures in the persecution of Diocletian, A.D. 302.

This brings us to ask the question on what these first copies of the Scriptures were written. Apparently on the material referred to by St. John in the twelfth verse of his second epistle: 'Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come to you, and speak face to face. . . .' The paper referred to here consisted of the separated layers of the papyrus reed, which grows freely in the Nile, and is the 'bulrush' used to make the ark in which Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter. It is interesting to note that the Bible ultimately derives its name from this reed. *Biblos* is the Greek name of the inner layer of the papyrus, and was afterwards applied to the paper made from it, and then to the book proper written on it. From the diminutive, *Biblion*, comes the plural, *Biblia*, which, owing to a mistake, due to its apparently feminine termination, was used as a singular in Latin. Thus the word Bible means: Book, as derived from the Latin; and Books, as derived from the Greek.

A few years after the destruction of the manuscripts by Diocletian, to which we have already alluded, came the triumph of Christianity in the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to the Christian faith. In the year A.D. 330 the Emperor ordered fifty copies of the Scriptures to be prepared for the churches in Constantinople; a sign that the old copies had disappeared. The fifty copies were written, probably, on vellum; for our first manuscripts which are on vellum, date from the fourth century, and from that time on we find a great and growing increase in the number of manuscripts. The manuscripts which have survived are divided into classes according to the shape of the letters. The most important class is written entirely in capital letters. These manuscripts are called 'Uncials,' and there are about one hundred of

them. The earliest of these is the Vatican Manuscript, known as Codex B, in the Vatican Library at Rome, dating from the fourth century. The next is the Sinaitic Manuscript, known as Codex \aleph , which is in possession of the Greek Church, and is in the Imperial Museum at St. Petersburg. Then comes the Alexandrian, known as Codex A, which is in the Manuscript-room of the British Museum. It was given to Charles I. by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1628. There is an Arabic inscription on the first sheet saying that it was written by Thekla the Martyr.

The other and larger class of manuscripts is called Cursives, from the smaller 'running' hand, which was used from the ninth century on. The late date of these makes their value much less. There are nearly two thousand of them.

Another class of manuscripts is called Palimpsests, *i.e.*, manuscripts that had the original writing rubbed out, or partially rubbed out, to make room for new writing, the object, no doubt, being economy. Codex C, in the National Library in Paris, is the best-known specimen of a Palimpsest.

Now a word as to the versions. The oldest, a most important version, is the version of the Old Testament in Greek, known as the Septuagint, from the tradition that it was made by seventy scribes or scholars, sent from Jerusalem by the High Priest Eleazar to Alexandria at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus, 285-247 B.C. Actually the greater part of the work was carried out in the second and third centuries before Christ. This version is of special importance, because it is from it Our Lord quoted, and it was in common use throughout Palestine. This version introduces us to the Greek New Testament, the language of which is largely derived from it. Most of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New are made from this Greek version direct, and not from the Hebrew. From this version sprang most of the other old versions, which are too numerous to mention. Among these is the Itala, or Old Latin Version. When revising this old Latin version, St. Jerome formed the idea of translating the Old Testament from the Hebrew. The work began in A.D. 390, and occupied him fourteen years. The completed work is known as the Vulgate, or Popular Version.

The version, however, which has done and is doing the greatest

work in the world is our English Version of 1611, known as the Authorised Version; authorised, not by ecclesiastical authority, but by common consent of the nation, won by its surpassing merits as the great history of the growth of the greatest of religions. This is the English Book of Books, for it reigns over the hearts and lives not only of the people of the United Kingdom but also of that greater England beyond the Seas, including our Colonies and the great republic of our kindred in the United States. The English Bible has done more than anything else to unify the Anglo-Saxon race by forming a national character that aims at serious and noble ideals, and by developing a literature not unworthy of being the fruit of this dominant influence. How did we get this most precious of our common possessions? The names of Cædmon and Bede and Alfred and Ælfric recall the earlier efforts to give England the Bible in the vernacular: the first reminding us that the dawn of English poetry, more than twelve centuries ago, was a paraphrase of Genesis in verse. But the foremost great figure in the work of giving men the Bible in English was John Wiclif, Rector of Lutterworth. A born reformer, he relied on the Bible to renew the nation's life. With the help of Nicholas de Hereford, one of his friends, the work was done. By the year 1382 the whole Bible was in the hands of the English people in their mother tongue. Wiclif's Bible was translated from the Vulgate, and the written copies (printing was not yet discovered) had a great circulation in spite of the efforts to suppress them. If Cædmon's paraphrase was a beginning of English poetry, Wiclif's Bible and Wiclif's pamphlets were the beginning of English prose.

Exactly one hundred years after Wiclif's death, a man was born whose life-work was to improve upon what Wiclif had done. William Tindale studied at Oxford, and afterwards proceeded to Cambridge. About 1521 he decided to give his life to the translation of the New Testament, and afterwards of the whole Bible, from the original Hebrew and Greek into English, which was to be more faithful than Wiclif's version made from the Latin Vulgate. Finding no encouragement in England—and, indeed, no safe place—to carry out his plans, Tindale went to Germany. In 1525 or 1526 he brought out at Worms a complete edition of the New

Testament, of which three thousand copies were issued. This was from the press of F. Schoeffer the younger. Copies were sent to England, and were eagerly received on the one hand, and yet so vigorously destroyed on the other that only one complete copy remains. After that he worked at the books of the Old Testament, but was taken and imprisoned by his enemies, and suffered martyrdom in 1536 at Vilvorde, near Brussels. His qualifications had been, besides his high resolve, a good knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, with such a rare mastery of idiomatic English that the unrivalled beauty of the Authorised Version is chiefly due to its large borrowings from his inspired renderings. Rogers, his fellow-worker, who was really responsible for the later 'Matthew's' Bible, embodying the work of Tindale and Coverdale, died at the stake, 1555. Coverdale, too, had carried on Tindale's work in the version of 1535, and early in 1538 undertook a new revision, based on 'Matthew's' Bible. The result was that the Great (*i.e.*, large) Bible was issued in 1539, with Cranmer's preface appointing its use in churches. Though merely a revision, Coverdale's work has had an important influence on our Authorised Version, in which many felicities of expression are due to him, and help to make it the greatest work in English prose.

The Prayer-book version of the Psalms is taken from Coverdale's Bible, which by means of this part of it has had a lasting influence on the devotional life of the nation. We must pass on now, merely naming the Genevan Bible of the Marian exiles, and the fully-authorised Bishops' Bible, to our so-called Authorised Version of 1611, seventy-five years after Tindale's martyrdom. It is a wonderful work. Its forty-seven revisers speak as one man, wisely embodying the best work of previous versions, chiefly the unrivalled rendering of Tindale, while it is so filled with the spirit and beauty of holiness that it might almost be called the Inspired Version. The Revised Version rendered necessary by the growth of knowledge, particularly of the text, had its origin in Convocation in 1870. The older Version is far more beautiful in its choice of language, and dignity and ease of style, but the Revised Version supplies an accuracy of translation, and that too from a more trustworthy text, which cannot be dispensed with.

Before entering on a consideration of the Books of the New Testament, which we shall take mainly in their familiar order, as we did the Books of the Old Testament, it might be helpful to give some account of the interval that separates the last Books of the Old Testament from the first Books of the New. If one were to accept the traditional date of Daniel, the last Books of the Old Testament in point of date would be probably the Book of Malachi the prophet, and the historical Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's second mission to Jerusalem was in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah xiii. verse 6), *i.e.*, 433 B.C. The prophet Malachi wrote probably not much later. Judæa was a Persian province at that time, and remained so till Alexander the Great conquered Darius, at the great Battle of Issus in 333 B.C. With Alexander's conquest a far-reaching change began, which was one of the most important providential preparations for Christianity, namely, the spread of the Greek influence and the Greek language over what afterwards became part of the Roman Empire, and especially among the Jewish race. After Issus, Alexander advanced to Tyre, which he took after a desperate resistance and a siege of seven months. He then proceeded against Jerusalem. He was met at Scopus by a train of Jewish priests in their robes, and a great multitude in white garments. Moved by the dignity of these representatives of a religious state governed by God, he treated Jerusalem leniently, and himself offered a sacrifice in the Temple.

The policy of Alexander was to bind together his whole vast Empire by the ties of Greek civilisation and language, and this policy was brought to bear on Palestine. After his early death in 323 B.C., the same policy was continued by his successors, and Greek influence flowed in on Jerusalem from its great centres, Antioch and Alexandria. Judæa fell first to the share of the Egyptian realm ruled by the Ptolemies, the successors of Alexander in this portion of his Empire. Large numbers of Jews were removed by Ptolemy Lagus to Alexandria and other cities of Egypt, where they prospered as colonists. There they adopted the Greek language, and felt the influence of the Greek literature. But their hearts were still in Jerusalem, which they frequently visited, thus bringing the

leavening influence of Greek civilisation to bear upon the Holy City.

The suzerainty of Egypt changed from time to time to the suzerainty of Syria, the high priest ruling Jerusalem and seeing to the payment of the tribute of twenty talents to the suzerain for the time being. Two parties divided Jerusalem between them, the old conservative Jewish party and the new Greek party. We may for convenience call the policies of these two parties, Judaism and Hellenism. In the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, 175-164 B.C., Syria being then suzerain, the Greek party at Jerusalem, which comprised most of the upper classes, procured the appointment of Jason as high priest by a gift of money to Antiochus. Jason had permission to set up a gymnasium in order to Hellenise the youth and to enrol the people of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch (*i.e.*, to give them the rights of citizenship), and he actually sent three hundred pieces of silver to Tyre to provide a sacrifice to Hercules.

The object of the Greek party at Jerusalem now became openly the acceptance of the Greek religion by the nation, but when the doings of the next high priest, Menelaus, were known in the country parts, the people rose in the interests of the old Jewish religion. This opposition to Hellenism came from the Scribes and their disciples, the priesthood having gone over to an alliance with Heathenism. In this action of the Scribes we can see the influence of the Old Testament, the Bible as it then existed, especially of the Pentateuch. A party grew up, chiefly in the country parts, of pious men and women who studied the law and loved the old religion. They were called the Chasidim or Hasidim, that is, the pious.

The struggle at Jerusalem between the Greek and the Jewish party came to a head when Antiochus, for the second time, sacked Jerusalem, and deliberately set about the extirpation of the old Jewish religion. All Jewish worship was abolished by the Syrian king. An altar to Zeus was set up upon the great altar of burnt offering in the Temple, 'the abomination of desolation' referred to in Daniel, and the Jews were forced to join in heathen sacrifices and to eat swine's flesh. The Syrian officials went about the country

to enforce the king's commands. The Chasidim chose death rather than surrender.

In the Apocryphal Books of the Maccabees we have a detailed account of the heroic way in which the Jews met this merciless persecution. One remarkable effect of the sufferings which the pious Jews endured, was the growth in brightness and strength of the Messianic hope. At first they died like martyrs without resistance, but at last a leader was found in Mattathias, the head of a priestly family in the town of Modin in Judæa. He slew a Jew who was about to offer a heathen sacrifice, levelled the heathen altar, and fled with his sons to the mountains. Joined by others, he and his family began a religious war against the heathen oppressors. One of his sons was Judas, called 'the hammer' (that is probably the meaning of the word Maccabee), who became the leader of the patriots. Now began a great war between the vast Syrian armies sent to put down the revolt, and the little band of Jews who were fighting for religious liberty, or death. The Syrians advancing towards Jerusalem, which was held by a Syrian garrison, were defeated by Judas Maccabæus at Emmaus. Next year, Lysias, the Syrian general, came back to Judæa with another large army, and was met and defeated by Judas at Bethzur, 165 B.C., twenty miles south of Jerusalem, and forced to retreat to Antioch.

Judas now occupied Jerusalem, and while he sent troops to attack the Syrians in the citadel, restored the Temple worship after solemn purification of the holy place. After the death of Antiochus, Lysias returned to Jerusalem, and Judas with his little force was defeated by an immense Syrian army, and Jerusalem was besieged. Defence seemed hopeless; but Lysias, finding that Philip, who had been left guardian to the young king Antiochus the Fifth, was marching against him, offered to grant religious liberty to the Jews in return for their submission. The offer was accepted by the Chasidim, but not by Judas, who continued the struggle. The Syrians occupied Jerusalem, and Nicanor, with a large army, was sent against Judas by Demetrius the First, successor of young Antiochus. Judas defeated Nicanor near Beth-horon, and nailed his head and hand to the fortifications of Jerusalem. Judas now determined to crush out Hellenism completely and to restore the

Jewish State. He sought foreign support, sending an embassy to Rome, with which he made an alliance, and the Roman republic threatened the Syrians with war unless they retired from Judæa. But before the Roman decree arrived, a fresh Syrian invasion overpowered Judas. His army was defeated and the Jewish leader was slain. So the great struggle ended. The main object of the Maccabæan revolt, religious liberty, was gained. And if the Jewish State passed under the suzerainty of Syria again, they were directly under the government of their own high priest. In 153 B.C. Jonathan, the brother of Judas Maccabæus, was acknowledged the high priest by the king of Syria. In 142 B.C. Simon, the brother of Jonathan, forced the Syrian troops to retire from the citadel, and in the next year the whole Jewish nation declared Simon high priest, captain, and governor (1 Maccabees xiv. 27-47).

The Asmonæan or Maccabæan family retained the high priesthood, and in the year 65 B.C. the Romans, whom Judas Maccabæus had invited so long before, arrived in Palestine represented by Scaurus, lieutenant of Pompey. Pompey himself followed the next year, and, enraged at the bad faith of one of the Jewish leaders, besieged Jerusalem and took it after three months' siege, 63 B.C. He acted with much moderation, and although he went into the Holy of Holies, he left the treasures of the Temple untouched. It was just eighty years since the independence of Judæa had been attained. And now the country came finally under the sway of Rome, Scaurus, Pompey's lieutenant, being left in charge of Judæa, as a part of Syria.

From the time of Judas Maccabæus, the Jews had held their own for nearly one hundred years. The national pride had grown with national success. The bitterness of now becoming a mere portion of the Roman province of Syria, under the orders of the Roman Pro-consul of that province, was extreme, and the people who had tasted the sweets of liberty were never able long to content themselves and live quietly under the rule of Rome. After the death of Pompey, Julius Cæsar gave to the Jews many privileges which Pompey had denied. He freed them from supporting Roman soldiers, reduced their tribute during the Sabbatical year, and gave them Joppa. The consequence was that the Jews most sincerely

sorrowed for Cæsar's death, when he was assassinated 44 B.C. When Antony came to Antioch after the defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, 42 B.C., a deputation of Jews waited on him to accuse the sons of Antipater, Herod in particular. Antony, however, appointed Herod to a tetrarchy, from which he was driven by a revolt to seek help and redress at Rome. In the year 40 B.C. Herod, who had been appointed king by Antony and Octavius, went back to Palestine to claim his kingdom. When Herod died, after a period of thirty-seven years, he left his kingdom among his three sons, having obtained from Augustus during a visit to Rome the right of disposing of it. To Archelaus he left Judæa with the title of king. To Herod Antipas he left Galilee and Peræa with the title of tetrarch. To Philip he left the north-east part of his kingdom with the title of tetrarch.

We have already closed our Old Testament, which we have learned to understand, to reverence, and to love. But before considering the main subject of the New Testament, which is the coming of Christ to the world—or, in other words, the Incarnation of God in Man—we must trace out, as far as so mysterious a subject can be followed up, the preparation for that Incarnation, the education of the world to receive the coming of Christ.

The study in recent years of the many religions of the ancient world points to the fact that all men in some degree are seekers after God, and that their seeking is met by a progressive Revelation through human experience which God seems to give in exact measure to man's capacity to receive it—a capacity which is weakened by sin and strengthened by righteousness in accordance with our Lord's illuminating saying : ' Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.' That there was a real seeking after God in the ancient religions, and that some knowledge, however imperfect, rewarded that seeking ; that the Revelation to the Jews was not an isolated experience but a part of a world-wide movement towards God which reached its highest in Judaism with its unparalleled continuity of inspiration and marvellous expectation of the coming of the Messiah—that is, of the Incarnation of God in Man—is a widely accepted view which has its foundations in Holy Scripture. It is, for example, St. Paul's view. He regarded Christianity as

the crown and completion of all religions, for which all other religions were only a preparation—the imperfect visions of truth they contained being, like the first grey light of dawn, a growing promise of the future coming of the perfect day.

Very definite are the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: ‘God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.’

Thus the ancient religions of the world prepared mankind for the Advent.

The supreme example of this preparation was the progressive Revelation granted to the Hebrews, which we need only touch upon here as we have read so much about it in the Old Testament. It may be added that the Jewish Dispersion supplied favourable seed-plots throughout the Roman Empire for the growth of the Christian Church in the nucleus of Jews and proselytes established in every considerable city, and equipped for the right ordering of a common religious and moral life with the inspired library of the Old Testament. But while the disciplining of the Jews by the teaching of Prophet and Psalmist and Lawgiver was the chief preparation, and supplied the favourable spiritual atmosphere not only in Palestine but throughout the Roman world in which the religion of the Incarnation could live and grow, the preparation of the world for Christ by other ancient religions must not be forgotten.

One of these was the Assyro-Babylonian religion. The deep sense of sin, the consciousness of God’s transcendent majesty, and the longing for God’s forgiveness which the labours of archæologists have unearthed in the tablet-books of this religion, reveal a very real seeking after God, a valuable preparation towards finding God fully and perfectly in Christ. A further preparation may be found in a Divine Mediator between God and Man—Marduk or Merodach, ‘the Holy Son,’ as he was called, the Redeemer of fallen man, a wonderful foreshadowing of the historical Messiah among the race out of which, be it remembered, Abraham came. Another example of this world-wide preparation for the Advent was the ancient Egyptian religion, in which a very elevated moral teaching had issued in the idea of a final Judgment, at which every one would

have to give account of his words as well as his deeds. More wonderful even than the anticipation of Christ in Assyrian Merodach was the similar anticipation in Egyptian Osiris, who lived on earth to befriend man; who died and rose again, the firstfruits of the grave; whose earthly life was a model for mankind, the mystic union with whom was the aspiration of every man of piety; who was the ruler of the world of the dead, and the merciful Judge before whom all must appear. We can only find space to mention here the Persian religion and its great teacher, Zoroaster, saying a word, however, about Mithraism, the kindred worship of Mithras, the old Aryan god of light, the personification of the sun, the Mediator between man and the unknown God, whose worship was brought to Rome by some of Pompey's prisoners, where it became extremely popular, especially in the Roman army, and spread even to distant Britain, and till the fourth century held its own against Christianity. The close resemblances of Mithraism to the Christian faith, its highly organized priesthood and sacramental system, give it a claim to be a part of the providential preparation for the religion of Christ which took its place.

The religions of Greece and Rome played their part, too, in this universal preparation; and it may be remembered that Socrates, the greatest personality of his time, as represented by Plato in the 'Laws,' saw only one hope for man to escape from the bondage of a specially degrading sin—namely, the coming of some Divine Person to brand that sin authoritatively as shameful, and give a fresh inspiration to the higher life—a hope which, centuries after the death of Socrates, was marvellously realised in Jesus Christ. It may be said here that the Greek religion was twofold—or, rather, that there were two religions that existed side by side: the popular religion of the masses, with its pantheon of deities of very loose morality, with their magnificent temples and their statues and their offerings; and the spiritual religion—the religion of the chosen few based on the unity and spirituality of God, a belief standing at the centre of the great Eleusinian mysteries, and mentioned as far back as the seventh century B.C. These mysteries did much to educate and prepare the minds of the initiated to receive the full Revelation of God in Christ.

Furthermore, a part in this preparation, a foreshadowing of Christ, like the anticipation of Christ in Merodach or Osiris, was played among our ancestors in the Teutonic branch of the Aryan race by Baldur, the god of light, who stood for all that was gentle and pure and good to his Northern worshippers, to whom he was known as Baldur the White, and when Baldur's worshippers received Christianity the new object of their worship was called the White Christ. But among these old Teutons probably the most important preparation for Christianity was the high ideal of morals, the high estimation in which bravery, manliness, uprightness, and purity were held, and the reverence shown to the aged and to women and children, together with a well-established and elevated standard of self-respect. A high ethical ideal, in short, prepared these Northern Teutons to accept Christ, in whom that dimly shadowed ideal of perfect courage and perfect goodness was found to be realised. The shadowy lineaments of divinity in the White Baldur prepared them for the radiant features of the White Christ, in whom the transfiguration of humanity into something higher than human visibly took place—what the Apostle calls 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

All these religions, and many more, have passed away. They were 'not that Light,' but were 'sent to bear witness of that Light.'

Christianity is entirely unlike these decaying cults, inasmuch as it is not only infinitely superior to any of them, but it contains in itself the principle of perpetual progress, the principle of undying vitality. In Christianity the Infinite Being reveals Himself to finite beings in terms of the finite. Thus it is at once intelligible to man, and able to supply all his needs from a source of light and love which is absolutely inexhaustible. To the Christian the whole universe and all that is in it is a manifestation of God reaching its highest in the perfect and Divine humanity of Christ. Higher manifestation there cannot be, for in the words of Christ, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' All the essentials of religion, isolated fragments of which are found in other religions, are found combined in their full completeness in Christianity. Primitive Christianity, speaking through St. Paul, already saw the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ completed in all mankind, viewed as one colossal being,

the Catholic or universal Church, comprehending all the inhabitants of the world as depicted in one body, with Christ as Head, 'till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (R.V. full grown) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Ephesians iv. verse 13).

This building-up of the body of Christ till it consists of all mankind was an idea constantly before St. Paul's eyes in the first century, when the building-up had only begun, and it ought to be continually before our eyes in the twentieth century, when the building-up is far advanced towards completion. St. Paul's idea gives the true note of finality to Christianity. When its object is attained, when its work is completed, there will be no more work left to do. Thus all other religions are a preparation for it, for all other religions pass away, and Christianity, as was preordained by God, takes their place. This distinguishing characteristic of Christianity is written in large letters across the history of nineteen centuries, and never larger than on the history that is being made to-day.

Now we have arrived at the time of our Lord's birth into this world. The land appointed by our Heavenly Father for the birth of the long-expected Messiah was the very same land we have been reading about all the while in the Old Testament, the land we know as Palestine. No scattered pastoral population inhabited Palestine at the time of our Lord's birth. The cities were numerous in Galilee as well as in Judæa, and full of Greeks as well as Jews. The people spoke two languages, Aramaic and Greek. It is evident that Greek was exceedingly well known, for nearly all our Lord's quotations from the Old Testament are made from the Greek Version. The great expense of Hebrew manuscripts was an additional reason for using the Greek Bible, which was comparatively cheap.

Every available inch of ground in this country was carefully cultivated. The population was particularly dense round the Lake of Galilee, where there were two hundred villages and three walled cities. Boats employed in trade and fishing thronged the lake. The life of this population, actively engaged in agriculture or trade, was seriously occupied with religion. The Pharisees, that is, the Separatists, were the distinctively religious party. They were scrupulously careful about the external observances of religion.

But their hard, self-righteous spirit had little in common with the God of Love. They were the dominant party at Jerusalem. The Scribes, or Students of the Law, were closely connected with the Pharisees. They had, to a great extent, taken the place of the Priests, and they took the upper hand in Galilee, as the Pharisees did in Jerusalem. The Sadducees were members of priestly families, of aristocratic race, and kept the high priesthood in their own hands, and often succeeded in leading the Pharisee majority in the Sanhedrin. Religion was to the Sadducees a secondary matter, their main object being worldly position and power.

In our Lord's time, religion was in a bad way in Jerusalem, under the combined influence of Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, yet there existed in country parts a considerable number of pious people, who studied the Scriptures devotionally, and lived deeply religious lives. Such were Joseph and Mary, Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna. These were the best product of the study of the Jewish Bible, and from similar material Christ's disciples were chosen and the Christian Church was formed. The general Expectation of the Messiah, who was to establish God's Kingdom on the earth, a Kingdom however that was to be formed exclusively of Jews, was one of the most striking characteristics of the life of Palestine at that time.

We have said something already about the long and gradual growth of this Expectation, developed and fostered by the utterances of the Prophets from Isaiah to Malachi. But the erroneous view that it was to be an earthly kingdom and to consist solely of Jews had been intensified by the temporary realisation which had been reached through the national victories and the national greatness under Judas Maccabæus. Thus, although the words of the Book of Daniel were remembered as a prophecy of the Messianic Kingdom, the universal nature of that Kingdom of God was forgotten, and a narrower national view took its place. A proud nation, which had by itself broken the power of Syria in the comparatively recent days of Antiochus Epiphanes, could ill brook the iron hand of Rome, and still less the bitter contempt for the Jew, which the Roman official made no attempt to conceal.

The vanguard which headed the great body of the people eager

to be delivered from Roman rule was known as the Zealots. One of this party, Simon the Zealot, was an Apostle of our Lord, and very likely joined Him with the idea that He would set up the standard of national independence and drive out the Romans (Matthew x. verse 4; Mark iii. verse 18; Luke vi. verse 15; Acts i. verse 13). But while the imagination of the mass of the people was entirely captured by this material conception of the Messianic Kingdom, others, the poor in spirit, had attained by a pious life to the blessedness of spiritual insight, by which they perceived God's salvation to be a spiritual thing. Such were the two mentioned in Luke ii. verses 25-38.

Others there were like a flock waiting for a shepherd to lead them into green pastures, with a dim, unconscious yearning of suffering helplessness; the sick and the maimed, the halt and the blind, were waiting for some help from on high, as the palsied man did for the troubling of the water. Multitudes of such sufferers needed help, but none knew that the Divine Helper was drawing near. Where was the Messianic Kingdom? Where was the looked-for Messiah? How long He seemed to tarry! How many thirsting and hungering souls were aching with deferred hope and unsatisfied longing! Almighty God, am I abandoned? Was I created in Thine Image? Is this what life means? Why am I here? Whither am I going? Oh, the sighs and groans and tears and sorrows that must have found their way on high! 'Be not afraid. Unto us is born a Saviour.' The answer comes back: 'Only believe.'

And what about this Saviour of the World? Where do we find Him? How can we serve Him? At once let us go to our New Testament, and hear the joyful news.

As a whole the New Testament—that is, the New Covenant—is far shorter than the Old Testament, but it is far more important, for it records the supreme revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It tells us the story of our Blessed Lord's life on earth. It gives us in His own words His Divine teaching. It puts before us His life as our example to follow which must ever be the aim of our keenest and hardest endeavours.

To begin with, on opening our New Testament, the names of

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four men arrest our immediate attention : these are the names of the four Evangelists. 'Evangel' is taken from a word which means 'good news' in Greek. 'Gospel' stands for Evangel in English, and comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'Godspell,' meaning 'God-story.' As you may observe, a part of the word 'Evangel' is 'angel'—a messenger sent by God to tell us tidings which He desires us to know. The good tidings are of God in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself. The names of the Evangelists are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, each of whom is honoured with the prefix of Saint. All four accounts are inspired by God, but each is marked by the differing personality and purpose of its writer. The Gospel according to St. Matthew probably represents the Gospel as it was taught by St. Matthew, and it was addressed especially to Jews, and sought to convince them that Jesus was their long-looked-for Messiah. To St. Matthew, as to St. Mark and St. Luke, Jesus is both the Messiah and the Redeemer of mankind.

The writings of St. Matthew take for granted the Jewish belief in the Old Testament. He quotes the Old Testament specially for the identification of Jesus with the Messiah. Also he gives prominence to Christ's idea of the Kingdom of Heaven and His Gospel, as well as to the importance of recognising Jesus to be the Messianic King. The service of the kingdom consists in conduct, and in the last day man is judged by his conduct, as is shown in the great parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew xxv. He puts special stress on the Parables of the Kingdom, such as the Sower, the Wheat and the Tares, the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, the Hidden Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price, the Net. He also lays special stress on the laws of the Kingdom of God, in what we call the Sermon on the Mount. The Gospel according to St. Matthew was written probably shortly before A.D. 70. The name Matthew signifies 'gift of God.' The special value of this Gospel is that it gives the fullest record of our Lord's sayings.

Our second Gospel is St. Mark's. This Gospel is seen by internal evidence to be the earliest. It is the basis of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. When we compare it with them, we find nearly the whole of St. Mark either in St. Matthew or in St. Luke, and the larger part in both. The original source of St. Mark's Gospel

is believed, for excellent reasons, to have been St. Peter. Papias assures us that St. Mark wrote down the words and acts of our Saviour as St. Peter delivered them in his preaching, and the second Gospel may be fairly called—as it was in the early centuries of Christianity—‘the Memories of Peter.’ When we examine the Gospel itself we find that its contents are evidently the record of an eyewitness, often specially to be attributed to St. Peter, as the account of the Transfiguration and the raising of Jairus’s daughter, and thus bear out the primitive tradition. We are told that St. Mark was with St. Paul when he returned to Antioch with Barnabas. There he met Manaen, Herod’s foster brother, from whom, no doubt, was obtained the striking account, with all its graphic details, of how Herod was worked upon by the daughter of Herodias and entrapped in the meshes of his own rash promise, till he ordered the murder of John the Baptist, and the head of the great Prophet was presented in a dish to the daughter of vindictive Herodias. St. Mark chronicles our Lord’s actions rather than His words. St. Mark wrote for Roman readers. Witness his many Latinisms, and his very full explanations of Jewish words and customs. Comparatively few of our Lord’s sayings are recorded, and only four of the parables. The interest centres in Jesus Himself, in His feelings as well as in His doings.

St. Luke was a Gentile Christian, a cultivated man who wrote good Greek, and was a critical and able historian. The date of his Gospel is probably not later than A.D. 80, and may be A.D. 61, during St. Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. He accompanied St. Paul on his missionary journeys; and that companionship enabled him to write the Acts of the Apostles, and helped to supply him with materials for his Gospels when at Cæsarea and Jerusalem; for we know that St. Paul and St. Luke were together during St. Paul’s imprisonment at Cæsarea, and afterwards at Rome. We know little about St. Luke’s own life. He is too modest to mention himself. He addresses his Gospel, as his later work, the Acts, to a friend, Theophilus, a fellow Christian, addressed as ‘most excellent,’ a title which indicates a Roman of high rank—in fact, probably one of the knights. St. Luke represents Christ specially as the Saviour of all mankind, not merely as the Messiah of the Jews. St. Luke,

with the thoughtfulness and sympathy of a humane physician, dwells on the fact that Jesus was the compassionate Healer of all suffering and illness, bringing out strongly Christ's human character. The labour that St. Luke spent in compiling his Gospel, which is mentioned in his preface, is evidenced by the fact that perhaps half his book consists of fresh matter, which he does not share with the other Evangelists. Not only does he supply a priceless list of parables not recorded elsewhere, headed by the greatest of all the parables, the Prodigal Son, and containing also the great parable of the Good Samaritan, but besides several miracles peculiar to himself, he preserves in his first two chapters the story of our Lord's Conception and Birth, as told from the Blessed Virgin's point of view, the weeping over Jerusalem, the blood-sweat in Gethsemane, the trial by Herod, the last words to the women of Jerusalem, the conversion of the penitent thief and the words to him from the Cross, the first words and the last words from the Cross, the appearance at Emmaus, the fullest account of the appearance in the Upper Room the evening of the Resurrection. He seems to have been in touch, probably when he was with St. Paul at Jerusalem, with our Lord's mother, and with Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. The feeling with which women of all classes regarded our Lord is dwelt on with special sympathy by St. Luke; for instance, he alone records the lament of the women of Jerusalem as our Lord was led away to be crucified and our Lord's words to them.

St. Luke's Gospel has, not without reason, been called 'The Gospel of Womanhood.' We owe St. Luke a great debt of gratitude for the priceless record which he alone has preserved, the most beautiful of the parables, the Magnificat, the Nunc Dimittis, the Benedictus, the story of the Annunciation; and he and St. Mark alone record the Ascension. St. Luke's is the most human-hearted of the Gospels, the most sympathetic, and so he occupies himself specially with the ministry of women. Whether St. Luke personally knew our Lord during his earthly ministry we are not told, but in the wonderful account of the appearance at Emmaus the graphic details of the eyewitness are manifest, and it has been conjectured that one of the two disciples was Luke himself.

The fourth Evangelist, St. John, was our Lord's closest friend

and most inseparable companion, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' As one of the inner circle of three he was with our Lord at the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the Transfiguration, during the bloody sweat at Gethsemane, and kept close to Him in the High Priest's palace and saw Him condemned for blasphemy by the Sanhedrin and buffeted and contemptuously ill-used by them afterwards. Finally, he saw Him nailed to the Cross, and was chosen to receive the dying bequest of his Lord's mother that he might be to her as a son. He was, when young, a man of such fiery and impetuous nature that our Lord named him and his brother 'Sons of thunder.' Later, Love was the keynote of the teaching of this 'Apostle of Love.' The other Gospels are true photographs of our Lord as He walked on earth. St. John's is a great portrait painted by one to whom the abysmal depths of the Divine Personality were opened by the key of intense sympathy and love.

Tradition tells us he was the last of the twelve Apostles to die, and he is believed to have died at Ephesus not many years after the close of the first century. His Gospel is supplementary, and supplies what is wanting in the other Gospels, which he was able to do, as this Gospel was written very much later, probably about the year A.D. 90 or 95. His is the most spiritual Gospel—a masterpiece of mysticism. The purpose of the contents of his Gospel is, in his own words: 'But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.'

He records our Lord's conversations and discourses, especially those at the closing of His ministry, with a fulness that is marvellous, considering the length of time before they were written down. The accuracy of his local colour in describing life in Palestine, and the vividness of his word-pictures of our Lord's mighty works, plainly betoken an eyewitness. St. John represents the Saviour to us in His Godhead. He had a grasp of the deep mystery of His Lord's Deity not approached by any of the other Evangelists. He also understood more completely than the rest the meaning of the Lord's discourses, and of the miracles, which he calls signs. St. John lays stress on the necessity of a new birth. St. John's insight into our Lord's character is unique. Unique, too, is his power of



Fresco

ST JOHN

LUNETTE IN THE SACRISTY OF THE CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI AT PARMA

CORREGGIO (1494-1534)

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expressing the deepest thoughts in the simplest words. This power distinguishes the Epistles, as well as the Gospel that bears his name—*e.g.*, in the Epistles, 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him'; in the Gospel, 'I and the Father are one' (R.V.), 'Before Abraham was, I am,' 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,' 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.' Of the Apostle's deep-thoughted simplicity it may be said the style is the man himself, and such a personality made him his Lord's best interpreter.

St. John tells us in the Book of the Revelation that he was banished to Patmos, an island in the Ægean, where he received the Revelation. Later he ruled the Church at Ephesus. A touching story is related of him. Jerome tells us how, in his extreme old age, when unable to preach, he used to be carried into church on a litter, and instead of a sermon used to address the congregation in these words: 'Little children, love one another.' When some of the people objected, asking why he kept repeating the same thing, he replied: 'Because it is the Lord's command. If only that is done, it is enough.'

Another story is to be found in Cassian. It shows that the great Apostle of Love did not content himself with loving men only, but that his love reached to and embraced the humblest animal. He used, says Cassian, to play with a tame partridge in his old age, and when blamed for this as unbecoming frivolity, he replied: 'The bow cannot be always bent.' An anecdote which illustrates the strength of his love of souls is told by Clement of Alexandria. It tells how he went into an ill-famed forest to win back a disciple who had relapsed and become one of a body of bandits there. The whole vehemence of character which had wished to call down fire on the inhospitable Samaritans, and had called forth his Lord's rebuke, showed itself in his old age, when, according to the story, he refused to remain under the same roof with the heretic Cerinthus. Of St. John's theology a few words may here be said. That theology may be summed up in three sayings, which are very simple in language, very profound in thought: 'God is spirit' (not 'a spirit,' as in A.V.), 'God is light,' 'God is love.'

As we have seen, the New Testament begins with the four Gospels.

The first three—Matthew, Mark, and Luke, known as the Synoptics—are supplemented by the more profound study of St. John. It deals with the heresies that had arisen by the time this latest Gospel was written by the effective method of setting forth in many ways the true doctrine of the Divine Person. Thus, the pre-existence is affirmed in the opening lines: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' Nor is it only in such passages as this that the Divinity of our Lord is revealed. Their intellectual statement of the high doctrine of the Incarnation is supported by St. John's simple records of the sacred humanity that serve to lift the veil from the indwelling Deity. An example of this is the treatment of the story of the raising of Lazarus, which is peculiar to St. John. A still more remarkable passage of another kind, by which the veil is taken away from that Holy of Holies of our Lord's inmost soul, where He holds communion with the Father, is our Lord's High Priestly prayer after the institution of the Great Sacrament, and shortly before He went forth with His disciples to Gethsemane to the agony which was to usher in the supreme sacrifice of the Cross to which He consecrated Himself at once as sacrifice and sacrificing priest in those self-revealing words beginning: 'Father, the hour is come; glorify the Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' The purpose of St. John's Gospel is the purpose of the whole New Testament—namely, to inspire such living faith in Christ in his readers that it may issue in Christ-like life in their thoughts, words, and deeds in the whole of their activity, internal as well as external.

The central figure of St. John's Gospel is also the central figure, the supreme subject, of the New Testament, our Blessed Lord Himself—the ultimate purpose of the whole universe, in whom the

many-centuried evolution of life finds its destined fulfilment, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' to use the pregnant and inspiring words of St. John in his book of The Revelation.

The old creation is the subject of the first words of the Old Testament, the first words of the Book of Genesis: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' The new creation is the subject of the first words of St. John's Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.' The whole of this marvellous preface to the fourth Gospel, of which we have given some of the opening words, is the most profound expression, even in Holy Scripture, of the central doctrine of the Incarnation, the revelation or unveiling to the mind of man of all that he needs and can receive of the knowledge of the infinite mystery of the being of God. Thus this preface to the fourth Gospel may be regarded as the proper preface to the whole New Testament, which is best understood in the far-reaching light of its illuminating words.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GOSPELS (THE ANNUNCIATION AND THE NATIVITY)

IN the first chapter of St. Luke, verses 26 and 27, we read : ' And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin . . . and the virgin's name was Mary,' whose parents, according to apocryphal accounts, were Joachim and Anna.

We have at this place another beautiful picture to look at. The subject is that about which we are reading—the Annunciation. This means, an announcement of news in general, and Gabriel's message from God to the Blessed Virgin Mary in particular.

The picture is by our much-beloved Fra Angelico. The Virgin Mary was probably at this supreme moment of her destiny in her parents' house. We love to think that God's beautiful firmament was not shut out, so that Gabriel, in his downward flight from heaven, could easily reach the Holy Virgin praying within or sitting in the portico of her dwelling, as the painter represents her, breathing the fresh air, scented with perfume from the blossoming shrubs and opening flowers.

We continue reading in the first chapter of St. Luke how the angel came to her, and addressed this humble-minded maiden, who regarded the possibility of being chosen to be the mother of the Messiah as something too good to be true.

Here we have God's own messenger Gabriel, the same angel we remember as appearing to Daniel, bringing God's own message of promise. Nothing is left in doubt. God promises. God fulfils. Mary asked, ' How shall this be ? ' Gabriel replies : ' The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' (' That which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God.'—R.V.)



Fresco

THE ANNUNCIATION
THE CHURCH OF SAN MARCO AT FLORENCE
FRA ANGELICO (1387-1455)

In some old pictures we see golden rays coming from the sky straight to Mary. God on high is sending down His Holy Spirit, His Holy Ghost, to the Blessed Virgin, just as God in His mercy sends down His beneficent sunbeams in order to quicken into life all His expectant nature-world. In other words, these golden rays symbolise God's Holy Spirit, God's Very Presence with His humble handmaid to strengthen and support her to do her part in all the wonderful things which were appointed for her.

In many other of our beloved Italian pictures we see the Holy Ghost represented as a pure white dove sent down with a message of love. We are told in the Gospel according to St. Matthew that Christ saw the heavens open and this holy dove descending on Him at His baptism, which was also seen of John the Baptist on the same occasion.

With humility and faith Mary accepted the highest destiny that ever was granted by God to any woman, fully conscious of the misunderstandings which it involved. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.' This was the sacred moment when the will of the holiest of women accepted by free choice the will of Almighty God, and the Incarnation took place.

This attitude of the Holy Virgin, her absolute acceptance of God's Holy Will, her high conception of duty, and her unbounded faith, show it was 'Hail' indeed with her. This sublime fact in the Gospel history stands out for all ages as a thing apart. Blessed in truth was Mary among women. This full acceptance is what is elsewhere called Faith. Our Lord always required it in order to work miracles. Wonderful to say, for the accomplishment of this greatest of miracles, which was to bring salvation in the Person of the Saviour to all mankind, the consent of this humble Galilean maiden was required. Without her consent the Incarnation would not have taken place as it did.

We are told that 'Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. . . .' Elisabeth answered that she too was a happy woman, because the Lord had told her that she also was going to have a little child.

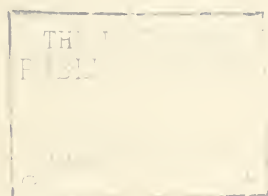
Mary now speaks the beautiful words of the Magnificat, full of holy joy and thankfulness. St. Luke i. verses 46-55: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.'

'And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John (*i.e.*, Jehovah is gracious). And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost . . . And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'

We thus see that God had a special message for this child John to deliver, as well as important things for him to do.

The child was in due time born. All the cousins and neighbours heard and saw that the Lord had showed great mercy to Zacharias and Elisabeth. They rejoiced with her. Everybody suggested a name to be chosen for this baby, and they thought of his father's own name, to be handed down to his son. But there was a difference of opinion. The dumb Zacharias 'asked for a writing table,' *i.e.*, tablet, and upon it we are told he wrote, 'His name is John' (verse 63).

St. Luke i. verse 80 says: 'And the child (John) grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.' In absolute seclusion we see John the Baptist preparing himself for his mighty mission. Here the question presents itself—whence was the account of the Annunciation obtained? Evidently from the Blessed Virgin Mary, who alone could have given the details of what took place. She is probably the source not only of the account of the Annunciation, but of the account of



THE
MEETING OF
ELIZABETH
AND MARY
A PAINTING
ON WOOD
IN THE
MUSEO CIVICO
AT VENICE
CARPACCIO
(1472-1519)



the visit to Elisabeth, which is vividly described, and in which that great thanksgiving, the Magnificat, points to Mary's direct authorship. Indeed, a larger passage of St. Luke may be ascribed to her authorship, beginning at the fifth verse of the first chapter, where the classical Greek of the first four verses suddenly changes to Hebraistic Greek, and the narrative continues to be distinguished by this characteristic up to the end of the second chapter, where the passage communicated by the Blessed Virgin comes to a close.

Thus far we have been occupying ourselves with John's life. Here we must pause and begin to think about a far more important event, the event of all events, the birth into this world of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. St. Matthew i. verses 18-25, tells us about this, and connects everything with the prophecies in the Old Testament. St. Matthew quotes Isaiah to this effect: 'Behold, a virgin . . . shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us' (St. Matthew i. verse 23); 'and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins' (St. Matthew i. verse 21).

The word Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means, Jehovah is Salvation. Christ is the Greek form of the Hebrew Messiah. The Anointed One is the official name of the Saviour. An angel had appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him all that was going to happen, and that he was to have no fear. This is obviously Joseph's own account. At this time, we read in Luke ii. verse 1, that a new decree was made. The words of St. Luke are: 'And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus (the Roman Emperor), that all the world should be taxed' (*i.e.*, enrolled). This means that a general registration of names of all the inhabitants was to be taken, what we may call a census—the census of Quirinius, not till later civil governor of Syria, but perhaps then military head. The Jews were all most particular as to their names being put down in their own native city. The families of Joseph and Mary belonged to Bethlehem as descendants of David. There they wished to be enrolled. It just occurs to me to mention the meaning of the word Bethlehem. It is rather a nice meaning. The word Bethlehem means: 'place

of bread.' With love and reverence we read in the Bible that our Lord called Himself the 'Bread of Life.'

The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem which Joseph and Mary took necessitated their turning in a southward direction. We can picture Mary riding on an ass, according to the custom of the country, comfortably seated on piled-up rugs; no doubt an earthenware jug would be slung across the animal, also a leathern pouch or bag, with bread and dates and figs, provisions provided for the journey. The two travellers would come to the rocky gorge of Esdraelon, they would reach the town of Engannim, all amongst fruitful orchards. They would in due course find themselves among the hills of Samaria, possibly a night's rest might be taken in the valley of Shechem, the modern Nablus, situated between the mounts Ebal and Gerizim, the mountain of cursing and the mountain of blessing as they are called in Scripture.

Altogether the journey would be about ninety miles. At last, weary and travel-stained, this humble pair would reach Bethlehem, glad to find rest no matter where, in that overcrowded and noisy inn, which gave them so scant a welcome. Oh! how I wish that my readers could see with their own eyes this wonderful city of Bethlehem, as I first set eyes upon it that never-to-be-forgotten day when I reached it.

Leaving Jerusalem, and passing along the high road, a very sinister spot is pointed out to you on your left. A solitary tree, which has ever since borne the name of a most miserable man, marks the spot. This is where Judas is said to have hanged himself, after he had betrayed our Lord. We pass, in Spring, along intensely green fields on either side, the very fields where Ruth had gleaned; the very pastures where King David, when still a shepherd-boy, had watched and tended his flocks. In front of us open out terraces built by means of stone walls, made out of chips and pieces of rock. Fig and olive trees abound. Here, as chief feature of the landscape, Bethlehem itself spreads out. Hardly does imagination carry us so far as to make it possible to believe that this is Bethlehem, and that such a privilege should be ours, that our very eyes can look upon the birthplace of our Blessed Lord. On the afternoon I am speaking about, a brilliant sun was shining brightly. Thick, white,

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Fresco

CHRIST AND ST JOHN
THE BELLE ARTI AT SIENA
PINTURICCHIO (1454-1530)

fleecy, gold-lined clouds were overhead. The air was balmy. A wondrous feeling possessed the very soul. Never shall I forget entering Bethlehem. In the old wall, the well was pointed out to me which we remember in connection with King David. 'And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that is at the gate !' (1 Chronicles xi. verse 17).

On the roadside coming along, I had also passed another well, the same one, we are told to-day, which the three Magi had halted by, to refresh themselves and their camels, when they were pilgrimaging to Bethlehem at the time of the birth of our Lord. Strange, as well as interesting, is the fact that after all these years, the customs of Palestine have remained unchanged. The day I was travelling in this country, strings of camels were sallying forth with dark-skinned Arabs, clothed with a white shirt and an upper garment, and a handkerchief headgear secured by means of a black silken cord, men and boys sitting jauntily on the backs of the animals, the former swaying to and fro in perfect rhythm with the camel's gait. There were other boys and men filling skins of animals with water, just as we read of their doing in the Old Testament days, and slinging them when full across their backs, either carrying them away home, or by means of a little bell which they rang attracting the notice of passers-by, who are always glad of water in that thirsty land.

Here was Bethlehem with all its associations. Here it was that Mary gave birth to that Holy Child, her first-born Son, who was wrapped up in swaddling clothes, and was cradled in a manger. In olden days the Arabs often built houses near and into the rocks. We still come across this kind of house ; they are called Khans, and we would call them inns. Thus we can picture the whole scene, just as it all took place, at the very time of the birth of our Saviour. You pass through an archway and enter a courtyard, a large open space, in the middle of which stands, as its chief feature, a huge basin built over the well. The mere sight of the water refreshes the weary traveller and his still more worn-out animal. 'Water, water,' is the cry of all in that hot and dusty country. Round this open space, against the walls, straw and food are littered about.

Animals are tied up, and packages lie about promiscuously. On the first floor an overhanging gallery affords accommodation for the traveller himself. On that most memorable occasion, the khan, or inn, was full to overflowing. No guest-chamber was vacant for Mary and her unborn babe. These travellers, who bore with them God's gracious destiny for all mankind, had to take their chance among the humblest of the other wayfarers.

Outside of the khan in the fields, on this wonderful first Christmas night, awaiting dawn and sunrise, shepherds were taking their rest, each with his staff at his side, around a camp fire, lighted to scare away any prowling wild beast. From Jewish sources we gather that the sheep fed on the heights of Bethlehem were the Temple flocks which were kept there all the year round, and used for sacrifices. It is significant that He whose coming was to end all these sacrifices, by the sacrifice of Himself, should be born so near to the pasturage of the sacrificial Temple sheep.

No doubt, in the distance, the shepherds would see the lights of Bethlehem. Overhead the windows of heaven opened, so as to reveal the splendour of the starry skies, seen best in the clear atmosphere of that land of marvellous history. Such, if we may recall it, was probably the scene on this auspicious occasion.

Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood by them and announced: 'Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.' Then the heavenly host said 'Glory to God' under the starlight; strains of melody sounded from the skies, until all was throbbing with love and light and life.

It may be not uninteresting to recall here, that sheep are the first domesticated animals we hear of in Bible history. We remember reading about them in connection with Abel; then with Abraham and Lot; with Jacob, Rebecca, and Rachel. In a pastoral community they were counted as the chief wealth of those who possessed them. Job had 7000 before his misfortunes and 14,000 after. Men and women tended them carefully. The office of looking after them was one of great responsibility. A shepherd was an important person, as having such valuable property in his charge.

In Syria to-day we see flocks of sheep and goats, the shepherd walking at the head of them, and leading them—just as in our

Lord's time, and as He describes it ; each one of them he knows by name, so that he can call them separately.

Because these animals which I have been speaking about were of such importance to the people of old, we see how natural it was for them to be spoken of so constantly in the Bible. No animal in the Scriptures compares with the sheep as a religious symbol. The Lord's people are His sheep, and He is their Shepherd. Nay, the symbol of the sheep is taken to describe the relation of Christ to His people : He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world by the sacrifice of Himself. Each time we come across a shepherd in the Holy Land, the thought comes to one's mind that it was to such as these God first sent his Best of Tidings. They look very picturesque in their loose draperies, called over there *caftan* and *abba*. The staff they carry has a thick heavy notch at the top, and has a quantity of nails driven into it, so that it makes a powerful weapon of offence or defence. Oftentimes I have heard them blowing a weird little melody, just on two or three plaintive notes, produced from a simple instrument made by them out of a cane.

It is quite easy to understand why the shepherds were sore afraid. We in England are breathless with excitement, even in these latter days, when we realise the scene of that night, as we stand with rapt gaze in contemplation of hallowed memories. The glory of the Lord shone about those shepherds. Bathed in the all-pervading sunshine and with the fairy-like colouring of that wondrous country, as I beheld it, all looks to-day indescribably beautiful. What must it have been on that supreme occasion in the glorious Eastern moonlight, when Christ was born, and the glory of the Lord shone around ? The shepherds were visited by angel-messengers, who said : ' Fear not.'

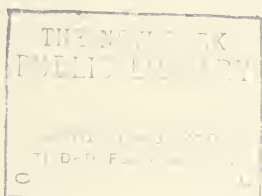
St. Luke ii. verses 10, 11 : ' Fear not : for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

The shepherds said, ' . . . Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us ' (verse 15). So they came with haste, and

found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger, and adored Him. We read that Mary 'kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart' (St. Luke ii. verse 19). Let us too ponder. But let us never be tempted to doubt. Just here it is appropriate for us to turn to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (chapter ix. verse 6) and read: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.'

Truly these are wonderful words, fraught with deepest meaning. How can chance or doubt hold a place in the Bible? Surely not, in face of such prophecies and of such fulfilments on God's part. Such forethought, such wisdom, such continuity of purpose. Indeed, we cannot help seeing His guiding hand through all the ages.

We have here a lovely picture to look at. We see the two holy children, Our Lord Jesus and John the Baptist. They are embracing and kissing one another—a beautiful foreshadowing of their after-life.





Painting

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE
THE ACCADEMIA AT VENICE
CARPACCIO (1470-1519)

CHAPTER XX

THE GOSPELS (JESUS AT BETHLEHEM—AT JERUSALEM— AT NAZARETH)

WHEN Jesus was eight days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple. The Blessed Virgin felt gratitude welling up in her heart. She wished to give expression to this by a thanksgiving offering. According to Eastern custom, those who were rich gave a lamb for a burnt offering ; those that were poor brought two pigeons. Mary was, we see, among the poor folk. The sin-offering was made for the purification of the mother.

St. Luke ii. verse 25 : ‘ And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon ; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel (*i.e.*, the Messianic age), and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ ’ (*i.e.*, the Messiah of God).

How beautiful was this promise of the realisation of the Messianic hope. What a favoured man he was to be allowed to hold the precious Babe in his arms. Moved by the Holy Spirit he came into the Temple when the Blessed Virgin entered, ‘ then took he him in his arms.’ Deeply moved was the old man. He blessed God for this great privilege. Looking first in tenderest love at this marvellous Child, then raising up his eyes in gratitude to God in Heaven, this venerable old man spoke those inspired words : ‘ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation (*i.e.*, the Messiah) which thou hast prepared before the face of all people : a light to lighten the Gentiles (R.V., ‘ a light for revelation to the Gentiles ’) and the glory of thy people Israel ’ (verses 29–32). The happy mother afterwards heard from Simeon those prophetic words how her own heart would be pierced by the sword of sorrow, on account of

the sufferings of her Divine Child, a prophecy fulfilled at the Crucifixion.

The Holy Virgin and Joseph marvelled at Simeon's words. And there was in the Temple along with the others a very old woman, who had lived seven years with her husband till his death, and eighty-four years as his widow, and would, therefore, if she was not more than twelve years when married, be of the great age of a hundred and three. This was 'one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser' (St. Luke ii. verse 36). She corroborated the testimony of Simeon, and showed that she also knew that this Holy Child was the Messiah of Israel. She 'departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day' (verse 37). She came into the Temple that very instant when the infant Jesus was in Simeon's arms, and also gave thanks to the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

We have seen how shepherds sought the Christ-child in order to adore Him. We come now to the visit of the Magi, which the A.V. translates 'wise men' in St. Matthew's account. They came from the East—from Media, Persia, or Babylonia, a priestly caste of magical tendencies, much engaged in study of the stars and divination. Daniel in his lifetime was chief of the Magi of Babylon, a renowned interpreter of dreams, and since the study of the stars was specially carried on in Babylon these Magi were probably Babylonians. The Jewish connection was strong in Babylonia, and therefore the widespread Jewish excitement at this time about the near coming of the Messiah would be well known. On this particular occasion some new star appears to have swum into their field of vision, and to have become connected in their minds with the expectation of the Messiah, to worship whom they had set forth. The Magi were bent on finding the wonderful Child. They came from very far—whether from Persia, Babylonia, or Media is not certain. They at first came to the conclusion that this Holy Child could only have been born at the capital itself, namely, Jerusalem. Thither they went—no doubt on camels, the ships of the desert, richly caparisoned, with gay and bright saddles and harness—accompanied by a retinue of servants laden with precious

gifts, as the Queen of Sheba was when she visited King Solomon, wherewith to do homage to this new-born King.

Having arrived at Jerusalem, they heard the old prophecies of Bethlehem as the place of the wonderful birth. The object of their coming aroused the bitter jealousy of the evil-minded Herod, known as Herod the Great, who reigned from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C.

At the time of which we are speaking Herod was king of Judæa, but he was a tributary under the Roman Emperor. Herod was a most cruel tyrant : he killed his wife and his two sons, and he was extremely suspicious of plots against himself ; so he sat lonely on his throne and died a dreadful death. His memory accordingly has been handed down to posterity as infamous. In his perplexity as to the inquiries of the Magi about the Infant-King, he began asking the chief priests and the scribes where Christ should be born. Herod was told by the chief priests and scribes, ' In Bethlehem of Judæa,' for everything had come about as had been foretold by the prophets. Have we not just read for ourselves in the prophets Micah and Isaiah that this was so indeed ? Herod was told : ' And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda ' (St. Matthew ii. verse 6).

The Magi were instructed to search diligently for the young Child until they found Him, and then to return to Herod, in order that he, too, might worship Him. The Magi arrived at Bethlehem, and there they saw the star standing, or seeming to stand, over the place where the Babe was lying. When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and when they were come unto the house they fell down on their knees and worshipped the Child.

To the Holy Child the Wise Men presented their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. All these were, it is said, symbolical : gold was the proper offering to a King, symbolising Christ's royalty ; frankincense, or incense, which is a dry, resinous, sweet-smelling gum, symbolised Christ's divinity ; myrrh is the gum of a tree which grows in Palestine on the slopes and hillsides. This gum has a bitter taste : on this account we take it that this offering of myrrh was symbolical of the bitterness and suffering, and especially of the Passion, which Christ had to endure while on earth.

To the Magi, who were interpreters of dreams, was given the

warning, very appropriately in a dream, not to return to Jerusalem. As by a flash of lightning on a dark night, we see these real but mysterious personages for a moment, and then they disappear for ever.

Herod soon realised that he had been mocked and that his orders had been disregarded. He was furious, and he resolved that, although not able to find this Royal Child, he would make sure of preventing such a rival from sitting on his throne. He ordered all male children of two years old and under to be slain. The mothers of Bethlehem were made to moan and to grieve over the loss of their beloved little ones. Jeremiah (xxx. 15) has words applied by St. Matthew to the slaughter of the Innocents: 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not.' And, indeed, how was it possible for these poor mothers ever to be comforted or consoled for the loss of their slaughtered children? Our Heavenly Father was all the while watching over the safety of His Divine Son. Jesus was far away from envy, hatred, and malice. Joseph had another dream, and once more was directed by God what to do. St. Matthew ii. 13: '. . . Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt.' Joseph arose, and started by night, and we read of his taking the young Child and his mother to their destination. Here they remained until Herod had died.

Guided in a dream by God's angel, Joseph returned to the land of Israel with the young Child and the Blessed Virgin. Herod was dead, but Archelaus reigned in his father's stead, and Joseph was still fearful of returning to Judæa, and decided to go into Galilee, to a city called Nazareth. Once more let us recall St. Matthew's characteristic Jewish view: 'He shall be called a Nazarene' (St. Matthew ii. 23).

The Flight into Egypt has been treated by many of the Italian artists. They paint Mary seated on her ass, with her precious Babe clasped closely in her arms, and Joseph leading them along on their journey, passing the mountain of Olivet on their right, and leaving Jerusalem behind with all its walls and towers, as they were making their way towards Egypt.

THE
SHEPHERDS
ADORING
A PAINTING
IN THE
ACCADEMIA
AT FLORENCE
GIORLANDAIO
(1449-1494)



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In Nazareth, where our Holy Family now took up their abode, we have another famous town of Palestine, ever to be remembered in connection with our Saviour's life. The situation of Nazareth is beautiful in the extreme. ✓ Situated on the gentle slopes of the lower hills of Galilee, its houses are of white limestone, and stand in the midst of profuse greenery, fruit trees, olive groves, and vineyards. Everything looks exquisitely clean, and all is kept in good order by the inhabitants of to-day, who are mostly Christians. ✓

Seen from my tent, pitched on the opposite low range of hills, Nazareth rising right in front afforded me every opportunity of feasting my eyes on infinite beauty of scenery, and on flowering gardens which shed forth most delightful perfumes. A fine building which stands out boldly on an eminence commands attention. This is the Girls' College, where little Arab children are brought up, and are taught Christ's loving words of command: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.'

Never shall I forget the ride I took after visiting this Girls' Home, and having been shown round by a little girl, called Nassra. Translated into English, this name is Victoria. All the little children are happy, and the Englishwomen who keep the school provided a great pleasure for me. All these Arab girls united and sang songs and hymns in English, which the children pronounced very well indeed, and also in Arabic, which sounded melodious and soft. Riding away from here, up towards the hill beyond and above this building, I arrived at the summit of the range of hills. One thought was ever uppermost—the thought that our Blessed Saviour must often have visited this same place. I felt this indeed to be for myself, as for every Christian, holy ground.

Hither He must have walked to be alone, and to approach and commune with His Father in Heaven. His eyes must have beheld all the beauty of the scene spread before Him. On that memorable evening on which I was first privileged to feel the associations of those sublime surroundings, I looked out into the country on all sides: there was not a single view which was not wonderfully inspiring. There, at one's feet, the plain of Esdraelon lay spread out, like a thick-piled Eastern carpet. On one side was Mount Carmel, on the other Mount Tabor. Then Megiddo, Samaria, Gilboa; the

village of Endor, notorious for the witch who was consulted by Saul ; Jezreel in the middle of cornfields ; with Mount Hermon, snow-crested, towering over all. Quite close by is the site of the tiny village of Sesostris, considered to be the spot where stood the native village of the Virgin Mary, where she dwelt as a child, according to a tradition, with her parents.

Away in another direction, is the Haifa Harbour, with the town of Acre, and the blue and calm Mediterranean beyond. Then again, are to be seen the breezy uplands of Naphtali and Zebulun. The bluest of blue skies is above, the dearest of flowers under one's feet. Never shall I forget it all. Oh ! to be there once more, and for numberless people to have an opportunity to be there, in order that each might drink in and make his own the atmosphere and associations of one of the holiest places on earth. Simply to realise this, that our Lord had once rested here, that His gaze had dwelt upon every detail of this country, that here was where He had often knelt in prayer, is an inspiring and elevating experience.

The sun went down, a huge golden-red ball, and dipped into the sea. Its dying glory suffused the heavens for a while, and the sky took tints and hues which baffle description. Quietly nature gave itself up to repose, and the flowers closed their tired eyelids. One silvery star appeared and looked around as if to ascertain that it had made no mistake as to its appointment. It seemed to express surprise, but not for long was it left alone or in doubt. Soon, one by one, peeped out its companions, and they all gave a smile of welcome to one another. Through the clear dry Eastern atmosphere the stars seemed double the size they seem at home, as their silvery fires flashed and flared through the darkening vault of heaven. Thus ever changing, but ever abiding in beauty, God's great infinity of the Universe opened vista after vista of exquisite and varied loveliness. It required a wrench on my part to tear myself away from this enthralling scene ; but my pony had carried me up well, and he knew evening had come on apace, and that well-earned rest was now his due. He was now pawing the ground, and I took it to mean that he was asking me for his much-needed supper. So we left the place of hallowed memories, of grandeur and greatness,

resting in God's hands. We took away a priceless possession, a memory which we shall ever keep. It is from such vivid experiences on the spot that we gain a sense of the reality of what we read in the Bible.

The people of Galilee in our Saviour's time spoke two languages : Aramaic, or Syrian, which had taken the place of Hebrew, and Greek, which had come to be the language of the Eastern Empire since the days of Alexander the Great. Our Saviour evidently spoke and read Greek with facility, and the Greek Bible was the one with which He was most familiar, and which He habitually quoted for most parts of the Old Testament. To-day, French and Turkish or Arabic are freely used in the Holy Land. Jesus would be taught the Jewish faith and the Jewish Scriptures, and would be versed in all customs and laws of the synagogue at Nazareth. We know that every year there was held in Jerusalem the great feast of the Pass-over. His parents regularly attended this festival, one which the Jews had never, since the earliest days, allowed to fall into permanent disuse.

When Jesus was twelve years old, He was taken by His parents to join in this great religious duty.

The path down from Nazareth is rocky and rough. Presently it leads to the very plain of Esdraelon which we have been speaking about, where Barak and Sisera fought, and on to the valley of Shechem, which is beautiful beyond words, wild and romantic. Whispering streams and melodious song of happy birds cheer the wanderer on his way. The Holy Family would pass on in turn to Shiloh, which at the present day is marked by a tottering ruin and a solitary tree, and then on to Bethel and the many places we have already spoken about. Each incident of the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem would be of intense interest to a boy : the lighting of the fire at night to cook an evening meal ; the fetching of the water from well or stream ; the men ungirthing and unloading the animals and attending to their wants. Above all, the magic charm of the open country itself. All is so marvellously attractive. Perhaps five or six days would be spent on this journey. Jerusalem, the rock-enthroned city, would at last be reached.

As regards Bible days, as we have seen, the city of Jerusalem

was first mentioned in connection with that mysterious Priest-King Melchisedec, king of Salem, as it was then called. It may have been called Jebus at a later date, when the Jebusites were its inhabitants. To this day we have traces of their handwriting as to the foundations of the city. The holy rock is now enclosed and protected by the Mosque of Omar, which was built by a Mohammedan potentate. When the tribes entered Canaan, Jerusalem is first mentioned by that name as the city of King Adoni-zedec in the book of Joshua x. verse 1. King David removed his court from Hebron to Jerusalem. Here too was placed the Holy Ark, and afterwards was built the Holy Temple, from which Jerusalem obtained its name of the Holy City. We have read about the many wars which laid it low, and also how idolatrous Jews worshipped the host of heaven and groves and other idols in the Temple, even in the days of King Manasseh. Then how Jerusalem was restored and the true worship re-established in solitary majesty in the Temple by different good kings and prophets. We read then of internal conflicts, and of the falling out of the Tribes amongst themselves; we read of the Assyrians attacking and of the Chaldeans besieging and taking the Holy City, and leading its inhabitants into captivity. 'Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who . . . had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age' (2 Chronicles xxxvi. verse 17). The Jews have never left off lamenting the lost independence of their beloved city. After a glorious struggle against the Syrian rule, Palestine passed into the possession of the world-empire of Rome, and the Jews were subject to Rome at the time of our Lord's ministry on earth. Jerusalem, from its close connection with our Lord, holds a place of its own as the most sacred city of the world.

And now, after this short digression and attempted description of Jerusalem, let us get back to the Bible, and read of our Blessed Lord when he was a boy of twelve, and think of the city and the festal garb it wore on the occasion of that memorable feast of the Passover. People would come, as we said awhile ago, from far and near, and Jerusalem would be full to overflowing. Outside the city walls tents would be put up for the accommodation of friends and travellers. Green boughs would be cut off and laid across the



Fresco

CHRIST AND THE DOCTORS
THE CATHEDRAL AT SARAGNO
LUCINI (1470-1530)

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canvas to protect the inmates against the heat. People would festively adorn all available open spaces with palms and green branches, until the whole place would be decked out. Eastern street life is at best noisy, so would it be more than ever on this special occasion. At such a time even to-day vendors shout their wares ; drivers urge on fatigued animals ; in the narrow streets people jostle one another, and it is impossible to describe all the stirring scenes that meet the eye on the arrival, on such a day, in an Eastern town, of vast multitudes of people. Into such surroundings would the Boy Jesus be launched on this His first journey from home. What a multitude of impressions would crowd in on His receptive mind. The approach to the Temple would be full of interest on account of the worship He would there see conducted for the first time. The young worshipper would be eager and alert not to miss anything of what might be heard and seen.

After worship in the Temple we know that Jesus took the first important step in His life as it is recorded in the Bible. The most learned of the Jews at that time were called Rabbis, and used to teach their pupils in the Temple courts and porticos. The Rabbis sat on carpets spread on the pavement, and their pupils sat round them. They taught by putting questions to their pupils, and they encouraged their pupils to put questions to them. Jesus during this visit to Jerusalem joined of His own choice one of these Rabbi's classes, and such was the result of the questions which He asked, and the depth of the answers which He gave, that a number of Rabbis seem to have collected to hear this marvellous boy.

Our Italian picture represents Him as occupying a central position, or walking about among these Rabbis, grown old in years as well as in experience, but St. Luke tells us that Jesus was found in the Temple 'sitting' in the midst of the doctors (that is, the rabbis), hearing them and asking them questions.

At the close of the feast there would be a great exodus. All once more would be turmoil and uproar and preparation for the departure.

From our Lord's twelfth year up to His thirtieth there is almost a blank in the records of His life. There are a few valuable allusions, which enable us to form an idea of how those years were passed

which we will consider later on. The birth of Jesus was, as we have seen, closely associated with John the Baptist's birth, and we now come to a still closer association in after-life. The event which brought them so closely together was the baptism of Jesus, a rite which was administered by John the Baptist. John's message was simply this : the Kingdom of God is at hand.

It was by the symbolical use of the old Jewish rite of Baptism that John the Baptist emphasised his teaching. He appeared upon the scene as the successor, after a long interval, of the prophets of old. From the very beginning of his preaching he commanded the attention of those to whom he addressed the announcement of the Kingdom, which they all looked for as near at hand. He called the people to repentance, for no gift could be granted from above so long as people were not sorry for their sins. John had an immense attraction for people of all classes. He was, in a remarkable way, a close copy of Elijah. He was a Nazarite from his mother's womb ; one who had never tasted wine, a total abstainer from his birth : an ascetic of the severest kind, wearing the rough camel's hair of which the Arabs weave their tents, a fabric far more trying to the skin than sackcloth. This rough mantle, just like Elijah's mantle, was girt round by a leathern girdle, and for food he had nothing but what he could pick up in the desert : locusts, of which the untilled land in the East is full, and wild honey from the nests which the bees make in the hollows of the trees and rocks. After a long preparation in the desert, whither he had retired to be alone with God, he had come down to Jordan, as Elijah came out of the wilds of Gilead, and his vigorous denunciations of prevalent sins as well as his ascetic habits and appearance, won him a wide hearing.

When interest in this strong personality increased, the multitude began questioning John as to who he was and on whose authority he was teaching. John confessed, and denied not, that he was not the Messiah, a supposition which his powerful personality had awakened in the minds of men. His fame spread through the country, and at Jerusalem, the centre of religious and national life, people became curious to find out all about this new prophet and what was his message to his generation. Many Pharisees and

ST. JOHN
PREACHING
A FRESCO
IN THE
CLOISTER
DELLO SCALZO
AT FLORENCE
ANDREA
DEL SARTO
(1487-1531)



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Sadducees came, with other people, to the Jordan, where John was baptizing, and were unsparingly condemned by the Baptist. The common people were baptized by him : the Pharisees and Sadducees were not, probably being repelled by his fierce denunciations.

This striking and original preacher from the wilderness said of himself (St. Matthew iii. verse 11) : ' I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance : but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.'

To see this Jordan where John was baptizing is to see a thing of beauty. The place where nowadays all pilgrims from distant lands all over the earth assemble to be baptized is said to be the very spot where John the Baptist carried on his ministry. The water is blue and the banks are green with graceful and bright green foliage. In the desert country near the Dead Sea, which is not far off, nature appears to be a lifeless thing, arid and bare and sandy. All the sweeter is the surprise when the Jordan breaks upon our view, winding along like a green ribbon through the sun-parched landscape.

And just here let me mention something about this Jordan in connection with the pilgrims of to-day. Thousands of these yearly tread the pass between Jerusalem and Jericho, which bears the name of Wady Kelt. Russians, members of the ancient Eastern Church, are perhaps in greatest number. In their picturesque Russian national costume, much the worse for wear, they wend their way along on foot under the broiling sun, some of them barefoot, others still in snow-shoes. In order to arrive at the Jordan at Easter time, they are obliged to leave their native villages weeks beforehand, often in mid-winter, and this makes it necessary to pile on all their warm garments, which naturally they find, on arrival in that land of sun, uncomfortably burdensome. Most of them in one hand carry a kettle to make tea, without which no Russian can live, while in the other they carry a bottle in readiness to fill with water from the river Jordan, which is considered sacred. This they take back to Russia as the greatest of treasures to those who are waiting for their return in the home country. Most of them, too, are provided with a pilgrim's staff, attached to which they carry a palm or green bough, in remembrance of the banks of the Jordan.

It is a most impressive sight to see these thousands of men and women, filled with reverence and regardless of hardships, bent on their pilgrimage, cheerfully undergoing many privations and untold fatigue during their long and tedious journey. It is uplifting to realise the spirit of simple faith that sends them forth to the Holy Land, the spirit to satisfy which they are willing to risk their lives. One is filled with admiration, admitting that to them their religion, with its intense reality, is everything. Many of these people literally die by the roadside every year.

We now come to the supreme moment when Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him: the sinless Jesus came, identifying Himself with sinners that He might become their Saviour—in other words, the purpose of this baptism, was that baptism should be the preparation for entrance into the Kingdom of God, for the sinless King, as well as for His faulty subjects. Till Jesus came to be baptized by John, John had not recognised that Jesus was the Messiah, but he did recognise that his Cousin was a higher and holier man than himself, and he felt himself altogether unworthy to baptize Him. John forbid Christ, saying: ‘I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?’ (St. Matthew iii. verse 14). And Jesus answered and said unto him: ‘Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness’ (*i.e.*, John’s baptism regarded as part of the Old Covenant).

And here we look at our picture of John. St. Mark i. verses 10 and 11 says: ‘And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ Till the descent of the Holy Spirit, John did not realise that Jesus was the Messiah; the descent of the Spirit made him certain.

In St. Luke’s Gospel (iii. verse 22) we read: ‘And a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.’ From the time of His baptism certainly, Jesus had the full consciousness that He was the Messiah, and the full resolve to establish the Kingdom of Heaven proclaimed by John the Baptist, purified and freed from popular misconceptions.



Painting

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST
THE BELLE ARTI AT VENICE
TITIAN (1477-1576)

John the Baptist was not allowed to end his life peacefully. His mission was fulfilled when he had prepared his countrymen for the coming of the Messiah. Herod the Tetrarch had listened often to John the Baptist. The Baptist had openly shown his disapproval of Herod's marriage with Herodias, his own brother's wife. The Gospel of St. Mark (vi. verse 17), says that ' Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison, for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.' John the Baptist had told Herod that he was offending against God's law. Therefore, Herodias, resenting this, had a bitter grudge against the prophet. Had she been able she would have killed him (St. Mark vi. verse 20): ' For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him ' (kept him safe, R.V.); ' and when he heard him, he did many things ' (he was much perplexed, R.V.), ' and heard him gladly,' *i.e.*, he felt the godly spirit of the Baptist's fearless appeal.

Unfortunately, however, an opportunity came for that wicked woman, Herodias, to do her worst. It was Herod's birthday; he ' made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates (chief men) of Galilee, and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.' She went forth unto her mother, and asked her what she was to ask, and her mother, burning for revenge, promptly said, ' The head of John the Baptist.' Straightway with haste the damsel went unto the king, and stated that she desired him to give her, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist. The king was exceedingly sorry, yet, for his oath's sake, and for the sake of them that sat with him, he would not reject her. He ordered one of his bodyguard to bring John the Baptist's head. This man went to the prison and beheaded him. He brought in the head of John the Baptist in a charger (*i.e.*, a dish), gave it to the damsel, and she presented it to her mother.

When this terrible crime got noised abroad, John's disciples came and took up his corpse and laid it in a tomb. John had brought on himself this death, by fearlessly doing his duty and deliberately rebuking the vicious king for his sin, a rebuke which was

the mandate of God. It is quite possible that the question might occur to him, just as it does to all of us, why God allowed him to languish in Herod's gloomy prison, while our Lord was actually then on earth, He who had only to say the word, and to set him free immediately. God's ways are not our ways. We must accept such apparent victories of evil as the mysterious part of His wise purposes, who alone sees the end from the beginning.

We may observe that in sending out the Twelve Apostles, and in sending out the Seventy, our Lord gave no command to baptize. The reason is plain, if Baptism, till after our Lord's Resurrection, when the formal commission to baptize was given, was, as we have said, preparatory to entrance into the Kingdom, a symbol, and not a sacrament that confers grace. Christian Baptism, as we possess it, begins with our Lord's great commission to His Church, when He met them by appointment on the mountain in Galilee, and commanded them: 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' (Matthew xxviii. verse 19). (R.V., 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name.')

It was not till the Church received the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, that St. Peter urged the Jews to 'repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost' (Acts ii. verse 38). Christian baptism then, being based on a distinct command of the Risen Lord, is binding on all Christians. It is a plain command, and was so understood by the first Christians who heard it given, and it has been so understood and carried out by the various branches of the universal Church of Christ ever since.

Children are brought to baptism as an act of obedience to this command of Christ, and to deprive them of baptism is to deprive them of the high privilege of membership in the Church of Christ, who said: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God' (Mark x. verse 14).

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Painting

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST
THE CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI IN BRAGORA AT VENICE
CIMA DA CONEGLIANO (1460-1534)

CHAPTER XXI

THE GOSPELS (THE SILENT YEARS OF PREPARATION—THE BAPTISM —THE TEMPTATION—THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST)

IN the beginning of the last chapter we said that there was a gap in the recorded memories of our Lord's life from His twelfth to His thirtieth year. But there are allusions scattered through the narrative of the Gospels, and passages in our Lord's parables and other teachings, which when brought together give us some idea how these silent years of preparation were spent.

It is plain, to begin with, that our Lord had a deeply religious mother, one whose mind was stored with the best of the contents of the Old Testament. To remember the Magnificat alone, is enough to assure us of this. That His mother was also a woman of rare thoughtfulness is proved by the way she pondered over her own mysterious experiences, and as time went on over her mysterious relationship as a human mother to her Divine Son. And not only was the Blessed Virgin a religious woman, but Joseph, the head of the household at Nazareth, was one that feared God, as we are told.

Under such influences the Child Jesus developed from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood. He was well known to His fellow-villagers as Jesus the Carpenter (Mark vi. 3), working with Joseph at his trade. He attended the services of the Synagogue, and listened to the reading of Moses and the Prophets, and, at a later date, was in the habit of reading the lessons of Scripture Himself, when invited to do so by the ruler of the Synagogue. His intimate knowledge of the Old Testament is evident throughout His teaching, a knowledge which could only have been acquired by a life-long study. His frequent quotations from the Scriptures show that He generally used the Greek version, but that He was

able to read them in the original Hebrew, such a passage as Matthew v. verse 18, with such expressions as one jot or one tittle seem to show ('jot,' the Greek 'iota,' represents 'yod,' which is the smallest letter in Hebrew; 'tittle' represents one of the tiny horns by which Hebrew letters are distinguished).

There were other influences that went to prepare our Lord's mind for His coming work. His sayings, especially in the Parables, reveal extraordinary sympathy with, and knowledge of, human character, and a sympathy scarcely less deep with external nature. The secret of His matchless sympathy was, that He saw God in both and both in God. He had entered with interest into every detail of the life of the mountain villages and the lakeside towns, and He used what He had observed to illustrate His teaching. He saw the evil in the world better than any one, but He loved the world nevertheless and longed to deliver it. This longing must have been working in His mind for years, before He came to John to be baptized as the introduction to the work of His Messiahship. As to His sympathy with nature, there is ample evidence in the illustrations with which He filled His teaching. A sensitive eye and heart is revealed in such allusions as those to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. And above all these influences, and conditioning them all, was the supreme influence, the mighty mystery of His union with God, which gave Him a constant and intense consciousness of God's nearness, which, even as we can dimly perceive it in the brief and fragmentary records of His words and deeds in the Gospels, is seen to be altogether unique; that is, like nothing that had been in the world before or has been seen since.

Our Lord had insisted on John baptizing Him, though John, perceiving how greatly superior to himself was this new candidate for baptism, was unwilling. As He came up out of the water, the Vision of the dove-like Holy Spirit and the Voice from Heaven were given as unmistakable proof of His Messiahship. With these signs the life of our Lord as the Messiah had begun. The first step in that life was not what might have been expected. The Spirit which had descended upon Him at His Baptism drove Him into the Wilderness. St. Mark says, in chapter i. verses 12, 13: 'And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was

there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan ; and was with the wild beasts ; and the angels ministered unto him.' The wilderness was inhabited by wild animals. Our Lord lived in their midst. They must have found very soon, by experience, that He meant them no harm ; that He was not come to hunt them or to slaughter them, like most men they were accustomed to meet.

While still in His boyhood, the tokens of our Lord's consciousness of His unique relation to the Father were unmistakable. But in the deliberate step of coming to John for baptism, we see His resolve to enter upon His public ministry, and the witness of the baptism left Him no doubt that He was to be the Messiah, the King and the Saviour who was to establish the Kingdom of God. With the resolve to carry out this mission, the question must have arisen : how was it to be done ? There were many ways that would suggest themselves, and the most obvious was to use the Messianic expectation as He found it among the people ; to make concessions to, or to accept, the conception of an earthly kingdom founded on force, which was firmly established, as we have seen, by the great national success under Judas Maccabæus in the past, and by the pressure of the scornful Roman rule in the present. Our Lord was conscious of new powers in Himself. With the consciousness came the question how He was to use them. He felt that the Spirit of God in Him could give Him power to do anything.

Then there came another spirit, the Spirit of Evil, personified in part of the Old Testament as well as in the New, under the name of Satan, and began to suggest a use of the powers given by the good Spirit of God, which was not in accordance with that good Spirit. Our Lord was human, as well as Divine ; Perfect Man as well as Perfect God. His humanity made the Temptation, or testing time, possible and necessary. His purpose of establishing, as the Messiah, the Kingdom of God, required that a definite plan of action should be thought out ; and solitude, apart from all human advice or interference, was the position to which the Holy Spirit directed our Lord. Good men have before now been tempted to seek to attain to a good end by means that are not good, and many have yielded to the temptation. This kind of temptation is that which the Evil Spirit uses to assail high natures, which are above

the reach of common forms of selfishness or self-indulgence. The human nature of our Lord made temptation possible. His mission as the Messiah made it necessary. The key to the right understanding of our Lord's Temptation is to be found in the inspired words of Scripture (Hebrews iv. verse 15): 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'

After fasting forty days, our Lord's human imagination was naturally filled with visions of food, for which his exhausted body felt an intense craving. The stones of the wilderness to hungry eyes might suggest loaves of bread. The evil spirit used the opportunity (Matthew iv. verse 3): 'And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' Our Lord must have been almost worn out with His forty days' fast, and had He hesitated, and had He parleyed with temptation, He might have said to Himself, surely it is right to use the Messiah's power to preserve the Messiah's life. But He felt, as He always after felt, that He could not rightly use His wondrous powers to help Himself, but only to help others. His answer to the Evil Spirit conveys a profound lesson to us. He used the Bible, safely stored in His memory, to overcome this subtle temptation (Matthew iv. verse 4): 'But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

This is a happy use of one of our Lord's best-loved books—Deuteronomy (viii. verse 3). This was the first Temptation. The sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—in our Lord's hand, repulsed the Tempter's attack. But the evil spirit had not exhausted his devices. He took Jesus with him in imagination to a pinnacle of the Temple, and urged Him to cast Himself down, and leave it to God to bring Him safely out of the danger. This would have been to substitute presumption for faith; to break God's natural law, and to expect God to prevent the consequences by direct intervention. Again, our Lord used the sword of the Spirit to repulse this new attack (Matthew iv. verse 7): '. . . It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' This is a fine reminiscence of Deuteronomy vi. 16. :

Once more the evil spirit took our Lord up in imagination to an exceeding high mountain, from which a vision shaped itself of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. His offer was, 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me' (Matthew iv. verse 9). The meaning of this was that Jesus was to take a short cut to gain power and wealth for the good end He had in view, and to do this would have been to serve and worship the Evil One, albeit for the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This would have been the case had He used the Messianic hope of the Jews, by putting Himself at their head and expelling the Romans, and so establishing by the sword an earthly kingdom. Our Lord again used His knowledge of the Bible to repulse the Tempter. Matthew iv. verse 10: 'It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' This is taken from Deuteronomy x. verse 20.

Matthew iv. verse 11: 'Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.'

After the Temptation our Lord returned to the Jordan valley, and seems to have remained in that neighbourhood, which was not very far from Nazareth, for some time. Then one day John, who was still baptizing, saw Jesus coming to him, and looking on Him intently said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (John i. verse 29). Nothing appears to have followed. These and many other words of the Baptist reveal a remarkable identification of the suffering Servant of God (predicted in Isaiah liii.) with Jesus, whom he had baptized.

John i. verses 35-42: 'Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found

the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.'

The passage which we have just given describes an event which seemed without much significance at the time, but was fraught with far-reaching consequences. When John and Andrew, the two disciples of the Baptist, left their master to join themselves to Jesus, the Christian Church came into existence. These two were the first Christians, the first disciples of the new teacher, whom by the next day they had recognised to be the Messiah. John and Andrew had been trained by the Baptist, and they joined Jesus as the result of the Baptist's suggestion. He did not tell them to go, but we can see that he meant them to follow Jesus when, earnestly gazing on Him, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

To these two first Christians were soon added more, for the Christian Church began to grow as soon as it was born. Philip and Nathanael were among the first. This was only the beginning, and the Church was not yet fully organised. The next step took place at Capernaum some time after, when Jesus called Simon Peter, and Andrew his brother, to leave their fishing on the lake and all their possessions, and follow Him. With them he called their partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee; and these four disciples, thus separated from the world to give themselves to Jesus, were the nucleus of the visible Church. These were the four chief Apostles.

Then came the calling of Matthew, the customs' collector at Capernaum, of which we must give a fuller account presently; and this was quickly followed by the call of the rest of the Twelve Apostles. The call to leave their homes and their business to be with Christ, and to be sent forth in His service, was made first, as we have seen, to two pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, and was gradually extended to Matthew and to the rest until the number reached twelve.

As to these names, it is enough to say that Bartholomew (*i.e.*, the son of Tolmai) is identified with Nathanael; Simon the Canaanæan (R.V.) was one of the Zealots; Judas Iscariot was a native of Kerieth in Judæa. Of what class were these twelve Apostles composed? Though they belonged to the middle and

lower classes, some of them were in comfortable positions. The fishermen were owners of boats on the lake, and Zebedee, the father of James and John, had 'hired servants.' John had an acquaintanceship with the high priest and had a house at Jerusalem. Matthew was a customs' collector. Simon the Canaanite belonged to the nationalist party. The Twelve were far from understanding our Lord's teaching at once. It was given to them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom as He told them, but only very gradually. After some training he sent them out as Missionaries—*i.e.*, Apostles—to the country parts to do a work of healing, when He was not able to go Himself, and to preach, saying: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' This simple heralding of the coming of the King in His Kingdom, seems to have been the whole Apostolic message; at first probably because the Apostles were not capable as yet of more advanced teaching.

Our Lord's human yearning for sympathy found, after a time, some answer in three disciples (two of whom were the first to come to Him), Peter, James, and John, who became a sort of inner circle in the Brotherhood, and to whom our Lord looked for support on special occasions. One of them, John, rose from discipleship to intimate friendship, and was known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. John is the disciple who was 'lying on Jesus' breast' (John xiii. verse 25) at the Last Supper, through whom always, as on this occasion, the other disciples sought any special information they desired from their Lord. John was the disciple to whom, as His most trusted friend, Jesus, from the Cross, confided the care of His beloved Mother; and John took her home after that heart-rending agony which only a devoted mother's love could know.

A short time ago we looked at a picture of St. John. In works of art we see him always pictured with an eagle. Each of the four Evangelists has his own special emblem. In regard to the eagle of St. John, we know that this bird easily soars to the greatest heights, and delights to do so. It is a beautiful thought that our Evangelist also is one who loved to soar upward towards heaven, and finds his native atmosphere there. This friend who lay on Jesus' breast knew most of his Master's heart, and best reveals it

in his words. John had a far higher and truer conception of his Lord's Divinity than any of the other Evangelists.

We have spoken about St. John, who was one of the four chief Apostles. His brother James occupies a minor place, as does Peter's brother, Andrew. Peter himself was the first of the Apostles in active life, as John was first in thought and feeling; Peter was a man of great energy and promptitude in action. Our Lord, whose marvellous insight at once read the character of a man, saw this when Andrew first brought his brother to Him (John i. verse 42): 'And when Jesus beheld him, he said . . . thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, A stone.' The meaning of this was that Peter would be a rock in the strength of his devotion to a cause he espoused. But temptation disclosed many defects in the rock-man. He proved unstable again and again as we shall see; yet always returned to his first position, and in the end justified the name which the Lord had given him.

Peter's chief weaknesses were pride, rash self-confidence, and fear of ridicule, and till those were removed by his heartfelt repentance after the great denial, he was hindered in the following of his Lord. His Lord's free forgiveness and generous trust after his failure made him a new man. He ceased to trust himself, or think of himself. He trusted in and thought only of his Lord. But he retained the innate weak tendency of his character, and incurred the rebuke of St. Paul (Galatians ii. verse 11). Peter, however, was the first to confess his Lord's divinity (Matthew xvi. 16), and on St. Peter, as thus confessing his Lord's divinity, the Church was founded, Peter, as the representative Apostle, sharing all powers with the rest.

Having given some account of the calling of the Christian Church, and the sending forth of the first Apostles or Missionaries, to preach the Kingdom of God, for which purpose we have taken occurrences somewhat out of their order in point of time, we will now prepare the way for some account of our Lord's Life, by considering two of its characteristics. His Life consisted of His Words and His Deeds. Looking at His Words, we find He very commonly chose Parables, as the most effective means of impressing His teaching upon His hearers. Looking at His Deeds, we find that He taught

most powerfully by the wonderful works or signs which we call the Miracles.

The shortest description of a Parable is, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The word Parable is derived from a Greek word, meaning, to put a thing beside another, to compare. To take the things that are known to explain the things which are less known, or unknown, is a method which commends itself both to the reason and the experience ; and this is the method of the Parables. The familiar things of earth are used in our Lord's parables to suggest and to explain the unfamiliar spiritual things of heaven. So intimately were parables interwoven in our Lord's teaching, that we are sometimes told by the Evangelists : ' Without a parable spake he not unto them ' (Matthew xiii. verse 34 ; Mark iv. verse 34).

Parables were perfectly familiar to our Lord's hearers. Easterns are accustomed to this mode of teaching. The love of the story, common to all mankind, is specially strong in the East, and our Lord's parables used the love of the story to attract the mind, and to introduce it insensibly to deeper and more difficult things. Our Lord had a further special reason for using the parable. The story form was a magnet to all, but only those who used their own minds, and only those who had ears to hear, could reach the meaning. It must be remembered that our Lord wrote nothing, as far as we know, except once when He stooped down and wrote upon the ground. His teaching was spoken, and He trusted to the memory of those who heard it, and the wonderful Gospels are the justification of His trust.

There are no parables, strictly speaking, in St. John's Gospel, though there are a number of sayings resembling parables, as when our Lord speaks of Himself as the Good Shepherd, the Door of the Sheep, the True Vine, the Light of the World. The parables Matthew, Mark, and Luke have in common are three : the Sower, the Grain of Mustard Seed, the Wicked Husbandmen. The parables Matthew and Luke have in common are two : the Leaven, and the Lost Sheep.

A single parable is peculiar to Mark : the seed springing up imperceptibly. Matthew has ten parables peculiar to his Gospel and Luke has eighteen. The latter collection is the largest one, and

it contains those most beautiful parables, the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan.

We now turn to the miracles which were an essential part of our Lord's teaching. His purpose was to reveal God. 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son ('God only begotten,' R.V.), which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him' (John i. 18). The whole narrative of the Gospels is so closely interwoven with miracles that it is impossible to retain an un mutilated picture of the historic Christ if the miracles be eliminated. Again, if the miracles be removed, the belief of Christians from the first that Christ was God is made altogether inexplicable. Our Lord claimed to be one with God, and if He was what He claimed to be there was nothing unnatural in His working of miracles. He was at home in two worlds, the seen and the unseen. He brought the powers of the unseen world to bear upon the seen. It is quite what might be expected that a superhuman personality like our Lord's should express itself in works as well as in words that are beyond the reach of man. There is a deep underlying unity in all the miracles of Christ, which comes from the fact that they proceed from and reveal the most profound miracle of all, the supernatural Person of Christ.

A miracle means something wonderful, something that cannot be explained by the known laws of nature, but does not necessarily involve a breach of those known laws. It may be brought about by the action of higher laws as yet unknown to us. When the philosopher faces us with the statement that miracles do not occur, he by no means establishes the position that they have never occurred in the past. The miracles of Christ are miracles which were, as we have seen, quite natural as the expression of His unique personality. And after all, is the statement that miracles do not occur tenable when carefully examined? Do we believe that only those events and those things are true which we are able to explain? Are we able to solve the mystery of the universe, or even the mystery of ourselves? What, where, and whence is the power of individual life in the seed? What, where, and whence is the human soul? What, and where, and whence is the life in a wheat plant or in a new-born infant? As we examine into familiar things like these,



Fresco

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THE SISTINE CHAPEL AT ROME
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the element of mystery in them grows before our eyes. We realise with Hamlet that 'there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'

A careful examination of the Gospels proves that we cannot preserve the vivid and convincing life of the narrative if we leave out the miracles, nor can we retain one class of miracles, the miracles of healing wrought upon man, and remove those wrought upon nature; for the earliest Gospel, that of St. Mark, contains these very nature miracles ingrained in the narrative.

When we come to look at the miracles more closely, one by one, we shall see that they are as St. John calls them, Signs, visible actions by which the Invisible Being makes Himself known, and makes Himself known as Love. For compassionate love is the motive power of the miracles.

The miracles may be divided into two classes: miracles wrought on man and miracles wrought on nature. In the case of man, faith was required in the persons for whom the miracle was performed. It was usually in the open air, by the lakeside, or on the slopes of the encircling hills, that Christ performed them.

A point which must not be forgotten is that the last great miracle of the Resurrection helps our understanding of, and faith in, all the other miracles. The proofs of the Resurrection are cumulative. We have the evidence of St. Paul in his great Epistles to the universal acceptance by Christians of the Revelation of the Risen Lord, and the corroboration, at a later date, by the recollections of the Lord's appearances recorded in the Gospels. We have also the evidence of a sudden change of world-wide importance, by which the fearful and dismayed disciples of the crucified Christ were converted into the fearless and confident believers, the watchword of whose teaching was summed up by St. Paul's Athenian adversaries as 'Jesus and the Resurrection.'

To this evidence may be added the taking of the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, as St. John calls it in the earliest of his writings, as the sacred day of the Christian Church, which can only be explained by the actual appearances which proved the fact of the Resurrection and made the new day and the new Church predominant over the old.

Now, the evidence which has verified the facts of the supreme miracle of the Resurrection, substantiates the lesser evidence for the miracles of the Gospel. It is probable, and natural, that He who showed Himself to be the Risen Lord should have performed the miracles we find in the Evangelists. The evidence of St. Paul to the continuance of miracles in the Christian Church of his day is very important. He was not only aware of miracles performed by others ; he knew that he had performed, and continued to perform, miracles himself. He refers to these miracles of his own, as known to all his readers, appealing to what they had seen ; for instance, he says to the Corinthians (2 Cor. xii. verse 12) that ‘ the signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, by signs and wonders, and mighty works.’ If his readers at Corinth had not seen these miracles, it is incredible that he would have written to them and reminded them of their experience. It follows that if the humble apostle, the slave of Christ, as he called himself, could perform miracles by the Power of the Risen Christ, how much more his wonderful and mighty Master.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GOSPELS (JESUS AT NAZARETH—AT CANA—AT CAPERNAUM—
AT JERUSALEM—WITH NICODEMUS—AT SYCHAR—A WOMAN
OF SAMARIA)

AT the time with which this chapter deals, Jesus had not left His home at Nazareth. It was nine miles thence to Cana, where He visited the Marriage Feast, with His mother and His disciples. The mother of Jesus said to her Son that the wine was finished. These words were the words of one who had reason to know that her Son was no ordinary man. That she expected something is plain, for though her Son's answer gave no encouragement to interference on her part, she turned aside to the servants and said, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it' (St. John ii. verse 5). There stood near six waterpots of stone—huge ones, such as are used all over the Holy Land, in which the water remains fresh and cool. Jesus commanded the servants to fill these water-jars with water. This was done. Then our Lord commanded them, 'Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast' (verse 8). And again they obeyed. The governor drank of the wine and knew not whence it came. He only knew that it was better wine than he had drunk before. Everybody saw for themselves what had happened. Thus was His glory manifested, and His disciples believed on Him.

After this our Lord went to Capernaum with His mother, His brethren, and His disciples; but the fact that He stayed not many days is probably inserted by St. John to show that He had not yet taken up His residence there.

From Capernaum He went to Jerusalem for the Passover with some of His disciples. St. John ii. verses 14-16: 'And he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of

small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen ; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables ; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence ; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.' This expulsion of the buyers and sellers from the outer court of the Temple was a deliberate act, intended as a public declaration that the young Prophet had a mission to Israel, and we see that the declaration was suitably made at the centre of national worship. By this everybody would know that Jesus claimed to be a religious reformer like the old Prophets.

Seeing in Christ's action a claim to exercise high prophetic functions, the Jews asked for some evidence as to His right to do those things which belong to a great Prophet's work. They asked for a sign or token to support His claim. By way of satisfying their demand for a sign, He uses a comparison which compares the Temple with Himself. St. John ii. verse 19 : ' Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

The Jews, misunderstanding the meaning of this, objected. Full well they knew that their Temple had already taken forty and six years to build. How, then, could anyone raise it up in three days ? But He was not speaking of a temple built by the hand of man, but of His own body. St. John, when he wrote, perceived that his Master had, when He spoke, foreseen His death and His Resurrection within three days, which was at the time hidden from His disciples. St. John ii. verse 22 : ' When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ; and they believed the scriptures, and the word which Jesus had said.' His stay at Jerusalem was not without effect, for we read in St. John's account, ' many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did ' (ii. verse 23).

In St. John iii. we read, ' There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.' He was a member of the learned religious council of the nation called the Sanhedrin. All the council were experts on points of Jewish law, and governed the Jewish people under the Roman Empire. St. John iii. verse 2 : ' The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi



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[Teacher], we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.'

We wonder while reading this, why Nicodemus chose the night to visit Jesus. Surely the days were fully occupied for the all-helping Friend of man, and it was hardly fair to break in upon the privacy and quiet of His night. Nicodemus must have had a very special reason. The reason was probably fear of adverse criticism. The Jews were proud ; they thought they knew as much as was necessary. Nicodemus would have been harshly judged and severely condemned, had it been known that he was asking advice from the Prophet of Nazareth. But as against all this, Nicodemus acted on the impulse of his heart, which had been touched. An irresistible attraction had taken possession of him towards this marvellous Teacher. Under the star-lit canopy of heaven, perhaps on the flat roof of the house that held Jesus, we can imagine Nicodemus speaking to the Master, drinking in the words of wisdom coming from the Divine lips. Nicodemus was a man of position ; looked on as one in authority ; a ruler of men. As Jesus spoke to him, high possibilities of a life opened out before him ; this life, which all of us may live by the grace of God. Ought not all of us in the silence of the night to come apart from the world to our Lord and Master, and hold converse in prayer with Him ?

Jesus said to him : ' Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ' (St. John iii. verse 3). This word ' verily '—that is, ' truly '—in the New Testament reminds us rather of the Old Testament expression : ' Thus saith the Lord.' Both are pronounced with full authority and assurance in their respective places. Jesus teaches us to review our everyday life ; and once we look below the surface, according to His instructions, He gives us the right direction. Nicodemus asked and required an explanation. Naturally we are but once born into this world. To our great consolation, our inner man is fashioned in such a way that we are able to make many new starts. When we find ourselves on the wrong road, we are happily able to pull up, and turn our heads in the opposite direction ; this is the great advantage that our inner man has over our outer. Our

body has a limited being. Free will belongs to our inner man alone.

Soon after this conversation with Nicodemus, to whom its record is clearly due, our Lord set out for Galilee, through Samaria. The fourth chapter of St. John is most fascinating. If the readers happen to be girls or women, what must their feelings be when they enter into the full significance of this wonderful story? To see Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman at Sychar (it was held unbecoming for any man of light and learning so much as to speak with a woman) is to gaze on a picture which brings before us the vastness of the change His religion has made in the world. What a fortunate being she was thus to meet Jesus. Thoughts can never soar high enough, nor words suffice, to describe adequately all that happened. We see the woman coming to the ancient well and drawing water for her household. What an unexpected largess of good things was to come her way!

Jacob's Well, near the tomb of Jacob and Joseph, called so up to this present day, is one of the loveliest spots on earth. A picturesque ruin lies scattered about the well. Pink roses in profusion bloom in fresh and airy beauty, shedding fragrance around, as you wander up and down and gaze, and gaze, and never exhaust your sense of admiration. The country further afield which meets the eye is gorgeous.

St. John iv. verse 5, says: 'Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.'

Jesus led the simplest life. This ought to set some of us thinking. We ought to try to curb our desires; to reduce our wants; to simplify our mode of living, according to the pattern laid down for us by our Saviour.

The woman of Samaria was taken by surprise: she could not understand why Jesus should see fit to ask her to give Him drink. She said: 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me,

which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans' (St. John iv. verse 9).

The Samaritans were originally Assyrian colonists. After Sargon had taken Samaria, he carried away the Ten Tribes to Assyria. Men were brought from Babylon as colonists to take their place, and established in the cities of Samaria. At a later date large numbers of Assyrian colonists were added. (Ezra iv. verses 1-10.) These colonists were first called Samaritans in 2 Kings xvii. verse 20. They brought with them their national gods, and troubles having come upon them, as it was supposed owing to the vengeance of the gods of the land, one of the captive Jewish priests was sent to teach them 'how they should fear the Lord' (2 Kings xvii. verse 28). As a consequence they adopted the Jewish ritual and worshipped Jehovah, but did not give up their graven images. After the Captivity, the exclusiveness of the Jews stirred up a mutual enmity which found expression on every opportunity in open hostility, in which the Samaritans generally took the lead. Sometimes Galileans passed through Samaria, which was the shortest way for them to Jerusalem, and on one occasion the Samaritans killed some Galileans who were passing through, and the conflict which arose was referred to Rome for settlement. The feeling of the Jews towards the Samaritans in our Lord's time was shown by their use of the word Samaritan, as a term of contemptuous reproach. For instance, in St. John viii. verse 48, we read, 'Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?' This was the reproach addressed to our Lord by His Jewish adversaries.

Here once more we have a lesson brought home to us by Christ. We see how far He is above party strife. For Him no barriers exist. He asked not then, nor does He ask now, are we Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, or Catholics Roman or Anglican, Eastern Church or Western Church, Congregationalists or Methodists, or any of the other various denominations. St. Paul expresses well the universal scope of the Church that is directed by the mind of Christ: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians iii. verse 28). 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity' (Ephesians vi. verse 24).

And now we return from this digression to the woman of Samaria. The answer she received from Jesus when she addressed Him is found in St. John iv. verse 10: 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.'

Once more we see that it is one thing to ask and another thing to receive. We can only receive at Christ's hands, after having given up the wrong that is in us. Jesus saw into the heart of this woman, that her mind was working towards the desire for a better life. She had led a careless, sinful existence, and Jesus spoke to her about it. She answered Him, 'Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet' (verse 19). Jesus explained that neither on Mount Gerizim, nor yet at Jerusalem, is the one and only place where God is to be worshipped. 'But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him' (verse 23). This profound teaching goes on to say: 'God is a spirit (R.M., 'God is Spirit'): and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth' (verse 24).

This we all remember reading about in the very first chapter of this book. The woman of Samaria had been taught, and knew well, the Messianic expectation. She said to Jesus: 'I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he' (verses 25, 26). It is not difficult for us to believe that our Saviour left a lasting impression for good on this woman's heart.

St. John iv. verse 27: 'And upon this came his disciples, and

marvelled that he talked with the woman (R.V., a woman) : yet no man said, What seekest thou ? or, Why talkest thou with her ? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did : is not this the Christ ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' This surprised the disciples ; they were only thinking of meat which they had fetched from the village. They immediately thought that Christ had been supplied with food by others. Jesus said, ' My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work ' (verse 34), which means that the spiritual food of saving the Samaritan woman so fully satisfied our Lord that he no longer needed bodily food.

' Say not ye,' our Lord went on, ' there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest ? (that is, it was now December, and the harvest would be in April) behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields ; for they are white already to harvest.' This means that the harvest of the Samaritan fields was months distant ; but that the harvest of Samaritan souls was already ripe for the reaper.

We hear that many of the Samaritans believed on Him, and that they asked Him to tarry among them. He complied with their request, and remained with them for two days. Thus it was that our Lord deemed it best to carry on His work ; for Jesus Himself testified that ' a prophet hath no honour in his own country ' (verse 44). Here, amongst strangers, He was gaining ground. St. John's Gospel tells us that from Samaria the Lord returned once more to Cana in Galilee. His teaching was making converts among the Samaritans, but mistrust and suspicion and antipathy were also on the increase among the Jews, who wanted an earthly leader against the Romans, not a spiritual Messiah.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GOSPELS (JESUS AND THE PROBLEM OF THE SABBATH DAY—
THE PREACHING AT NAZARETH—AT JERUSALEM—THE RETURN
TO GALILEE—MIRACLES OF HEALING AT CAPERNAUM—THE
CALL OF ST. MATTHEW)

WE are to notice that Christ did not restrict Himself to six days of the week. We find Him at work healing and curing all who came to Him in the right spirit, even when it was on the Sabbath Day. The Gospels record this fact unmistakably. This is therefore specially intended for our understanding and guidance in life. In the Bible the Sabbath is the seventh day, and means the day of rest. It was probably known to the Babylonians, and it is possible that the Hebrew and Babylonian institutions came from a common source. Be that as it may, the Hebrew institution was free from the superstition associated with the Babylonian observance. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, so would fall on the day which is our Saturday. In all codes of the Pentateuch, the Sabbath is ordained, and its object is to provide a day of rest from field labour for an agricultural community distinctly for a humanitarian purpose.

The attitude of our Lord towards the Sabbath was that of an authoritative Reformer. He used what was good in the institution, while condemning the evil which had been engrafted upon it. He joined in the worship and the teaching in the Synagogue. He taught that 'the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath' (St. Mark ii. verse 27). But against the exaggerated prohibitions of the Jewish legalists of anything in the nature of labour, He set His face like a flint.

Christ's teaching is very simple and, at the same time, profound. Christ's teaching as to the Sabbath greatly offended the Jews. It

was the head and front of His offences against their arid legalism. We read that 'he knew their thoughts' (Luke vi. verse 8), and met them by healing the man. Thereupon 'they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus' (Luke vi. verse 11).

Jesus had been now for some time making His headquarters at Capernaum, from which He had been visiting the country parts, preaching the Gospel, teaching in all the synagogues, and healing the sick. A very striking event in His ministry has now to be recorded. He came to His own town, Nazareth, which He had abandoned for the more busy centre of Capernaum, and now re-visited for the first time. It was only a few months since He had left Nazareth; but how much had occurred in that time. In Galilee, as well as at Jerusalem, He had already made Himself known. On the Sabbath He went into the synagogue at Nazareth. He went into the synagogue, as His custom had been, to join in the common worship. Whether Jesus was invited by the ruler of the synagogue to conduct the whole service, as was usual, or whether He was only invited to read the second lesson and preach, we are not told. They had two lessons in these services, one from the Law and another from the Prophets. Probably, if not already invited, Jesus stood up as a sign that He wished to read the second lesson. The Roll of the Prophets was given to Him. The lessons were read in Hebrew and translated by an interpreter into Aramaic.

St. Luke iv. verse 16: '. . . as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'

After He had read the lesson, Jesus rolled up the book, gave it back to the minister (R.V., attendant) and sat down. When the people in the synagogue saw Him sit down, they knew that He was going to preach. They had, no doubt, heard of His mighty works

at Cana and Capernaum, for we read, 'the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.' In a Jewish synagogue, the preacher sat down to deliver his sermon.

St. Luke iv. verses 21, 22 : 'And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?' The sermon was in Aramaic.

We can see that His townsfolk were jealous of Him. What right had Jesus, the carpenter's son, to identify Himself with the Righteous Servant in the lesson read from Isaiah. Jesus heard their criticisms, and changed the direction of His address, pointing out that both Elijah and Elisha had left the unbelieving Israelites and brought God's blessing to Gentiles, like the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian. The result was immediate : St. Luke iv. verses 28-30 : 'And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.'

After being cast out of Nazareth, Jesus returned to Capernaum, which now became more distinctively His home. At that lakeside town He would, on the Sabbath, preach in the synagogue which the centurion had built—'For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue' (St. Luke vii. verse 5)—and of which the chief ruler was Jairus.

The next move with which we are acquainted is the visit to Jerusalem for the feast generally called the 'Unknown feast,' called by St. John simply 'a feast of the Jews.'

In the valley of the brook Kidron, which emerges from under the rock at the base of the Temple, and into which brook all the blood of the sacrificed animals was wont to run, there was a sheep-market (R.V., gate). This was one of the twelve gateways of the great wall which encircled Jerusalem. Through this particular gate referred to all the animals for the sacrifices were driven on their way to the Temple. Another historical feature of the surroundings was a pool of water known to us as the Pool of Bethesda. It was fed by

a subterranean and intermittent spring. In olden days, to guard against a fierce sun, the pool was covered over. Under the awning, the sick and the poor, the halt and the maimed, used to lie and sit about. This was their retreat, and might be regarded almost as their hospital. But no doctor was there who could treat them. What they came for and believed in was the healing property of the water. To get into it, they thought was to be cured. The bubbling of the water was caused, according to the words of the Gospel, in this way: ' . . . an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had ' (St. John v. verse 4).

One memorable day Jesus was walking here among the sufferers. His kind eyes looked round, and on this particular occasion fixed their gaze on one man from among the many. The Gospel says (verse 5): ' And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.' What a lifetime of helplessness these words convey. Words Jesus addressed to him later imply that in former days he had not been a man of good life. The Scripture tells us that Jesus said to him: ' Wilt thou be made whole? ' (verse 6). Jesus selected the man who most needed healing, and also selected the man who most needed reformation. Here was a surprise. Here was a man who could not believe his own ears. Hopelessly he answered: ' Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me ' (verse 7). This poor cripple could not move; his legs could not support him. Unsuccessfully he had shuffled along as best he could, but he was always too slow and always arrived too late. Our Lord thereupon spoke the words of power: ' Rise, take up thy bed, and walk ' (verse 8). This was said to the man who had not been able to move for thirty-eight years. Then we read (verse 9): ' And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.'

Before proceeding, just let us put in one word about the bed, which the man was ordered to carry at the command of Christ. We must not think of a bed with a framework of wood or iron, which

would be too cumbersome to be taken up and walked away with. In the East it was the custom to lie on a thin mattress, or even a mat, and to cover yourself with your cloak ; the climate there is so dry, and often it is so hot, that the poorer people lie out and sleep under the canopy of heaven. It is therefore quite easy to pick up a few wraps and carry them away, and it is quite easy for us to understand this part of the story. But where the marvel comes in is the actual cure of this hopelessly paralysed man.

After Jesus had spoken His words of power to the paralytic, He immediately took Himself away from among the crowd. He wished for no demonstration. He worked quietly and unassumingly, taking no credit to Himself, but saying that it was due to His Heavenly Father that He wrought His mighty works. What a number of lessons we learn from Christ. There is not one single position in life which is outside the teaching and example of our Blessed Lord. He has had experience of all our conditions, and can supply all our needs. Through Him we can be blessed in every enterprise of ours. We have only to mould our actions according to His pattern.

When the Jews saw the cured man walking, and carrying away his bed, they grumbled, because this carrying of the bed was a breach of the Sabbath day. They accused the man. Gratitude overflowed his heart, now strong and well. Little did he care what the Jews were concerning themselves about. He brushed them aside, and said : ' He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk ? And he that was healed wist not who it was : for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.'

The cured man met in the Temple his benefactor, who addressed the following warning to him : ' Behold, thou art made whole : sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee ' (verse 14). Thus we see this man cured at once of sickness and of sin by the power of God dwelling in Jesus of Nazareth.

When the Jews knew that it was Jesus who had healed the paralytic, they were infuriated. ' Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but

said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God' (St. John v. verse 18).

Jesus realised that no present good could be gained by his teaching to the stiff-necked and stubborn Jews. He decided to go back to Galilee, where His early ministry had been carried on. There He would soon draw again to Himself all His old friends and followers.

In our Lord's time the synagogue at Capernaum was probably a sumptuous building, visited alike by rich and by poor. According to recent research and excavation, opinion inclines to think that experts can definitely decide upon the exact site where stood the synagogue. To-day it is a ruin on the lake shore, where ground overgrown with brushwood and marshy ground alternate. In the year 1905, when I was visiting the small huts huddled together, which go by the name of Tol-huns, I came across excavators at work, who were bringing to light fragments and pieces of columns, and remains of architecture, which told of past splendours, even in the dilapidated condition in which they were. Kindly nature had thrown a mantle of green verdure over the crumbling stone and marble, forsaken for centuries, and had hidden from view the eloquent, although silent, records of bygone ages. The Lord's words were at once remembered. St. Matthew xi. verses 23-25: 'And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'

And here it was also that one pictured the magnificent synagogue in all its splendour, as it was in the time when our Lord preached to the assembled crowds, and when we read of that piercing cry which went up, uttered in despair by the poor distracted maniac. This creature burst upon the Saviour, and asked and implored that he too might be saved. Christ had a power of mysterious mastery over souls possessed by evil spirits. At first the poor devil-possessed

sufferer thus addresses the Saviour (St. Luke iv. verses 34, 35) : ' Let us alone ; what have we do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art ; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.'

Then we can imagine the maniac restored to sanity looking up into that Divine face of perfect pity, marvellously expressive of sympathy and help, and offering grateful thanksgiving for his deliverance.

St. Mark i. verse 32 onwards says : ' And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils ; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.'

Can we not imagine how ready all the sick and sore and crippled people were to flock around the never-erring and ever-ready Curer ? Are we not ourselves eager to drink in the healing waters of the soul-refreshing teaching of this Minister of God's Holy Word, who ever dwells on our Father's love, illustrating it thus by His own gentle handling of all afflicted creatures brought unto Him ? The same chapter of St. Mark, verse 35, goes on to say : ' And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' ' Solitary place ' (R.V., ' desert place ') properly means a waste of wild untilled ground outside the town.

There was great excitement in Capernaum. They were all eager to find this wonderful Prophet and Healer. Peter and others came to Him, and told Him, ' All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also : for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils ' (St. Mark i. verses 37-39).

The next sufferer to appeal to the great Healer was a leper. Leprosy is about the saddest of all the sad illnesses human flesh is heir to. It existed in the days of the Old Testament, and was the

same disease cured by our Saviour, and still exists incurable to-day. At Jerusalem there is now a Leprosy Hospital. But in spite of this, numbers of poor lepers lie and crouch about certain streets, usually against a high wall by the roadside, begging of passers-by. Most of them are unable to move, some manage to crawl up to you, holding out diseased limbs, and showing pitiful faces, such as serve to send a shudder of horror through your whole body. What lives they have to live! Shunned and loathed by everybody and unable to help themselves. Most of them carry a small tin can, in which they rattle a solitary coin to attract your attention, thus asking for alms. Walking up to the Garden of Gethsemane, kept at the present time by an Italian Brotherhood, who reverently tend the garden, you see crowds of these poor maimed specimens of humanity, who raise a lamentable moan, and beseech you to give them something. How one's heart aches for them: one can think of but one thing that could benefit them. Oh, for the healing touch of Christ. How they must daily yearn for Him to come by that way and help them in their distress, as only He is able to do, for the best medical skill is still powerless in the face of this incurable disease.

The next mighty work we read of is the healing of the sick of the palsy, which took place at a house in Capernaum; probably the house of Peter, to which Jesus had just returned from the missionary journey in the course of which he had healed the leper.

St. Luke v. verse 18: 'And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take

up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.'

The scene is not difficult to realise. The eager crowd was filling the house, and overflowing into the street while Jesus preached to them. Suddenly there arrived four men carrying a completely paralysed friend. Finding it was impossible to get in by the door, they ascended the outside staircase of the house to the flat roof, which they dug through, and let down their friend on his pallet bed through the hole into the midst of the house in front of Jesus. The strong faith thus displayed pleased our Lord, and the first words He spoke to the sufferer were (St. Matthew ix. verse 2) : ' Son, be of good cheer : thy sins be forgiven thee.' He deliberately gave the paralysed man first the greater gift, the forgiveness of his sins, which our Lord's unerring eye at once perceived to be needed, before He gave the lesser gift of bodily healing for which the man was there.

The Scribes and Pharisees who were present at once perceived that this forgiveness of sins implied the giver's Divinity, and in their hearts accused Him of blasphemy. He read their thoughts, and answered them by asking : ' . . . whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; or to say, Arise and walk ? ' (St. Matthew ix. verse 5). Of course the actual forgiveness of sins was more difficult ; but it was an easy thing to say, because success could not be tested. Accordingly our Lord said the easier thing, which, however, could be tested. He told the man to arise, take up his bed, and walk. The natural inference was that if the command, which could be tested, was miraculously obeyed, the other statement, which could not be tested, really issued in the spiritual miracle it asserted.

Next after the calling of the four fishermen came the call of Matthew (Levi), the custom-house officer. Our Lord passed by and saw Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and said : ' Follow me.' He arose and left all, and followed Him. Matthew was evidently at heart already won by the teaching and personality of Jesus,

which he must have had opportunities of knowing in the synagogue where Jesus preached. But he would be deterred from even the hope of becoming a disciple by the abhorrence with which his business was regarded. As little could he hope that the Great Prophet would take any notice of such a pariah as himself. Suddenly Jesus came by, and fixed on him eyes of sympathy and love that thrilled his heart. Then came the wonderful invitation: 'Follow me.' Matthew answered not a word. In speechless joy he rose, and left all and followed Him. Thus Christ gained a faithful follower, and the Church an Apostle and Evangelist.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GOSPELS (THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT—THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON AT NAIN—THE FORGIVENESS OF THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER—THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD—THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER)

WE possess in our Bible, and here to-day in particular, in the wonderful Sermon on the Mount, a never-failing fountain-head to supply the most elevated ideals of human life for all sorts and conditions of men.

Here in the soft spring morning on the peaceful Galilean mountain height was God giving His laws again, incarnate now in the person of a man ; no longer terrible, but attractive, drawing all men to Himself, ruling by the motive of love, and not by the power of fear. The old laws of Sinai were for the childhood of the chosen race, and took the simple form of prohibitions. The new laws of the Galilean mount were for a people who had sufficiently advanced in knowledge to be able to receive higher ideals and teaching. The membership of this Kingdom was for all mankind, and all the laws take the form of blessings. When we read these new laws we find they are not commands, but descriptions of character necessary for the members of the Kingdom. It is necessary that the whole character, and not a part of it, should be aimed at ; the whole of the blessings belong to each member of the Kingdom, if they will exert themselves to take them. Our Lord began the Sermon on the Mount by enumerating the laws of the Kingdom. (See Matthew v. 3-12.)

It was a spring morning on one of the mountains north of Capernaum, and Jesus, who had spent the night in prayer, came down from the mountain top to found on earth the Kingdom of God. A great crowd was waiting for Him. St. Luke's Gospel, chapter vi.,

introduces the Sermon on the Mount by a full account of the scene and circumstances. The crowd occupied a level plateau, and consisted of a great multitude of His disciples, and a great number of people not only from Judea and Jerusalem, but also from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, eager to be delivered from their diseases, eager to experience the healing power of His touch. The great Healer was for the time being to occupy Himself as the great Teacher—a healer still, but a healer of souls.

After He had chosen His chief officers for the Kingdom from the multitude of His disciples, He called up those for whom there was room on the mountain height, and gave them the laws of the Kingdom, which we call the Sermon on the Mount. These are called the Beatitudes or Blessings. The first one may need a word of explanation. To be 'poor in spirit' means to feel oneself in need of help from God. Those will feel the need most who are trying most to be good; that is, God-like. They feel their own spiritual poverty in the presence of His infinite wealth.

The second Beatitude is for those that mourn. Again, as in the first, with which it is closely connected, the meaning has to do with spiritual things. Everyone who sees the difference between what he is and what he ought to be, ought to mourn for it. That is a mourning which shall be comforted, for it will help us to grow like what we ought to be. Such mourning leads to mending.

The third Beatitude is for the meek. The meaning of this follows out our explanations already given. Meekness means here the opposite of self-assertion, and follows from the spirit commended in Beatitudes one and two.

The remaining five Beatitudes speak for themselves, and complete the ideal of the character of a citizen of the Kingdom.

Later we come to the centre of the laws of the Kingdom—the Law of Prayer. Not only are our Lord's disciples not to make a show of prayer, but also they are not to think that they will be heard on account of the length of their prayers. And then our Lord went on to give an authoritative model of prayer for their guidance. We call this the Lord's Prayer. St. Matthew vi. verses 9-13: 'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this

day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: (For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.) The doxology is a later addition. The prayer ends at evil.

The searching nature of this prayer is brought out by considering the request for God's forgiveness, which is made dependent on our forgiveness of others. If we use the prayer and forgive others, we are forgiven. But if we use the prayer and do not forgive others, we are not forgiven and we practically pray that we may not be forgiven. Three points strike us specially in this prayer. What stands first in order and importance is God, and God's blessed purposes for all. Secondly, the user of the prayer and his wants, spiritual and physical, come last. Thirdly, we pray not each of us for himself, but each of us for ourselves and the rest of the Christian community. We said the prayer was a searching one: and we will find it so, and not solely in the petition which we gave as an example. Unless we are really trying to follow Christ in earnest, can we use any of the petitions? Real prayer will stop us from sinning, or else sinning will stop us from praying. It is a spiritual impossibility to go on in deliberate sin and, at the same time, to go on in earnest prayer.

Jesus goes on to unfold the inward life that must belong to every member of the Kingdom. We are not to lay up for ourselves on the earth treasures which pass away, but treasures in heaven. He bids us to behold the birds of the air: they are content to be looked after by God. Remember that the birds are by no means examples of idleness or thoughtlessness. They look ahead and build their nests and prepare for their families: they go afield and seek for food, and provide for the little ones in their nests. God rewards their efforts. The birds neither sow nor reap, but 'your heavenly Father feedeth them' (St. Matthew vi. verse 27).

Our attention is drawn next to the lilies of the field, a simple and beautiful teaching which needs no comment. St. Matthew vi. verses 28-30: 'And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not

arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? ”

Then He tells us not to judge others, and gives us an illustration of the mote and the beam. But He returns to what the soldiers of the Kingdom need most of all in order to do their duty—the power of prayer by which the aid of God can always be obtained by His children.

St. Matthew vii. verses 7-11 : ‘ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you : for every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.’

Again, we are told to enter in by the narrow gate that leadeth unto life, and is missed by so many who take the broad way that leadeth to destruction.

St. Matthew ends up his account of the Sermon on the Mount with these words : ‘ And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine : for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes ’ (St. Matthew vii. verses 28, 29).

Among the miracles which Christ wrought the most important were the three raisings from the dead, of which one was performed on the son of a widow at Nain. This word means beauty, and certainly this village does not belie its name. It is situated on the south-western slopes of the range of Mount Hermon, and overlooks the Plain of Esdraelon ; Mount Tabor lies to the left of it, while you see Mount Carmel on the right. This is when you descend into the plain coming from Nazareth, and looking towards Nain. Not far off lie the little towns of Jezreel and Jennin. This Plain of Esdraelon is the battle-ground of the Israelite history, where each feature of the land speaks eloquently of events recorded in the Bible. At sunset one evening Jesus, in one of his journeys, arrived at this very Nain.

Read the story in Luke vii. 11-17.

We can picture to ourselves the dusty, white-looking mountain road, and the funeral procession leaving the gateway of the village. We can see the flat-roofed and occasionally high-domed houses,

relieved by a silvery green olive tree, or dark funereal cypress ; these latter shooting up like closed umbrellas. The friends would be accompanying the stricken mother, and all would be weeping and wailing piteously and plaintively. Christ met this funeral party, and went up to the open bier with the dead man upon it. Then Christ touched the bier and the bearers halted at the touch. He spoke the word of power, Arise ; and the dead sat up and began to speak. Then the Lord, who had wrought this great miracle out of pure pity for the mother's sorrow, delivered the man He had raised from the dead to that happy mother's care.

At the present day, outside the city walls, rocks are still to be seen, and in them sepulchral caves. Can we at all imagine the joy with which this great miracle was received by the mother ? No one can explain how this mysterious exercise of superhuman power was carried out.

St. Luke vii. verse 36, we read : ' And one of the Pharisees desired that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.' We can imagine all the pomp and luxury and splendour with which this rich Pharisee was surrounded. In the centre of the courtyard would be the refreshing water in a handsome marble basin ; the pavement would be of lovely coloured tiles or mosaic ; on the walls would be luxuriant creepers. Cushioned couches with rich Eastern embroideries would offer accommodation to the visitors, who would recline on these, leaning on one elbow in Eastern fashion. Into these surroundings our Lord would walk in His simple dignity. Presently we would see a woman enter, poor, sad, forlorn, one who was not a bidden guest, but a person quite out of keeping with such select society. Perhaps she had been standing outside for a while, hesitating as to whether to enter or not. Of course in the East of that day the doors were left open, so that anyone could enter who wished. It required a great deal of determination on her part to approach the One Person whom her heart was yearning for. A propitious moment would give her a chance of slipping in unobserved, and without receiving rude reprimands on the part of the servants who would be occupied looking after their master's guests. Then she would find herself in the presence of Jesus. St. Luke tells graphically the story of this

woman : ' And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment ' (St. Luke vii. verses 37, 38).

There was this woman just sobbing her heart out. She had followed Jesus about, and seen people leave his Presence freed, not only from aches and pains, but from the pangs of a hopeless slavery to sin. She herself had known only too well what the load of sin meant. She longed to be a better woman : her sins burnt within her like fire. Never could she forget them day or night : she longed to be washed clean. She wondered whether there could possibly be a healing from sin for her. At first she shrank from obtruding herself ; then she summoned up courage. Oh ! to be made white, and to gain forgiveness. But in the town everybody knew her bad character ; she had been notorious in the place. No, she had been too bad a woman ; she felt it was to expect too much, that there should be a chance for her. Yet she approached unseen, and standing behind at His feet weeping, she washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair, and kissed His feet and anointed them with her precious ointment. Jesus did not rebuke or repulse her ; nay, He seemed to encourage a hope of pardon by His gentle silence.

' Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him : for she is a sinner ' (verse 39).

How could Jesus, if He were really a Prophet and a Holy Man, have any care for or anything to do with a sinful woman. The Pharisee argued that the One whom he had bidden to his feast could not possibly be a prophet at all. How mistaken was the Pharisee's idea of holiness. Jesus of course read the Pharisee's thoughts. For the purpose of teaching the Pharisee, Jesus asked him a question.

St. Luke vii. verses 40-43 : ' . . . Simon, I have something to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on, There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred

penance, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.' Directly Jesus had brought home the lesson to Simon, and had given him a great deal to think about, and had made him see the case in its true light, He turned to the woman, and addressing Simon, said to him: 'Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet. . . .' (verse 44). This was a discourteous omission on the part of the Pharisee. The very first thing that everybody was offered in the East was water wherewith to wash off the dust of recent travel from the sandalled or naked feet. What the reason of this inhospitable act was on the part of the rich Jew we do not know. Probably he did not think much of a prophet unmistakably poor in this world's goods, though he was willing enough to patronise him. Jesus pointed out the lack of hospitality: even the sinful woman knew better. Jesus says of her that 'she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little' (verses 44-47).

St. Matthew viii. verses 23-27, St. Mark iv. 35-41, St. Luke viii. verses 22-25. We must be sure and read these passages for ourselves in the Bible. By night as by day the Lake of Galilee showed itself to me when I was there in its perfect beauty. Green slopes gently inclined towards the water, leaving just a yellow margin, a narrow strip of shore like the frame round a mirror. The water now looks sapphire blue, now emerald green, according to the sun and cloud effects. A wild profusion of flowers, luxurious in colour and varied in shape, lends interest and charm to the scene. We remember that Jesus dwelt here, and drank in all nature's beauties, which His Father had so lovingly provided in this land which was now His home. On the mountains all around our Lord had prayed; on the lake he had sailed, and on the shore He had taught. The tumble-

down castle of the ancient town of Tiberias lay on my left hand as I sat in front of my tent and tried to receive an indelible impression into my mind from the solemn associations of those hallowed surroundings. The marks of past splendour have well-nigh disappeared ; not so the marks of God's handiwork. The distinguishing features of the land remain unchanged, and will for ever charm and inspire everyone who is privileged to dwell here for a time. Farther down the lake, beyond Tiberias, built in our Lord's lifetime, there were pointed out to me the sites of Bethsaida, Capernaum, Magdala, and many other historical places. As you sail to the extreme end of the lake, you see the Jordan passing into it, lazily and almost imperceptibly, and very muddily, as though it were weary with its journey through hot and dusty lands ; very different it is from the boyish mirth and fantastic frolic of young Jordan, whose acquaintance you make when you reach the northern point of the ancient land of Palestine near Cæsarea Philippi. We have just spoken of the lake in its calm aspect, but we well know that a land-locked lake as well as the open ocean can change its mood. We also know that calm and peace can forsake our own heart and soul. Thus it would appear we are all subject to the same influences as God's nature, of which nature we are part. Angry billows and violent storms can assail us, when we put out upon the open waters of life. On the memorable occasion we are thinking about at this moment, we see the Lord Jesus in a boat on the lake with His disciples.

St. Luke viii. verses 22-25 : ' . . . and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep : and there came down a storm of wind on the lake ; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water : and they ceased, and there was a calm. And he said unto them, Where is your faith ? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this ! For he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.'

We see one of these sudden movements of natural forces which caused great fear to the companions of Jesus. In contrast to this,

we note the perfect calmness of our Saviour reflected in His words. We see His superhuman power to save under any circumstances. And this power is not exercised in a spasmodic manner ; His help is steady, sure, and absolutely trustworthy.

Jesus and His disciples returned to the opposite side of the lake once more. No sooner did He arrive at Capernaum than His time and attention were claimed by Jairus, who met Him, saying that his little daughter lay at the point of death. In his agony he appealed to Jesus, knowing the multitude of cures He had performed. Our Lord did not hesitate, but followed the father to his house through a thronging crowd.

St. Mark v. verses 35-42 : ' There came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead : why troublest thou the Master any further ? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John, the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep ? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi ; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose and walked ; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.'

Many were the aching hearts, and many the weary souls that found help and hope, and sustenance, and strength at this time. Care was wiped away ; cures were effected. A light was kindled never to be extinguished. Seed was sown for the full harvest of God's Kingdom on earth. And during all this great period of Christ's teaching, one idea was never lost sight of by Him : and that was the Kingdom of God, a life of self-denying love and willing service which constitutes that Kingdom on earth. This Kingdom is the Kingdom of God, but our Lord Himself is the direct ruler, as

the accredited representative of the Father in Heaven. Righteousness, a pure life, good done to others ; these are what He continually insists upon as being essential. He was in the midst of the people, daily seen by everybody, living His own life as a proof how the perfect life could be lived, and was to be lived by those who accepted Him as Lord. He was there to show us that God rules the universe by invisible but immutable laws, within us as well as without us, which have been ever since the world began, and remain unchangingly true for all eternity. Only by obedience to those laws can any of His human creatures arrive at lasting satisfaction and ultimate and final good, which is to be identified with the will of God.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GOSPELS (THE SENDING FORTH OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES—
THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND—MIRACLES ON THE
LAKE—WALKING ON THE WATER—THE JOURNEY THROUGH
PHŒNICIA—THE CONFESSION OF PETER, THE ROCK-FOUNDA-
TION OF THE CHURCH—THE TRANSFIGURATION)

THUS far we have been occupying ourselves with some of the events which took place in the middle period of Christ's Ministry: but we must leave much untouched and untold, which should be sought out by earnest, persistent, and methodical reading of the Gospels.

Now we have come to the sending forth of the Apostles to teach and to spread the Good News. St. Matthew x. verse 1, St. Mark vi. verses 7-13, and St. Luke ix. verses 1-6, have passages on this subject. In details they vary; substantially they agree. It is always best for us to turn to the actual words of the Gospels.

During this period of our Lord's ministry a great miracle was performed at Bethsaida Julias—the feeding of the five thousand. (All four Gospels have accounts of this—St. Matthew xiv. verses 13-21, St. Mark vi. verses 32-44, St. Luke ix. verses 11-17, St. John vi. verses 5-15.) St. John gives by far the most vivid and interesting details.

St. John vi. verses 1, 2: 'After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.'

Jesus went by boat to Bethsaida, and the people, knowing where He was going, followed Him by land round the head of the lake. Probably the greatness of the multitude was caused by the fact that the Passover was at hand, and people had already arrived at the lake-side towns on their way to it. It was not till their coming that



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our Lord, who had been teaching them, noticed the need of the multitude, who were far from home and had nothing to eat. Jesus 'saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' (verse 5). It is added in the Gospel that 'this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little' (verses 6, 7).

'Pennyworth' of bread means rather sevenpence worth, the denarius being a small silver coin of about that value; that is to say, six or seven pounds' worth of bread would have been required to supply even a scanty meal. Christ had already fed the multitude with spiritual food, the Bread from Heaven.

'Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?' (verses 8, 9). The details that the loaves were barley loaves, which was the poorest and cheapest kind of bread, and that the fishes were small, we owe to St. John. This was the provision for our Lord and His disciples probably till the next day. Here we see the extreme poverty in which our Lord lived. They had money in the common purse to give to the poor, because they denied themselves and lived on the commonest food. This was not asceticism, but self-denial for the sake of others. The words 'small fishes' is one word in the original, and means a savoury eaten with bread, what we would call a sort of dried sardine from the lake.

Here St. Mark's account is the most detailed and vivid; St. Mark vi. verses 39-42: 'And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled.'

The word 'ranks' means literally 'flower-beds,' the vivid memory of the Apostle Peter recalling the scene—the bright-coloured clothes of the crowd showing on the green grass like beds of many-coloured flowers. We gather from the account that the

people sat on the lower slopes of the hillside, and from the fact that the grass was abundant and green, we perceive that it was in the springtime the miracle took place.

This was the kind of prophet the dullest of those sense-bound minds could appreciate ; one who had made five loaves into food for five thousand ; such a prophet as seemed to them the coming one, the Messiah, beyond a doubt. The embers of the Great Hope kept alive in the hearts of the people for centuries, burst forth into flame under the influence of a miracle which they had all seen with their eyes, and tasted the result of with their mouths. Here was the real Messiah. An immense enthusiasm moved them to make Him Israel's king. Knowing probably from past experience that He would not be willing to accept kingship, this great crowd of five thousand men resolved to seize Him and force Him to put Himself at their head.

St. John vi. 15 : ' When Jesus perceived they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.'

Our Lord had come to establish a very different Kingdom to that which they desired. His Kingdom was to be a society of men and women, a brotherhood closely united and moved one and all by His spirit breathed into them by Himself. Even His disciples, whom He had taught what this Kingdom meant, misunderstood Him, and hankered after the material Kingdom of the Messianic Expectation, in which they hoped themselves to occupy high places as friends and companions of the King. From this final refusal of our Lord to accept the earthly kingship which the people wished to force upon Him we may date the beginning of the decline of the great popularity which He had reached at this time. In this connection we may note that had our Lord consented, His success as an earthly conqueror would have been almost certain ; for in the same part of the world, and with a similar but inferior Semitic race, Mahomet, some hundreds of years after, achieved a gigantic success. The splendid fighting of the Jews, especially of the Galileans, against the trained legions of Rome, about forty years later, shows what material Jesus would have had at His command had He yielded to the temptation of putting Himself at the head of an enthusiastic

people, and winning an earthly kingdom by the sword ; but this would have lost the spiritual kingdom still growing to-day.

On Good Friday, in the year 1905, I was beside this lake. My tent was pitched on the sward quite near to the water, so that I could hear the lispings of the wavelets on the shore. The lake has its own unique charm, radiant with the recollection of the one perfect life. Through every change, whether of sunshine or of storm, the remembered presence is ever at hand. The Eastern twilight passed at a stride into the darkness, and the moon rose and sailed silently on its way, growing in brightness and intensity until the lake was sheeted in purest silver. The full moon's rays fell upon the quivering surface of the water. All was hushed ; all was awe-inspiring. Nature, for this time at any rate, was in harmony with the soul of man. With love and reverence one's thoughts dwelt on the events in the life of our Lord associated with the scene.

The two next miracles were performed on this lake. We find them recorded in three Gospels : St. Matthew xiv. verses 22-36 ; St. Mark vi. verses 46-56 ; and St. John vi. verses 16-21.

Then Jesus returned to Capernaum. And there the great crisis in popular opinion took place. The first turning in the tide of national enthusiasm for Jesus was after the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, when He refused to yield to their efforts to take Him by force and make Him their earthly king. Apparently they thought that He refused the kingship out of fear of the consequences or doubt of His own capacity for the Messiahship, and disappointment and dissatisfaction at Christ's attitude soon grew into defection among His adherents. This was helped on by His great mystic discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, when He put Himself forward as the Bread of Life to believers. Such passages as St. John vi. verse 51 : ' I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,' aroused questioning and dissent in materialistic minds. ' How can this man give us his flesh to eat ? ' said they. To which Jesus answered (St. John vi. verses 53-56) : ' Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and

drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.'

Our Lord was now to change His mode of life. Hitherto He had gone about openly among the people, preaching the Kingdom and healing the sick. From this time until the events of the last week of His life He sought retirement as much as possible, in order to have time to train the Twelve to carry on His work after His departure, without the ceaseless interruptions from Scribes and Pharisees sent down from Jerusalem to question and criticise Him, as well as from the eager multitudes. These still desired an earthly Messiah, and as His teaching became fuller and deeper, and revealed that spiritual union with Him constituted membership in the Kingdom and salvation, they murmured and opposed Him more and more.

Jesus now set out with the Twelve for a long journey, and this took a new direction. The little party travelled on foot towards the Mediterranean, through a region thickly filled with a heathen population. This district, 'the borders of Tyre and Sidon' as St. Mark calls it, lay north of Galilee, and spread from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. When Christ arrived here we read in St. Mark vii. verse 24, he 'entered into an house, and would have no man know it : but he could not be hid.' The object of His journey was retirement.

Now we come to a crisis in our Lord's life and in the lives of His disciples. Jesus had gone with them northward to Cæsarea Philippi, which was a town built by Philip the Tetrarch in honour of Cæsar.

On Easter Sunday, 1905, I found myself here. We were encamped on a mountain slope rather high up, giving me a view of all the country round. Beneath in a gorge, in wildest mood, danced and foamed young Jordan through the rocks and boulders of its channel. In whatever direction I looked, all was clad in luxuriant green. The tents were pitched in a perfect grove of mulberry and olive and fig trees, affording most grateful shelter from the sun, which was shining down in all its Eastern strength. My tired animals, which had had a fatiguing morning's journey, starting at

sunrise, revelled in the freedom from their loads, disporting themselves under tamarinth and olive trees on the green and grassy camping-ground with great enjoyment, which was a delight to see in a country where, alas ! their poor creature wants are but scantily attended to. One longs for the coming of the Spirit of the Saviour, who held all His Father's creatures in such affectionate regard, and whose tender heart would bleed at seeing them ill-treated, and at finding how little His lessons have been taken to heart.

The crumbling remains of an archway, which gave me welcome as I passed under it, seemed very doubtful as to whether they would continue to rest upon the supporting stonework, or whether they would abruptly part company from it forthwith. A huge stone slab, which bore traces of a Roman inscription greatly effaced, was poised on two pillars, and one felt thankful when one had safely passed from under it. A fine ruin, full of historical associations, built on an eminence, still seems to guard this beauteous place. The birds were singing and chasing one another in the branches overhead, the air was astir with bees and beetles sucking nectar and ambrosia from the beautiful flowers growing in wild profusion all around. Brilliant butterflies were wafted across one's line of vision at intervals. Owing to their chrysalis birth, butterflies are sometimes regarded as emblems of immortality. The sight of them suggested the fancy that souls of the past were holding communion with us in the place where they once had lived and loved. No human voice was heard. As one lay stretched out on the sward, looking up into the blue vault of heaven, one was transported into a different world. Time seemed no longer to exist. Earth and eternity seemed to be as one. I did not awake from my day-dream until some little native children, with intensely dark eyes, had approached, and were looking at me, perhaps with little less wonder than I at them. These little creatures had been driven by curiosity to see for themselves what interlopers had broken in upon their otherwise secluded existence, and brightened for a while the monotony of their everyday life. They were attractive little beings. By and by quite a number of little ones had collected. We could not reach one another by means of language, as I could not speak Arabic. A bond of sympathy drew us together, and before many

minutes had passed, we were all playing and enjoying ourselves. These little Arab children were delighted with a game of oranges and lemons, laughing and dancing for joy just as English children do.

It was in this district, to which our Lord had withdrawn with the Twelve, that the definite foundation of the Christian Church was laid, and it may have been that the rock-wall at Cæsarea Philippi suggested to Christ the form of the reply in which He received Peter's confession. The castle built on the high rock-wall may have suggested the picture of the Church built on the rock. Jesus introduced the great question by asking His disciples (St. Mark viii. verse 27) : ' Whom do men say that I am ? ' Our Lord's method was here, as always, not to tell His disciples directly, but to lead them to find out the truth for themselves.

St. Mark viii. verses 28-30 : ' And they answered, John the Baptist : but some say Elias ; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am ? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.'

St. Matthew's account here is fuller than St. Mark's.

St. Matthew xvi. verses 16-19 : ' And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'

Our Lord's question brought a critical time to the Apostles, and we have seen how faithfully they met it in the confession of Peter. A critical time also comes to each one of us. If it comes not sooner, it comes later. We are bound to be active and not passive, if we wish to lead the true Christian's life. It is given to each one of us either to reject or to accept Christ. This alone is really what life amounts to. One can manage to be a man or a woman committing no murder, not molesting a fellow-creature, and passing through



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life in a negatively decent manner. This is what animals do. A hen will take care of its chickens ; even a wild beast will protect its young. Dogs at times can be more faithful than human beings. This we acknowledge. God has made them so. But do we not remember that we have dominion over all of these? 'Are ye not better than they?' (St. Matthew vi. verse 26). Do we not remember that more is expected of us because we are rays of the Eternal Light? It is not a case of being a superior sort of animal in God's creation : it is a case of being a Christian, a follower of Christ. Here we have the crucial point. In life it is the motive which counts with God.

Peter's confession expressed a fuller and deeper faith in their Lord's Divinity on the part of himself and the other Apostles than they had reached hitherto. They were in a position now to receive the trying and disturbing revelation of what awaited their Lord in the immediate future.

St. Matthew xvi. verses 21-25 : ' From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan : thou art an offence unto me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it : and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.'

Evidently the Apostles still hankered after the old way they had expected the victory of the Messiah to come. They had still to be taught the difficult lesson that their Lord's victory must come through suffering and apparent failure and death. Their Lord also taught them the further lesson following out of this, that, as their Lord suffered and conquered, so they too must suffer and conquer in their turn. From this time forth our Lord went on with His teaching, which the Apostles evidently found most difficult to accept and assimilate. Yet one day the disciples were to follow their Lord's example in a life of suffering and service.

St. Matthew xx. verse 28 : ' Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Six days after Peter's confession came the great event of the Transfiguration. Not till they had fully perceived and confessed His Messiahship, and been made to understand the nature of the victory He was to win, were even the chosen three fitted for the experience of beholding Him in His glory.

St. Mark ix. 2-8 : ' And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves : and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow ; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses : and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here : and let us make three tabernacles ; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say ; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them : and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son : hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.'

Peter, to whom this account in St. Mark's Gospel may be attributed, was one of the three eye-witnesses, and records this fact in his Second Epistle i. verses 16-18 : ' For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.'

In this passage St. Peter describes the sight of the Transfiguration of Christ as the sight of His Majesty. This was a sacramental beginning of the Revelation of Christ as God. The Glory which shone from His Person and transfigured even His clothing was the glory of the Godhead made visible, and was intended to enlighten the minds of those who saw it. He shone forth on this occasion

visibly to bodily eyes as God Who was manifested in the flesh in His daily life of self-sacrifice to spiritual eyes. The Transfiguration, then, may be described as the perfect Godhead shining through the perfect Manhood, and glorifying it.

The 'high mountain' on which the Transfiguration took place is evidently part of the Hermon range—either Mount Tabor, one of the spurs, or even Hermon itself. The Transfiguration may be regarded as a foreshadowing of the glory of the risen Christ after His resurrection. It was in the same Body that was transfigured on the Holy Mount that He afterwards appeared repeatedly in His Majesty to the same disciples who had seen Him there.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GOSPELS (FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM—THE HOME AT BETHANY—THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES—FIRST TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE—THE MINISTRY IN PERÆA—THE FEAST OF THE DEDICATION AT JERUSALEM—RETURN TO PERÆA—VISIT TO BETHANY TO RAISE LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD—WITHDRAWAL TO EPHRAIM)

FOR the portion of our Lord's ministry which we are now about to consider, the chief authorities are St. John and St. Luke. St. John is occupied with our Lord's visits at Jerusalem. St. Luke supplies the record of what took place before, during, and after the journeys to Jerusalem. St. Luke's account gives the ministry in Peræa, the land beyond Jordan; St. John's, the ministry in Judæa. The six or seven months between the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles are briefly mentioned by St. John in the seventh chapter. This, of course, is because St. John did not purpose to deal with the Galilean ministry, sufficiently dealt with before in the other Gospels.

St. John vii. verses 1, 2: 'After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.'

The Feast of Tabernacles is described by Josephus as the holiest and greatest among the festivals of the Jews. It fell in October, and Christ's visit may be dated A.D. 28. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the first possession of Canaan. It also gave the people an opportunity of showing their gratitude to God for the harvest. The pilgrims from Galilee had to start some time beforehand, not only allowing time for the journey, but also for the preparations, which, especially for this feast, were considerable; booths

having to be constructed in which to live during the festival, in memory of the nation's wanderings in the wilderness.

The road which Christ took from Galilee was the direct road through Samaria, whereas the Galilean pilgrims generally took the road through Peræa, in order to avoid the hated land of the Samaritans.

St. Luke ix. 51-56 : ' And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face : and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did ? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know now what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.'

It is extremely difficult to arrange in chronological order the incidents of this journey, during which, according to St. Luke, the question put by a certain lawyer, what he was to do to inherit eternal life, led to one of the greatest of our Lord's parables—namely, the one of the Good Samaritan.

St. Luke x. verses 25-37 : ' And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? He said unto him, What is written in the law ? how readest thou ? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right ; this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour ? And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way ; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain

Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was : and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him ; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves ? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.'

This ranks as one of the most beautiful of our Lord's parables ; so simple that a child can understand it ; so deep in its teachings that it remains unexhausted to-day, with a yet fuller message for men of the twentieth century than it had for men of the first. Our Lord draws a picture of a poor man stripped by thieves and left for dead : a poor wounded man lying forsaken at the roadside in a very lonely place. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho begins at once to descend, and continues to descend all the way. You feel as if dropping into an abyss ; the atmosphere becomes very trying and most oppressive, for Jericho is 1300 feet below the sea-level. It is lonely here in the extreme ; bare rocks and mountain gorges alternate with far-stretching tracts of wild land, affording scant pasturage. An occasional shepherd with his speckled or black sheep is the only sight which relieves the monotony.

Journeying along with my mounted Arab escort to guard me from possible Bedouin attacks—which reminded me how little changed is Palestine to-day from what Palestine was at the time the parable was spoken—one had no difficulty in giving rein to the imagination. The whole scene stood before one as vividly as in real life. One saw the poor man abandoned to his fate, passed by by the selfish priest and by the Levite, who ' looked at him and passed by on the other side.' The inn on this mountain pass still goes by the name of ' The Good Samaritan.' A very cheery one-eyed host gives one a hearty welcome on arrival. Water is still fetched from the well that must have refreshed both man and beast in the time of our Lord.

Immediately after this parable we read in St. Luke that Jesus

came to a certain village, and from St. John we know well the name. The village in which His journey to the Feast of Tabernacles ended was the village of Bethany, so close to Jerusalem as to be almost a suburb. In this village there was a house where Jesus was received as a guest by two sisters, Martha and Mary. They had probably intimated to the messengers whom Jesus had sent on before to make arrangements for the reception of Himself and His disciples, during their stay for the Feast of Tabernacles, that they would receive Jesus, but that His disciples must lodge elsewhere. The disciples seemingly went into Jerusalem for the festivities, while Jesus stayed at Bethany at Martha's house. During this first visit of our Lord to Bethany, Lazarus, the brother of the sisters, was evidently absent, doubtless in Jerusalem for the festival week.

The sorry remains of what was once beautiful Bethany are to be seen lying half-way up an incline in a sequestered spot, nearly two miles from Jerusalem. The very pathway between Jerusalem and Bethany which our blessed Saviour must frequently have trod can be followed by us to-day. Groups of olive trees, as well as fig and almond trees, still grow there, but the date palms are gone from which Bethany (house of dates) takes its name. The eyes of Jesus must have rested on much the same landscape we admire to-day. He, who took such deep pleasure in the natural world which our Heavenly Father has prepared and made so beautiful for our delight, must often have gained strength and solace in contemplation of the beauties of nature on His way.

The home of Bethany became Christ's other home on earth; for here He felt at ease, and here He was understood. The atmosphere of affection in this household was in harmony with His personality. He was with a family who appreciated and loved Him. St. Luke gives us a beautiful account of the beginning of the friendship with the family of Bethany.

St. Luke x. verses 38-42.

In a very few words the Bible is able to give us a complete description of these two sisters, and the difference of their characters. Mary, quiet and intense, so devoted to the person of our Lord, and so enraptured with His teaching that she could think of nothing else. Martha, equally anxious to honour the great Teacher, but not under-

standing Him as well as Mary, and thinking to please Him by giving all her energies to the preparation of an elaborate entertainment. Jesus would have preferred that the simplest food should have been provided, and that Martha should have done as Mary did, and listened to His teaching; but He recognised Martha's genuine affection, and the gentleness of His reproof appears evident in the repetition of her name.

The feast had been going on for some time before our Lord went into Jerusalem from Bethany.

He taught so boldly in the Temple that some of the Jews were deeply impressed. St. John vii. verses 25-31: 'Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we knew this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?'

The result of this teaching was a division among the people; some inclining to accept Him as the Christ, others objecting that He was a Galilean. The officers who had been sent to arrest Him came back to the chief priests and Pharisees who had sent them, half-convinced themselves, and giving the true reason for their failure: 'Never man spake like this man' (verse 46).

A long discussion with our Lord's Jewish critics followed, in the course of which they accused Him of being a Samaritan, an accusation which reminds us of the Parable we have lately been considering. This discussion ends with a very important declaration: that of our Lord's Divinity.

St. John viii. verses 56-59: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen

Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.'

Here we have a foreshadowing of the supreme claim of our Lord, which brought about His condemnation and Crucifixion. The Jews correctly enough interpreted the words: 'Before Abraham was, I am,' to be intended as a claim on the part of one whom they looked upon as merely man, to be God as well as man.

The ninth chapter of St. John tells of the restoration of sight to a man who had been blind since his birth. The mode by which He did this is worth recording. St. John ix. verses 6-14: ' . . . he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is, by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.'

Why did Jesus use saliva and clay? The reason was that the day was the Sabbath, and it was expressly forbidden by the narrow Judaism of the Pharisees to apply saliva to the eyes on the Sabbath day. The kneading of the clay on the Sabbath day was equally forbidden. It is evident that Jesus deliberately went against the rigid traditional view of the Sabbath, and healed the man in this way in order to challenge the Pharisee position.

The little village which to-day still bears the name of Siloam exists, as it would appear, very little altered in condition from the time of our Saviour. Curious little apertures allow the air to enter into the houses, which are built of yellow sandstone, and are mostly

two-storied and always flat-roofed. The place is built in terraces, and gives one the impression of having been built in parallel lines along the hillside across the valley of Hinnom and beyond the tomb of Absalom.

In the tenth chapter we come to a very beautiful allegory in our Lord's teaching. It is called Parable in our Authorised Version by a mistranslation of the original word, elsewhere translated Proverb.

St. John x. verses 1-5: ' Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.'

This allegory was addressed primarily to the Pharisees, who claimed to be shepherds of God's flock and fold, and yet were in utter blindness as to the Good Shepherd Himself. In the allegory Christ sets Himself forth under two figures: as regards the fold, He is the Door; as regards the flock, He is the Shepherd. Our Lord explains the allegory Himself, so there is no need for any explanation of ours, in St. John x. 7-16.

Immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus retired into Peræa, where John the Baptist had preached, and where He Himself had been baptized. A great change had taken place since then. The leaders of the people, the Scribes and Pharisees, were now bitterly opposed to Jesus, yet on the other hand there was a much fuller knowledge of Jesus, of His wondrous works, and of His preaching. Hitherto He had preached in Galilee and in Jerusalem; He now gave some months to a ministry in Peræa. The people there had not had time to forget the impressive call to repentance given by John the Baptist, so that in a very real sense they were prepared to hear and understand Christ. His Peræan ministry lasted about six months, and was divided into two parts—the first from after the Feast of Tabernacles, the end of September or beginning of October,

to the month of December, when He came to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Dedication ; the second part from the close of the Feast of the Dedication to the beginning of April, with an interval for a short visit to Bethany to raise up Lazarus from the dead. The account of this ministry in Peræa is supplied chiefly by St. Luke, chapter xix., with the exception of a passage in the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew, and short references in St. Mark x. 1, St. Matthew xix. 1, St. John x. 40. St. Luke's account contains but little narrative of events, consisting mainly of discourses and parables. Just as the beginning of the Galilean ministry had been marked by discourses and parables, so was the beginning of the Peræan. The first thing to notice in the Peræan ministry, according to St. Luke, is the account of our Lord casting out a devil, and the dispute which followed, evidently with the Pharisees, who accused Jesus of casting out devils by Beelzebub. This charge was met by our Lord by showing its unreasonableness in a short but convincing argument. Then we read, in St. Luke xi. verse 37, that a certain Pharisee asked Him to breakfast, and wondered that He had not first gone through the requisite ceremonial washing before eating. Thereupon our Lord delivered the last discourse directly addressed to the Pharisees recorded in St. Luke. This is another step in the attack on the Pharisees' position, which was developed during His Peræan ministry. The result of this attack we are told in St. Luke xi. verses 53, 54 : ' And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things : laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.'

After this a great multitude of people gathered to hear Him, and the crowd was so great that they trod one upon another. One of them asked Him to speak to his brother, and make him divide the inheritance.

St. Luke xii. verses 15-21 : ' And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness : for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully : and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits ?

And he said, This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided ? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'

This is the first of the series of wonderful Parables which distinguish His Peræan ministry.

In St. Luke we read, after a graphic characterisation of Herod as ' that fox,' a touching lament for Jerusalem.

St. Luke xiii. 31-34 : ' The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence : for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following : for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee : how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not ! ''

About two months had passed since Jesus had left Jerusalem for Peræa at the close of the Feast of the Tabernacles. It was December when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Dedication. This feast was not a Biblical institution. It had been instituted by Judas Maccabæus when the Temple, desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, was solemnly purified and dedicated again to the service of God by that devout patriot. The festival was also called the Lights. The illumination of the Temple and also the illumination of private houses were salient characteristics of this feast. Thus the illumination was universal, and a close connection was established between the custom and the religious life of the nation and the life of the family and the individual. Here is a lesson for us. As the Temple had to be kept purified and well lighted, so too the family life, as well as the individual life, requires care and attention. Our Lord's teaching shows that the outward life is intimately associated with the inner life of man. The out-

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ward life is intended to be sacramental, an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.

We turn to St. John for an account of what took place at this feast.

St. John x. verses 22-24 : ' And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt ? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.'

The answer of our Lord was a test of faith. Though He was the Christ of the Old Testament, He was by no means the Christ the Pharisees hoped for (verse 25) : ' Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not : the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.'

That is to say, even if they could not yet understand His teaching, His mighty works were there to interpret it. The miracles were full confirmation for the teaching. The Jews were answered finally by the great declaration of Christ's Oneness of Essence with God : ' I and my Father are one ' (verse 30). ' One ' is neuter, *i.e.* one essence, not one person.

St. John x. verses 31, 32 : ' Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father ; for which of those works do ye stone me ? ''

Our Lord's words seem to have had some slight effect, for there was no further attempt to stone Him ; but they tried to arrest Him, though, overawed by His personal majesty, they let Him go forth out of their hands.

After this escape from His enemies, our Lord left Jerusalem. St. John x. verse 40 : ' And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized ; and there he abode.'

Here in Peræa the people seem to have been simpler-minded and warmer-hearted, and many of them believed on Him. Perhaps also the unforgotten attraction and influence of the Baptist's preaching contributed to this result. The time between this journey and the last entry into Jerusalem falls naturally into two parts, divided by the journey to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead.

To the first of these two periods belong a number of Parables which it is impossible to arrange with certainty in chronological order; the same difficulty meets us in the arrangement of the discourses and events. These Peræan parables differ from the Galilean parables, which required explanation, in being easy to be understood by all our Lord's hearers. They bring the Good News, the Gospel, to the lost. The Divine compassion runs through them, and reaches its highest manifestation in the parables recorded in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke.

To understand these parables we must understand the circumstances, and they are set forth in the first verses of this chapter.

St. Luke xv. verses 1, 2: 'Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.'

The Jews held that works of penitence were required before God would receive the penitent. But Christ taught that God had come in Him to seek and save those that were lost, not waiting for repentance and amendment on their part. The murmuring of the Pharisees and Scribes against our Lord's attitude towards sinners was the immediate cause of the parables, which show that Christ's attitude is exactly God's attitude. All these parables enforce this view. The work of the Father and the work of the Son is regarded as the same, and that work is the restoration of the lost. Christ has come to do the work, and the Father longs to welcome the wanderers home again. The first of these parables is the Parable of the Lost Sheep. This parable, like the next, the Lost Coin, is addressed directly to the Pharisees. 'What man of you having an hundred sheep,' says Christ, just as He had addressed the Pharisees in a recent discussion on the Sabbath, 'Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit' (St. Luke xiv. verse 5).

The last parable, that of the Prodigal Son, is not, like the other two, a defence of our Lord's action, but a revelation of the reason of His action, that He was doing literally the work of His Father. The essence of the first two parables is the same, the seeking of the Saviour until He finds and rescues the lost, and the joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. The

parable of the Prodigal Son is the crown, not only of these three parables, but of our Lord's whole teaching by parables. It is the Gospel in the Gospel, as it has sometimes been called.

From the teaching of Christ at this period, we turn now to His works. We open St. John's Gospel and read the whole of his beautiful account of the raising of Lazarus, which is the climax in the miracles of our Lord. It is not only the miracle of miracles, as the Prodigal Son was the parable of parables, but, unlike the miracles in Galilee, it is very fully attested. It took place quite close to Jerusalem, and in the presence of numbers of spectators, many of them hostile to Christ and some of them converted by what they saw. It has been well said, if this miracle be true all are true; for to raise the four days' dead was an exercise of manifestly supernatural power. The great thinker, Spinoza, said, that if he could accept this miracle, he would humbly accept Christianity. Read the story of it in St. John xi.

A few words may be said on this marvellous account. It is evidently that of an eye-witness, full of vivid touches as well as of minute details. Turning to verse 25, Jesus says: 'I am the resurrection and the life.' That is, resurrection is not a doctrine, but a fact, being the personal communication of the Lord Himself to believers here and now. He that is in union with Christ has true life, in the present and in the future. The permanence of our humanity is to be found only in our union with Him.

Turning to verse 33, we read that Jesus 'groaned in the spirit and was troubled.' The meaning of this is first perhaps that Jesus felt an indignant emotion (which He expressed by a groaning) at the dread and horror of death by which those He loved were overcome. He regarded death as a peaceful sleep from which there was a sure and happy awakening. By His sympathy He felt what they felt, and sorrowed to perceive the needless terror of death, by which His friends and all mankind were oppressed. A fuller meaning must not be lost sight of: that in some mysterious way, in taking away the sufferings of men, He took them upon Himself. 'Groaned' may also be translated with R.M. 'was moved with indignation' at the power of death.

Turning to verses 41, 42, we find that our Lord thanked God

aloud for the great miracle He was about to do. Christ being One with God, this prayer was the conscious realisation of God's Will, and to a thoughtful bystander like St. John, a clear manifestation of His Divinity.

The immediate result of the miracle was that many of the Jews believed in Jesus. Some went and told the Pharisees in Jerusalem; and the Sadducee chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council. This council, the Sanhedrin, met to decide what was to be done. The unscrupulous Sadducee high priest, Caiaphas, set forth, probably, his own decided policy that Jesus should be put to death, and was guided by a mysterious irony to interpret truly, though unconsciously, the results of the death of Jesus.

St. John xi. verses 49-54: 'And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation: and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews: but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.'

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GOSPELS (THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM—AT JERICHO—
ZACCHÆUS—THE HOME AT BETHANY—THE MESSIANIC ENTRY
INTO JERUSALEM—THE TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE)

THE place to which our Lord retired with His disciples after He left the home at Bethany, and the sisters happy in the society of their brother restored to life, was called Ephraim. From the notices in the Synoptic Gospels, this place seems to have been somewhere on the borders of Peræa and Galilee. It was not long before He set out for His last journey to Jerusalem. He had resolved to go up to the Passover, and to offer Himself as the Messiah for the acceptance or rejection of the nation. After a short stay in Ephraim, He seems to have journeyed along the northern borders of Galilee, perhaps in order to enable His disciples to visit their friends ; perhaps also to enable the disciples from Galilee to join Him. The many women mentioned in St. Mark xv. verses 40, 41, as having come up with Him to Jerusalem, must clearly have been with Him on this last journey.

It is to this part of the journey that we must assign the teaching of our Lord on divorce, which is of a very definite and important nature. The duty of Christians is themselves to observe and to teach others ' to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ' (St. Matthew xxviii. verse 20).

The utterance of this important discourse was an answer to questions put by the Pharisees, who perhaps thought that if Christ spoke out boldly against divorce in Peræa, Herod's territory, the fury of Herodias might be aroused against Him, as it had been against John the Baptist. They also judged that the popular feeling would be against the high and severe views of our Lord ; and in this they were not far wrong, for the disciples, when they were alone with Jesus in the house, expressed their dissatisfaction, and asserted

that, if Christ's view were to be accepted, it was better for a man not to marry at all. But our Lord made no concession, and His words on divorce remain binding on all Christians to-day as when they were first spoken.

The historic Churches have, on the whole, adhered to this ideal. Experience confirms the wisdom of our Lord's plain prohibition of divorce, for such easy customs of divorce have been found to mark the decadence of great nations ; for example, the Roman Empire.

See St. Matthew xix. verses 3-9.

After our Lord had given His lofty teaching on marriage in answer to the Pharisees, He returned to the house in which He was staying ; and there the disciples asked Him again of the same matter. The teaching was repeated and emphasized.

It was to this same house that they brought young children that He might touch them ; that is, put His hand on them and bless them.

St. Mark x. verses 13-16 : ' And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them : and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.'

The children were no doubt brought by their mothers. But the disciples considered it quite beneath the dignity of the Great Teacher to occupy Himself with such small things. Our Lord reminded His disciples of what He had already taught them, that the Kingdom of God had to be received as by a little child, in humble trust and meek obedience. His folding of the little ones in His arms and blessing them has been a perpetual consecration of child-life. Childhood He taught thus to be a holy state, as He had taught marriage to be a holy state, both to be revered and guarded against degradation, on pain of the destruction of national as well as family life. The consecration of the whole common life of man was from the first the destined work of the Gospel.

In other passages in the Evangelists we have unmistakable

teachings of our Lord revealing the high value and the sacredness of childhood.

St. Matthew xviii. verses 1-6: 'At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'

Little had His disciples dreamt of the answer that Christ gave to them: the greatest in the kingdom of heaven was to be like a little child. Indeed, the child-character is declared to be essential for membership in the kingdom of heaven. The self-seeking, ambitious spirit, which had dictated the disciples' question, must be put away. The humble, trustful spirit of a little child must take its place.

The next incident which meets us in this record of the last days in Peræa, is the story of the young ruler who came running in his eagerness, and kneeling, asked Christ: 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good, but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions' (St. Mark x. verses 17-22). Dante calls this 'The Great Refusal.'

This young man was serious and earnest, and had done his best to live up to his light, and Jesus looking intently upon him, loved

him, and called him to the highest honour He could bestow upon him: to take his place, like Matthew, at his Master's side. But Jesus saw that there was one obstacle to prevent this young man following Him as His disciple. He had great wealth, and he loved his possessions. Till his heart was set on Christ alone, he could not really be His disciple. Christ had already repeatedly laid down the conditions of discipleship. St. Luke xiv. verse 33: ' . . . whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' The event justified our Lord's insight into the human heart.

Before he left Peræa on the last journey to Jerusalem, our Lord predicted to His Apostles the approaching end. They were on the way when He told them, saying: ' Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles; and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again ' (St. Mark x. verses 33, 34).

St. Mark tells us they were amazed and afraid, and it is evident from what followed later, that they did not really understand Him. And now our Lord passed for the last time the fords of Jordan, leaving Peræa and Galilee behind, and setting His face towards Jerusalem, where the last great sacrifice of a life of self-sacrifice was to be offered up by Him. He came on this occasion openly, not as a private man as at the feast of Tabernacles, but as a Leader at the head of His disciples.

Jericho, about six miles from Jordan, was the first city our Lord and His band of followers approached, by the main caravan road from Arabia and Damascus. The fame of the great Prophet of Nazareth must have been particularly well known in Jericho: not only must they have heard of the wondrous works He had done in Galilee and Peræa, but the greatest of His works had shortly before been performed at no considerable distance, at the village of Bethany. They knew at Jericho of His raising of Lazarus from the dead, and they knew also that the Sanhedrin was bitterly opposed to Him and had resolved on His death. The news that Jesus was coming had spread before Him, and long before the band

of pilgrims to the Passover, who accompanied Jesus, came in sight of Jericho, the inhabitants had come out to see the great Prophet. A crowd lined the road, and among them, but in a tree, above the head of the others, the chief of the publicans (*i.e.* head of the Customs' collectors at Jericho) was waiting.

St. Luke xix. verses 1-10 : 'And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus, who he was ; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him : for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down ; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord ; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor : and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

Next morning Jesus resumed His journey to Jerusalem ; but as He left Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, 'blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side, begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace : but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise ; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he

received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way' (St. Mark x. verses 46-62).

The effort made to induce the blind man to hold his peace came without doubt from our Lord's disciples, and for a very weighty reason. Jesus had not yet made a public claim to the Messiahship, though since Peter's confession the Twelve Apostles at any rate knew that their Master was the Messiah, but He had charged them not to make this known. Here was Bartimæus crying out: 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' This name, 'Son of David,' was well known to mean the Messiah. Jesus, however, was going up to Jerusalem for the purpose of offering Himself to the nation's acceptance as the Messiah, and He was not afraid of the blind man's confession. So He called him and healed him.

After He left Jericho, our Lord travelled to Bethany, and there He stayed, as before, with Martha and Mary. He arrived there six days before the Passover. The result of His presence at Bethany was that a great number of people from Jerusalem came out, not only to see Him, but to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. Many of them, we learn from St. John, before they went away believed on Jesus; that is to say, accepted Him as the Messiah. The Sadducee chief priests, on hearing of this, consulted together how they might put Lazarus as well as Jesus to death; thus to remove the living proof of the great miracle as well as the Worker of it. While this plot was being hatched at Jerusalem, Jesus was resting in the peace and quiet of the happy home at Bethany. The atmosphere of love and devotion there must have been comforting and helpful to our Lord's human nature, sorely tried by the bitter hatred of the leaders of His own nation, whom the proof of His divine power and His divine goodness merely served to exasperate against Him. It seems very fitting that our Lord's last home on earth should have been the house of friendship, the home at Bethany.

Jesus arrived on the Friday. The next day was the Sabbath. And they made Him a supper. Here we may think of their loving hospitality. The supper was not at the house of Martha, but at the house of Simon the Leper, a man who no doubt had been healed by Jesus, and who gave his guest-chamber for the supper with grateful love. Martha managed the service of the meal, and

Lazarus was one of the guests. Martha's sister was also present. St. John xii. verse 3: 'Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.' This touch is unmistakably that of an eye-witness.

Genuine spikenard, as the words of the original Greek may best be rendered, is a very precious perfume of the consistency of ointment. It was worth a large sum, nearly *gl.* Mary had kept this precious possession against the day of her Lord's burial, and we may gather from her action that He had told her plainly that the end was at hand, and that He was to die that very week.

The indignant objection of Judas Iscariot, which actually succeeded in carrying away some of the other disciples, drew from our Lord a defence of her action which is full of pathos. The love which was the master-passion of Mary's soul gains by contrast with the covetousness which ruled the mind of Judas. But that He, who for our sakes came down from heaven, should have had to plead for the last service of love, is touching, and in keeping with all the sorrow and suffering our Lord had soon to bear.

Before we come to the next step in our Lord's progress towards the end of His ministry and His life, the entry into Jerusalem as the Messianic King, we may with advantage endeavour to realise a picture of Jerusalem as it is to-day, to help us to see with the mind's eye Jerusalem as it was then. We have read in our Old Testament of the building of Solomon's magnificent Temple, and of its destruction by the Chaldæans in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The Temple which was built by the exiles, after the return from Babylon, was inferior to Solomon's Temple, and was altogether surpassed by the Temple of Herod, begun in the year 20 B.C. At the time of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, Herod's Temple had been forty and six years in building, and was not finished for about thirty years after. The site of the Temple is a very beautiful one; it is also a very ancient one. Psalm xlvi. verse 2: 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.' Not only had Solomon's Temple, Zerubbabel's Temple, and Herod's Temple stood there, but earlier still David built an altar there and offered sacrifices. 2 Samuel xxiv.

verse 25 : ' And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.'

The Mosque of Omar, which still stands above the sacred rock, is called by the name of Khalif Omar, who took Jerusalem from the Christians in A.D. 637, and built a wooden mosque. Abdel-Melek, the sixteenth Khalif, erected a Kubbeh, or dome, over the sacred rock in A.D. 688. This was the original of the present building. Instead of a pavement, the original bare rock floors the centre of this building. The rock is railed off as being too holy to be trodden by the foot of man. Everything is of the best : priceless Persian tiles adorn the exterior. The result is truly beautiful as well as poetic. Out of the crevices of the stonework yellow-eyed hyssop peeps, and clothes with beauty brick, and stone, and marble. Doves in large numbers build their nests in between work of indescribable beauty. The interior abounds with different and exquisite kinds of wood, of marble, of stained-glass windows. Around this building lies the Temple area : a scene of a variety and a beauty that baffles description. The ground you walk on is in part flagged ; in part it is green grass diversified with many-coloured flowers. Under the silvery leafage of the olive-trees occasional groups in Eastern garb meet the eye. Moslems are freely admitted, at any and at all times. Christians, who here indeed are made to feel as if they were aliens, are only admitted when they have procured an order from their embassy.

In the Temple precincts there are several wells, whence I saw men filling their skins. Little Arab children were lying about among the scarlet anemones which here abound. The walls of the Temple area are partly in ruins, but the gates are still to be seen. There is a wonderful view, full of the memories of that unparalleled history. Just outside the outer walls are the tombs of the Hebrew kings. The Valley of Hinnom lies deep below. The Brook of Kidron flows hard by. The village of Siloam which we have been speaking about is to be seen on the opposite hillside. As a background to everything else rise the hills, brilliant in green in the springtime. The nearest is the range known as the Mount of Olives. The quietness here is profound. You seem to hear the stillness

in that sort of day-dream which one experiences when one is taken out of oneself by the realised nearness of persons and scenes of the mighty past.

From this very place Christ had often gazed on the same view. It is an unforgettable experience to realise this truth. Moving to the Mount of Olives, the view changes : undulating hill ranges, fold within fold, one gently melting into another, form a continuous but ever-changing panorama of surprises, as the clouds from above send down light or shade on the hillsides. In one direction your eyes follow the way to Bethlehem ; in another you see, in a hollow, a sheet of water, glinting like polished steel, which is no other than the Dead Sea. Beneath at your feet, amongst the low and weather-worn hills, which give you the impression of rising and falling as if breathing, there lies a village which was once the Bethphage of the Gospels, the very place from which our Lord directed the ass to be fetched for His use to ride upon at that memorable entry into Jerusalem which we are shortly about to recall. Donkeys and mules wander in search of pasture along the pathless, but often-trod hill slopes. Here and there a shepherd leads his black flock (a feature of that neighbourhood) into the mountains around, which are studded at intervals with a few olive-trees, or perhaps a patch of verdure, wrested, as it were, from the grip of the arid rock and the scorching sun.

We must return to Jerusalem now and our Lord's entry. The Sabbath was over at Bethany. The morning of the first day of the week which we know as Passion Week had come. Jesus prepared to make His entry into Jerusalem as the Messianic King. The entry into Jerusalem took place as it did by the deliberate intention of our Lord. He intended to make a great appeal to Jerusalem by the sight of an entry consciously based on the words of the prophet Zechariah. To see the Kingly Figure riding upon an ass, the animal of peace, as the horse is of war, surrounded by the rejoicing procession, would remind everyone of the words of the prophet. Zechariah ix. verse 9 : ' Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy King cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass and (even) upon a colt the foal of an ass.'

This was a symbolic appeal perfectly understood by Eastern minds ; a silent appeal to the rulers of the whole nation which would speak more eloquently than any words. Would they accept or reject this Messiah ? Our Lord foresaw what would happen. Not so His disciples, who were evidently full of the highest hopes, in spite of all their Master's warnings. It was a morning of early spring when the procession set out from the home of Bethany. All the four Evangelists record the entry. The three first describe the approach from Bethany ; St. John alone takes the standpoint of one who was with the multitude that came out from Jerusalem to meet Him.

St. Matthew xxi. verse 1 : ' And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her ; loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them ; and straightway he will send them. All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way ; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitude that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David : Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this ? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.'

St. Luke xix. verse 37 : ' And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.'

It was customary for the people of Jerusalem to greet the pilgrims to the Passover on their arrival, but this was the triumphant



Painting on wood

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM
THE UFFIZI GALLERY AT FLORENCE
BOTTICINI (1446-1498)

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welcome of One who claimed to be the Messiah. The Pharisees who were among the crowd noticed it and said : ' Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing ? behold, the world is gone after him ' (St. John xii. verse 19). Then they turned to the Master Himself in helpless rage.

St. Luke xix. verses 39, 40 : ' And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.'

The procession advanced towards Jerusalem, and it seems to have been just where the full view of the city opens to the eye, that the procession paused, and our Lord gazed upon the city and ' wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.'

Our Lord's bodily eyes beheld the glory both of the Temple and the city, and at the same time, with His mind's eye, He saw as in a vision the Roman camp, the Roman legions, enclosing all in a fatal and crushing grasp, till all those walls and buildings lay even with the ground, and all the crowded population within them was laid low. This wonderful prophetic vision of the ruin of that proud city set forth in our Lord's words, proved, as we know, in a few years' time, literally true. It was the spirit of blind pride and self-confidence, the spirit which wrought Christ's death, the spirit which refused to be enlightened, even by Christ Himself, that some forty years after, by rash defiance of Roman power, brought on the Holy City the utter destruction over which our Lord now wept as He foresaw and foretold it.

Jesus had wept by the grave of Lazarus, and now wept at the terrible judgment, which those who had already plotted His death, because He had raised Lazarus to life, were bringing on themselves and on their city.

The question arises : How is this hearty welcome of the multitude to be reconciled with the clamouring for the Lord's Crucifixion, which, later on in the week, overcame the reluctance of Pilate ? The multitude who went out to meet Jesus consisted chiefly of pilgrims come up from the country for the feast. They were

friendly to Jesus, but the Jews of Jerusalem were mostly hostile to Him. Their leaders, the chief priests and scribes, sought to take Jesus by craft, and put Him to death.

St. Mark xiv. verse 2 : ' But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.'

The traitor disciple sought opportunity to betray Jesus to them in the absence of the friendly multitude. St. Luke xxii. verse 6 : ' And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.'

Within the gates, the citizens, as distinguished from the pilgrim multitudes, displayed their ignorance or indifference by such a question as, ' Who is this ? ' To which the pilgrims replied, ' This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee ' (St. Matthew xxi. 10, 11).

Our Lord must have felt in this attitude of the people of Jerusalem some foreshadowing of His coming rejection. He must have felt also the sadness that had moved Him even to tears at the first sight of Jerusalem, as He looked now on the crowded streets, and the magnificent Temple filled with multitudes of worshippers, and realised how near was the end—the end of His own ministry and life, and in a few short years the end of the Temple and of the nation. He went into the Temple, but we are not told that He taught on this occasion. He seems to have looked round Him at all that was going on, and silently to have returned to Bethany with His disciples. There the night was spent, and the next morning, the morning of the second day in Passion Week, the Monday, He went with His disciples again early to the Temple. At that hour the Temple was crowded with worshippers, and the traffic which our Lord had once before attempted to stop was going on. The traffickers consisted largely of money-changers, who changed the money of Jews from foreign countries, in order that they might make their contributions, as was required by the Temple authorities, in Jewish money. Besides the money-changers, there were numbers of sellers of doves, which were used for sacrifices. The high priest himself made a profit by selling these doves to the merchants, who sold them in the Temple, and was thus himself interested in maintaining this traffic.

The stir of this traffic in the Temple courts must have interfered with the quiet meditation and prayer for which the Temple was

intended, and our Lord was indignant at the sight, and He cast all the traffic out. See St. Matthew xxi. verses 12-16.

Our Lord's judgment on the traffic in the Temple was really a judgment on the high priest, and the whole body of priests who permitted this desecrating traffic, and made money out of it. But they did not dare openly to interfere with Jesus, as at that early hour the Temple was full of pilgrims from Galilee and Peræa, whose enthusiasm for Jesus was unmistakable. The chief priests and scribes then contented themselves with remonstrating at the Messianic claim implied in the children's hosannas, hoping to induce Jesus to silence the children, as the Pharisees had attempted to induce Him to silence His disciples the day before, during the triumphant procession into Jerusalem.

Our Lord's reply amounted to an acceptance of the position of the Messiah, and the hosannas were appropriate as an acknowledgment of the Messianic works of healing He had just done in the Temple. Thus, the second day of Passion Week was marked by our Lord's manifestation of Himself as Messiah, by His mighty works in the great centre of national worship. The night was again spent at Bethany, and on the Tuesday morning early our Lord was again in the Temple, where He walked and talked in the Porches; and where soon after His arrival He was met by the chief priests, who had probably held a meeting the night before, and decided on challenging His authority for all He did.

We read in St. Matthew xxi. verses 23-27: 'And when he was come into the Temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? but if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all held John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.'

The chief priests being thus silenced, the Pharisees, with the Herodians (the party who accepted Herod's kingship as rightful), devised a subtle question to entrap Jesus into an answer that would, they hoped, either give ground for an accusation of sedition against the Roman empire, or, if He avoided that, would involve Him in the discredit of supporting the Roman rule, which would shake His popularity with the fiery patriots of Galilee.

We find the account of this in St. Matthew xxii. verses 15-22, where Jesus says: ' . . . Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.'

Our Lord now left the Porches, and turned to go up into the Temple building, and there He sat down, perhaps on the flight of steps, and watched the people. St. Mark's account of the incident gives a lifelike picture (xii. verses 41-44): ' And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.'

With the great series of woes against the false teaching of the Pharisees, our Lord seems to have closed His teaching in the Temple. Each woe in St. Matthew's account in the twenty-fourth chapter begins with the words, ' Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' But even in the midst of His denunciations our Lord keeps His tender love and pity for the lost city and its inhabitants.

' O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

The most important part of our Lord's last teaching now claims our attention. This is the series of parables spoken in the Temple to the people with the chief priests and Pharisees, who heard and understood their application to themselves. The first of these parables in the Temple is the Parable of the Two Sons. St. Matthew xxi. verses 28-31: 'But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterwards he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.'

The first son represented the publicans and harlots, whose refusal of the father's call was implied in their lawless life; yet afterwards they repented and obeyed the call. The other son, who made a great profession of obedience, represented the Pharisees, who felt no need of repentance; and so the outcasts of society go into the kingdom of heaven before the false professors of religion.

Immediately after this parable came a far more important one, that of the husbandmen. It is found in St. Matthew xxi. verses 33-39.

In order that the chief priests might perceive unmistakably that He spoke of them, our Lord drove home the meaning of this parable. The neglect and unbelief shown by the son representing the Pharisees in the former parable, is seen in this parable intensified into deliberate rebellion, carried to its extreme expression in the murder by the husbandmen of the king's son. The husbandmen are the Jewish nation, represented and condemned in the person of their leaders, who had at this very time already murdered Jesus in their hearts. The owner of the vineyard was, of course, God, the Father, who had leased His vineyard to Israel of old; in accordance with the terms of the lease they were to give Him His proper share of

the fruits. He sent His servants for the fruits, but the husbandmen received them with ill-usage and even put them to death.

He sent to them a greater servant, John the Baptist, and he received the same treatment. At last He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, and they cast Him out of the vineyard and killed Him. Even the chief priests and Pharisees in reply to our Lord's question, 'What will the lord of the vineyard do to these husbandmen?' (verse 40), were obliged to answer, 'He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their season' (verse 41).

'And Jesus said unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.'

This terrible condemnation enraged the chief priests and Pharisees, who felt that it was passed on them. St. Matthew xxii. verse 46: 'But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.'

Jesus spoke to them yet another parable, the parable known as the Marriage of the King's Son. St. Matthew xxii. verses 2-14.

The marriage feast is the Kingdom of God. The King's Son is the Christ. The chosen guests are the people of the Old Covenant, the Jews. The prophets of the Old Testament had been sent to them with the King's invitation. They had rejected it, and the invitation had been repeated again and again. Judgment on the nation followed and was to follow at the hands of the Romans, who were the instruments of Divine Justice, as the Chaldæans had been in the days of Jeremiah.

The second part of the parable applies specially to the disciples of our Lord, to those who had accepted the invitation and had come to the marriage feast of the Gospel. For each of them the King supplies a wedding garment. The wedding garment is indispensable, and one of the guests who has insolently refused to put it on—breaking the harmony of the happy company—is thus, by his own

action, unfitted to remain and is removed from the feast. What is the wedding garment? Clearly the Christ-likeness, the righteousness that Christ bestows, the fruit of intimate union with Him. Putting on the wedding garment is described by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans as putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans xiii. verse 14), and again in the Epistle to the Ephesians as putting off the old man and putting on the new (Ephesians iv. verses 22-24), and again in the Epistle to the Galatians, 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (Galatians iii. verse 27).

After His solemn farewell to the Temple, our Lord and His disciples left Jerusalem to return to Bethany, as they had done on each evening of this week. On this occasion they halted on the Mount of Olives, and sat down in full sight of the magnificent buildings of the Temple. As they had left the Temple, our Lord had predicted to them its coming destruction: 'Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down' (St. Mark xiii. verse 2). This prediction, it may be observed, was literally fulfilled not many years after, when the Romans took Jerusalem.

Meditating on these words, four of our Lord's disciples came to Him and asked Him, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?' (St. Mark xiii. verse 4).

The uncertainty as to the date was intended to produce in His disciples the most intense and unwearying watchfulness. 'Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his home, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch' (St. Mark xiii. verses 33-37).

In close connection with this teaching of our Lord which we have been considering, the suddenness of His coming and the need of constant watchfulness on the part of His disciples, are two parables, the Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Talents,

They were probably both of them spoken on the Mount of Olives, and addressed to the disciples, who had just listened to the discourse on the Last Things. That of the Virgins followed directly out of the conclusion of our Lord's discourse, for so to live as to be always prepared to meet the Lord, however sudden His coming, is its main lesson. See St. Matthew xxv. 1-13.

In this beautiful parable the word-picture of a Jewish wedding is used by our Lord to convey a lesson of profound importance, the need of personal preparation, in order to receive Him at His coming, and to be with Him after it. At evenfall in the East, it was the custom for the bridegroom, with his friends, to come to the house of the bride and take her to his own house. On the way they were joined by the bride's young friends, the virgins of the parable, who accompanied the procession into the hall where the marriage feast was held. The bridegroom of the parable was coming from far away, so that it was not known at what hour he would arrive. The five wise virgins had provided not only lamps, but oil for the lamps; the five foolish virgins had provided lamps, but had neglected to provide the necessary oil. The meaning is plain. The virgins represent the disciples of Christ; they have all the same good intentions, but five carry out and five neglect the necessary preparations for performance. The oil represents the inward spirit of the Christian life, without which the lamps—the outward part of Christianity—will not fulfil their purpose, and enable Christians to shine as lights in the world. The need of a continual attitude of watchfulness and expectation, in order that the coming of Christ to the soul may not be missed, is the practical purpose of the teaching of this parable.

The Parable of the Talents which immediately follows in St. Matthew's Gospel deals with the active service required by Christ from His disciples. Like the Parable of the Ten Virgins, that of the Talents was addressed to disciples, and its lessons are eternally applicable to Christian life. True spiritual life must issue in personal and purposeful service.

We find the parable in St. Matthew xxv. verses 14-30.

The Lord's coming is the culmination of the two parables. The waiting time in the Parable of the Ten Virgins is to be a watching

time ; the waiting time in the Parable of the Talents is to be a working time. To work as well as to watch is required of those who would have their Lord's approval on His return, and working is a result of watching. The servants in the Parable of the Talents are slaves to whom their master entrusts his property that they may use it so as to earn him an increase—as was the custom of the world at that time. The meaning of the parable is plain. The man traveling into a far country is Christ. The man's servants are Christ's disciples. The goods entrusted to the servants are all that a Christian has wherewith to serve Christ. Not only the natural gifts which we call talents, borrowing the familiar name from this very parable, but also the opportunities for service, the time, the money, all is given us to be used so as to bring forth fruits of increase.

This parable has a very searching application to Christian life to-day. To make the best use of the powers we possess is a part of our religious duty : self-development as well as self-denial is a part of Christian service, and even as regards our spiritual powers, how commonly is the duty of self-development forgotten. How many persons who find time to study secular literature can find no time for the study of the Bible ; how many never seriously study a single book of the Divine Library so as to grasp and understand it as a whole, but content themselves with reading texts and fragments here and there in an unconnected and perfunctory way which no one would dream of pursuing in dealing with any other literature. The wicked and slothful servant in the parable had no faith in his lord's goodwill, and no sense of his own duty ; he gave up any effort as hopeless, certain that he could not satisfy his lord. Thus he brought on himself just condemnation when the day of reckoning came. This story has its warning message for Christians to-day to remind them that the very smallest endowments can be and must be used for Christ, if the disciple is to be greeted with the ' Well done, good and faithful servant,' at his Lord's coming.

Immediately after this parable follows the great Parable-vision of the Last Judgment recorded in St. Matthew xxv. verses 31-45.

This vision sets forth very beautifully, in our Lord's clear and imperishable words, the great Christian truth that in serving our fellow-men we are serving our Lord ; and that what is done to them

is done to Him. The commentary which supplements this vision is to be found in St. John's Gospel, in the thirteenth chapter, in the washing of the disciples' feet, where our Lord first sets the example, by doing what He afterwards commanded. 'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you' (St. John xiii. verse 15).

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Painting

THE LAST SUPPER
THE UFFIZI GALLERY AT FLORENCE
PAUL VERONESE (1528-1588)

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE GOSPELS (THE SADDUCEE PLOT AND THE PHARISEES—THE TREACHERY OF JUDAS—THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER—GETHESEMANE—THE TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN—THE TRIAL BEFORE PILATE—THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH)

WE have been considering our Lord's teaching during the early part of Passion Week, and we must now turn to the action of the leaders of the people in Jerusalem. Our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem as the Messiah, and the boldness of His action in cleansing the Temple, had brought matters to a head. The attempts to ensnare Him in His talk, such as the question of paying tribute to Cæsar, had failed, and the Sadducee leaders felt that His mighty works, and His great reputation, especially with the Galilean pilgrims who filled the city, made Him a real danger to their supremacy. They had already put themselves at the head of the Pharisee party after the raising of Lazarus, and the high priest, Caiaphas, had guided the decision of the Council of the chief priests and Pharisees to put Him to death. They had then, however, had no opportunity of taking Him, for He had retired into Peræa. Now He was in Jerusalem again and daily in the Temple, where He taught and worked miracles of healing. But they dared not attempt His arrest in the Temple, where the multitude of Galilean pilgrims would have stopped such action by force. An informal meeting was called to the palace of Caiaphas, near the Temple; and the meeting seems to have been held on the Tuesday night. To this centre of Sadducee rule assembled not only the chiefs of the priesthood and the Temple officials and the relatives of the high priest, who constituted the priestly council, but also the Pharisees and Scribes who had been so often and so severely denounced by Jesus. But eager as they were to put Him to death,

they could not risk an arrest at the moment, and intended to wait until after the Passover, when the pilgrims had dispersed. They were afraid of a tumult, for Pilate, who was in Jerusalem, had a double garrison in Antonia for the Passover, and would only have been too pleased to take vengeance for any disturbance, not only on the multitude, but on the leaders of the people. At this juncture Judas arrived at the high priest's palace and offered to betray his Master. This was just what they wanted, and they 'weighed unto him' (R.V.) a sum of money to betray Jesus to them in the absence of the multitude. The price paid was thirty pieces of silver, about £3. 15s., the price of a slave. This price was paid out of the Temple moneys intended for the purchase of victims for sacrifice. The force of this symbolism is unmistakable. This purchase seems to be also a remarkable fulfilment of prophecy (in Zechariah xi. verse 12): 'So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.'

The blood-money was paid, and the traitor was to complete his bargain upon the first opportunity. How had Judas sunk to this depth of infamy? Apparently he had been bitterly disappointed at the refusal of Jesus to take the earthly kingdom of the Jewish Messiah; like the other Apostles, he had expected an earthly kingdom, and had been building upon a high and lucrative position in it for himself.

When Judas returned from Jerusalem on the Wednesday, his absence would probably be explained to the other disciples as connected with arrangements for the Feast of the Passover. This was to take place in Jerusalem, and our Lord sent two of the Apostles from Bethany to prepare the Paschal Supper at the house of one who was evidently a disciple, for no mere stranger would have acted as he did. St. Mark tells us, in chapter xiv. verses 13-16.

In St. Matthew xxvi. verses 20-25, we read of the eating of the Passover and of a sad announcement which accompanied it. 'Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe

unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I ? He said unto him, Thou hast said.'

We come now to the Lord's Supper. The following is St. Luke's account of the Institution of the Lord's Supper (St. Luke xxii. verses 19, 20) : ' And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.'

Here let us look at our picture of the Lord's Last Supper, and try to realise the touching scene. The Passover had been eaten before this solemn Institution took place, the Passover which had pointed in type to Him through all the past had now reached its consummation. He was the Lamb destined to be slain, ' the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ' (Revelation xiii. verse 8). The Great Sacrament He thus instituted was to be to His disciples the Sacrament of union with Him and with each other. In some mysterious and wonderful way He Himself, His spirit and His character, was to be conveyed through this rite to those who took part in it, in loving remembrance of Him. The Christian Church has from the first made the Lord's Supper its chief service ; for a long period there was no other regular service, and it remains the supreme centre of the Church's worship and the symbol of the unity of all Christians as the one Body of the One Lord, the whole world over.

St. John, who omits the actual Institution because it had already been given by the other three Evangelists, gives much, not elsewhere recorded, that our Lord did and spoke on that eventful night in the Upper Room. In the thirteenth chapter, verses 2-17, we have some sacramental teaching of our Lord which emphasizes the self-sacrifice which is one aspect of the Lord's Supper. The vividness of the details proclaims that the Evangelist was an eye-witness.

The following chapters of St. John's Gospel, xiv., xv., xvi., and xvii., embody the last conversation of our Lord with His disciples,

which took place in the Upper Room after the institution of the Great Sacrament was over. Hours passed while our Lord poured forth His tenderest and deepest teachings for the comfort of His sorrowing disciples, from whom He was soon to be taken. He knew the suffering that lay before Him, but He thought only of the lesser sorrow and sufferings of His disciples. He sought to lessen it by the revelation of the mysterious perfection of the union with Himself, which was to be theirs after He was gone, through the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. These discourses begin with the familiar words, 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you' (St. John xiv. verses 1, 2).

Then follows His conversation with Thomas and Philip, which gives the clearest revelation of His own Divinity (St. John xiv. verse 9): '. . . Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?'

Very significantly does this revelation come from the lips of Him who had just instituted the Great Sacrament, the Holy Communion.

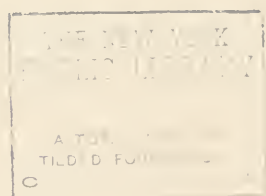
Then follows the promise of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, which the Father would send in the Son's name. The intimate union of Christ and His Church is set forth with wonderful felicity in the allegory of the True Vine and its branches. The wonderful conversation and discourses of these chapters close with the last prayer—the prayer of consecration—of our Lord for His disciples, which fills the seventeenth chapter.

At the Feast of the Passover six Psalms were sung: Psalms cxiii. and cxiv., during the Feast; Psalms cxv., cxvi., cxvii., cxviii., at the end. Christ and His disciples sang these Psalms, which were called the Hallel: this is the 'hymn' with which the Paschal Supper ended: 'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives' (St. Matthew xxvi. verse 30).

The discourses which we have been considering, and the prayer, followed the hymn, and after the last prayer was ended we read in St. John xviii., verse 1: 'When Jesus had spoken these words,

THE AGONY
IN THE
GARDEN
A PAINTING
IN THE
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AT FLORENCE
PERUGINO
(1446-1524)





he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.'

Gethsemane, 'the oil-press,' was a garden on the slope of the Mount of Olives, named probably from a press used there to extract the oil. The spot identified with it is very small, and gnarled old olive trees still grow there. It was probably the property of a disciple of Christ's, 'for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples' (verse 2). It was, as the word 'resorted' signifies in the original, a place where His disciples assembled to listen to their Lord's teaching, and possibly, during the present visit to Jerusalem, had been used for passing the night: 'And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives' (St. Luke xxi. 37).

Then our Lord turned to Peter, who had asserted again that though the others might fail, he would not, and warned him that before the cock crowed twice he would deny Him thrice. When they came to Gethsemane, Jesus carried out His purpose of preparing for His Passion by prayer to His Father in Heaven. But first He told the body of His disciples to sit still while He went to pray. St. Mark's account, which probably came from St. Peter, is full of graphic detail.

Our Lord was so faint and weary and sorrowful at heart that He kneeled down and fell on His face on the ground, and in an agony of prayer He struggled with the temptation to avoid the horrors that lay before Him by refusing to drink the cup of anguish. But the brave spirit conquered, and He resolved to drink that cup, and mentally drank it even to the bitter dregs. What was this cup the Father had given Him to drink, which He took and drained of His own free choice? It was not only the awful death of the Cross, intensified by the hatred and contempt of His own countrymen, it was not only the betrayal and the denial, and the desertion which He knew He was to meet from His own circle of friends and disciples, even from His chosen Apostles; it was all this and something besides far deeper and more wonderful. In some mysterious way on Him was laid 'the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah liii. verse 6). The marvellous prophetic vision of the suffering Messiah was in Him to be literally fulfilled. How He bore the burden of the whole world's

sins is beyond our fathoming, but the healing power of His sufferings in removing sin from the heart of all sorts and conditions of men is a fact attested by the experience of centuries. By the power of His matchless sympathy He became as it were a nerve over which passed not only all the sorrows and the sufferings, but also the sins of mankind. And all this He bore in His human nature as man, as the representative of the race. As St. Paul wrote to the Philippians (ii. verse 7), He 'emptied himself, taking the form of a (bond-servant, R.M.) servant, being made in the likeness of men' (R.V.).

Suddenly, while He was speaking to His disciples, came the tramp of trained men and the flash of lights. It was a band of Roman soldiers from the garrison stationed in Antonia, with a body of Temple police (officers) sent by the chief priests and Pharisees. Judas was their guide, and with the cynicism of covetousness he went up to Jesus, and kissed Him, a kiss being the signal he had arranged. Jesus said to him very quietly, 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?' (St. Matthew xxvi. verse 50)—words calculated to give Judas an opportunity to repent by reminding him of the infamy of what he was doing, and of the miserable bribe for which he was incurring that infamy. Jesus, getting no answer, added to unmask the hypocrite, 'Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?' (St. Luke xxii. verse 48).

Then Jesus stood forth in calm and fearless majesty, desiring only to shield His disciples, and asked the armed men, 'Whom seek ye?' In the uncertain light they had evidently not recognised Jesus, for they answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth' (St. John xviii. verses 4, 5). 'Jesus saith unto them, I am he. . . . As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground' (St. John xviii. verses 5, 6).

Here a word may be said about the plot which the Sadducees had devised, and the Pharisees had conspired with them to carry out. The plan was this. To arrest Jesus by night, when the Galileans in the city could know nothing of what was going on. To hurry Him before the Sanhedrin the same night, to bring Him condemned by them before Pilate at the early dawn, there to accuse Him of stirring up a revolution and putting Himself forward as the King of the Jews, and to get Him condemned and crucified

forthwith. Once He was on the Cross, the Roman soldiers might be depended on to carry through the execution, in spite of any popular interference. This plot was literally carried out.

The arrest of Jesus took place about one o'clock in the morning on the Friday. No time was lost, and probably about two o'clock the preliminary private examination was made before Annas in the presence of Caiaphas, who together with Annas was waiting up all night to hurry through the preliminary examination. This was at the palace of the High Priest. Before this private examination John had obtained admission for himself and Peter to the courtyard of the High Priest's palace.

'Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not' (St. John xviii. verse 17).

There was a fire in the courtyard, for it was long before sunrise and cold. At this fire the servants and officers were warming themselves, and Peter was with them for the same purpose.

Meanwhile the private examination of Jesus went on. Caiaphas asked Him about His disciples and His doctrine (St. John xviii. verses 20-23).

Then followed the examination before Caiaphas, to whom Annas sent Jesus officially. This was in another part of the palace. When Jesus was brought into the Court at the close of the private examination, attention was drawn to the stranger, Peter.

St. John xviii. verses 25-27: 'And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again; and immediately the cock crew.'

Something in Peter's manner as his Lord was led by had revealed his interest and love, and led to the conjecture that he was a disciple. At three o'clock, an examination of Jesus took place before an irregular meeting of the Sanhedrin, and before five o'clock, at a hasty regular meeting of the same body, the formal sentence of the Sanhedrin was pronounced.

At the earlier informal meeting of the Sanhedrin at three o'clock

in the morning, the chief priests and the elders and scribes, and all the Council, had sought witness against Jesus to put Him to death. John, and probably Peter, were present, and to their memory the account of this trial is due. Mark's account helps us to realise the scene. The High Priest and the Council sat on cushions on the floor in a semicircle, the High Priest in the middle. Jesus was forced to stand, bound with cords, though it was usual to allow a prisoner to be seated, and this Prisoner was very weary with the long night of trial. The Council brought forward many witnesses, whose witness agreed not together: the Prisoner maintained a dignified silence. Nothing worthy of a death sentence could be proved, and yet it was to pass this and nothing else, that the High Priest and the Council were there.

St. Mark xiv. verses 60-65: 'And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing.'

Then at five o'clock, at the formal meeting of the whole Jewish Council to which we have referred, it was decided to take Jesus before the Roman governor; and the Sanhedrin, headed by the High Priest, conducted Him to Pilate's palace, the Prætorium (Hall of Judgment, A.V.). The sentence of death was determined on, but the Jews had no power to carry it out. The night trial was technically illegal, and the second meeting of the Sanhedrin had had to be held to confirm the decision already arrived at. Yet even the letter of the law was broken by a sentence and execution carried out on the day of trial. Probably it was not yet six o'clock when Jesus was brought before Pilate, for the word translated 'early' in St. John xviii. verse 28 is used for the fourth watch—three to six A.M. Pilate would have been prepared for the trial when, the day before, he granted a detachment of soldiers to help to make the arrest, and a Roman court could be held immediately after sunrise.

A full account of the private examination before Pilate is given by St. John alone, who was no doubt present at it. The Jews remained outside the Prætorium, lest they should be defiled at this Passover season, that is, by entering a house from which all leaven had not been removed.

The scenes in the trial of our Lord before Pilate took place partly outside the Prætorium and partly inside. The accusers of Jesus remained outside the Prætorium; Jesus, and the Roman soldiers who guarded Him, and St. John were within. First Pilate went out and asked them what charge they had against Jesus, and as their indefinite reply that He was a malefactor seemed unsatisfactory, he told them to take Him and judge Him according to their law. Pilate's words forced the Jews to reveal their murderous purpose: 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death' (St. John xviii. verse 31).

It would be difficult for us to explain this scrupulousness of Pilate if we did not know (from St. Matthew's account) of the message of Pilate's wife, warning him to have nothing to do with that righteous Man, for she had suffered many things in a dream because of Him.

As a result of the private examination Pilate went out and told the accusers, 'I find in him no fault at all' (verse 38). This did not suit the chief priests and the multitude; they had already accused Him of perverting the people and refusing to give tribute to Cæsar, a gross misrepresentation of His words on the tribute money. Now they urged that He stirred up all the people, beginning from Galilee unto this place. At the word Galilee, Pilate saw an opportunity of shirking his responsibility: he was anxious to acquit Jesus, but he felt the difficulty. He asked if Jesus was a Galilean, and when he learned that He was, he sent Him to King Herod, to whose jurisdiction He belonged, and who was in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was pleased at Pilate's courtesy in treating him as king over the Galileans, even when in Jerusalem. He was the Herod who had murdered John the Baptist, to keep his promise to the daughter of Herodias. He had heard of the fame of Jesus and had long wished to see Him: he hoped also to see Him do a miracle. He asked many questions, but received no answer from the majestic Prisoner, though the chief priests and scribes, who had come with the Prisoner to Herod, vehemently accused Him. Jesus would work no miracle to satisfy the king's curiosity, so Herod and his soldiers mocked Him, arraying Him in royal robes and sending Him back to Pilate. Thus Pilate was still left with the responsi-

bility, though by his action he had made friends with Herod. Then Pilate thought of another loophole of escape. It was the custom of the Roman governor to release a criminal at the Passover, whomsoever the people wished. Pilate went out of the palace and offered, in accordance with his custom, to release Jesus to the people. 'Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?' (St. Mark xv. verse 9); but, moved by the chief priests, who were active all along in their midst, they cried with one voice, 'Not this man, but Barabbas' (St. John xviii. verse 40).

Barabbas was a notorious criminal, who for insurrection and murder was in prison. Pilate weakly asked what was to be done with the King of the Jews, and then arose, apparently for the first time, the formidable cry, 'Crucify him! crucify him!' (St. John xix. verse 6). The chief priests no doubt raised the cry, but the multitude yelled it after them. Crucifixion had that horrible attraction which all public executions have for the rabble of a city, and stirred the lust of cruelty in an accentuated form, as being the most harrowing of all such spectacles. Pilate, after a few ineffectual efforts to make himself heard, crying, 'Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him' (St. Luke xxiii. verse 22), resorted to dumb show. He took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye it' (St. Matthew xxvii. verse 24). 'Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children' (verse 25).

The next step in our Lord's sufferings was the scourging, which St. John's narrative shows us was inflicted by Pilate as a punishment severe enough (he thought) to satisfy the Jews without crucifixion. Pilate had humoured the multitude by releasing Barabbas, and thought they might be satisfied with a lesser punishment than the death of Jesus. 'I will therefore chastise him, and let him go' (St. Luke xxiii. verse 22). Scourging was a savage torture; the scourge was loaded with metal and bone, to bruise and tear the flesh of the prisoner, who was naked to the waist and bound to a pillar during the punishment.

After the scourging followed a shocking scene in the guard-room of the Prætorium, which was probably suggested by the coarse

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CHRIST BEFORE PILATE
THE CHURCH OF SAN ROCCO AT VENICE
TINTORETTO (1522-1637)

jest of Herod and his soldiers, when they sent Jesus back, dressed up as a mock king. The whole body of soldiers had the Prisoner at their mercy in the guard-room, and they did with Him as they chose. They put on His head a crown of thorns, gathered probably from a thorn-bush in the garden of the Prætorium, they put a purple robe upon His bleeding shoulders; they put a reed, for a sceptre, in His right hand, and they knelt before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees, worshipped him' (St. Mark xv. verses 18, 19). The whole band took part in this callous sport, and each time they came to Him and said 'Hail, King of the Jews,' they smote Him with their hands, a savage blow on the face taking the place of the kiss of homage; but Jesus bore it, as He bore all His sufferings, without resistance and without anger, with patient fortitude and gentle silence.

Pilate, who had come back into the palace to order the scourging, now must have found out what had been going on in the guard-room. This suggested to him a last appeal, by bringing out the Victim of the fierce sport of the soldiers, and showing Him to His enemies as at once too pitiable and too insignificant for more serious punishment.

Pilate's words 'Behold the man' (*Ecce Homo*) were the expression of half-contemptuous pity, and he hoped that the sight of such bitter humiliation would awaken the same feeling in the spectators. But the chief priests and their officers, the moment they saw Him, anticipated any such outburst of pity with the loud cry, 'Crucify! crucify!' Nothing short of crucifixion, the death of a slave, would satisfy them. Pilate, disappointed and angry, told them to crucify Him themselves, which of course they had no power to do. The Jews met Pilate's challenge by stating their real reason for demanding the Prisoner's death.

St. John xix. verse 7: 'The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.'

Pilate had already recognised something mysterious and greater than man in Jesus, and what the Jews asserted deepened the doubts which our Lord's presence had inspired.

'When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin' (St. John xix. verses 8-11).

The calm dignity of the Prisoner's answer confirmed Pilate's fears, and he now actively sought to release Him. Thereupon the leaders of the Jews dropped the religious accusation and adopted a political one. They raised a loud simultaneous cry, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar' (verse 12). This amounted to the threat that they would accuse Pilate of disloyalty to the Emperor, if he did not crucify Jesus. This appeal to Pilate's fears of what a morose and suspicious tyrant like the Emperor Tiberius might do, was at once successful: he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat, and pointing to Jesus, said bitterly to the Jews, 'Behold your King!' (verse 14).

The soldiers, after they had taken Jesus away, amused themselves at His expense by a second mockery of the condemned King.

St. Mark xv. verses 20, 21: 'And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.'

St. John's account is that He went forth (that is, started) bearing the cross for Himself, but St. Mark's account tells us that after He had gone some distance, He sank from weakness beneath the burden, and therefore it was transferred to Simon of Cyrene, a passer-by.

As the sad procession made its way from the Prætorium to Golgotha (Calvary, 'the skull'), a spot outside the city where the crucifixion was to be carried out, an incident occurred which shows how our Lord was thinking of and sorrowing for others, and not

for Himself : the incident is recorded in St. Luke's Gospel in chapter xxiii. verses 27-29.

When the soldiers and their prisoners reached Golgotha, the usual preparations were made to crucify Jesus and the two malefactors who were to share His fate. A stupefying draught, ' wine mingled with myrrh ' (St. Mark xv. verse 23), was refused by Jesus, who was resolved to suffer and die with all His powers intact. Shrieks and groans and curses probably came from the two robbers, the usual accompaniment of the cruel pain as the nails were driven through hands and feet, but from Jesus, as the nails were driven in, came what is known as the first word from the Cross, a prayer of forgiving love : ' Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do ' (St. Luke xxiii. verse 34).

This utterance of unselfish compassion for sinners and calm courage under keen suffering fitly introduces that great Revelation of Incarnate Love which is offered to our gaze in the records of the Crucifixion.

St. John xix. verses 19-22 : ' And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews : for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city : and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews ; but that he said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.'

Pilate wrote the inscription himself, and had it placed on the Cross as some slight revenge on the chief priests, who had forced him to condemn an innocent man.

That Pilate knew something of the mighty works of Jesus and His holy life, before He was brought to the Prætorium, seems probable from the readiness with which he accepted the Prisoner's explanation of the entirely unworldly nature of His Kingdom. His wife's dream, and the message she sent, shows that she possessed such knowledge, and was fully convinced that Jesus was a righteous man. The end of the Roman who judged our Lord is unknown, but the end of the Jew who betrayed Him is recorded by St. Matthew in chapter xxvii. verses 3-8.

The pangs of conscience which drove the wretched man to suicide, and the genuineness of his grief, have suggested to some students that Judas expected that by some exercise of the supernatural power, which he knew his Master possessed, He would defeat the attempt to arrest Him. The gentleness of our Lord's remonstrances with Judas points to the fact that He was ready to forgive and only wanted Judas to awaken to the heinousness of his sin and ask for forgiveness. At the present day there is still shown to visitors to Jerusalem a piece of waste ground, barren and desolate, shunned by every passer-by and as well known as 'The Field of Blood' to-day as when the Gospel was first written.

To return to the Crucifixion.

'And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God' (St. Matthew xxvii. verses 39-43).

Even His fellow-sufferers joined in the chorus of ridicule and abuse: the soldiers too were moved to imitate the other mockers.

'And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself' (St. Luke xxiii. verses 36, 37).

The mocking and ribaldry were borne with the same gentle patience as His other sufferings, and this wonderful gentleness and sweetness produced its effect.

'And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto

thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise ' (St. Luke xxiii. verses 39-43).

' Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son ! Then saith he to his disciple, Behold thy mother ! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home ' (St. John xix. verses 25-27).

And now the ministry of Jesus to others was ended, and our attention is concentrated on the Lord Himself. A great darkness came on, which lasted for three hours.

' And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst ' (St. Luke xxiii. verses 44, 45).

It came on at the sixth hour, that is twelve o'clock. This deep darkness at noonday may be regarded as Nature's way of sympathising with Nature's Lord. This was the most awful period of suffering, and it was to save His mother the sight of this, that He had sent her away with St. John. The only measure of that awful suffering He endured while the weight of the world's sins pressed upon Him is the awe-inspiring cry which broke from Him, under the awful sense of utter abandonment and isolation : ' ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI ? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ' (St. Mark xv. verse 34). Or to translate the original Aramaic of the cry more literally, ' Why didst thou forsake me ? ' This utterance of supreme anguish is the fourth word from the Cross, and belongs to the period of darkness towards its close.

The next word came when the darkness was over, ' I thirst,' the fifth word from the Cross.

' After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar : and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth ' (St. John xix. verses 28, 29).

This utterance of physical suffering was in itself an expression of relief from the greater suffering of spirit which was now over. Apparently one of the soldiers, touched with compassion, offered this slight refreshment, which the Lord accepted as the offering of reverent kindness from one whom His bearing upon the Cross may have half won.

The last suffering for sin had been endured : the life-work was done : Jesus was ready to die.

‘ When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished : and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost ’ (St. John xix. verse 30).

This cry of triumph, ‘ It is finished,’ is a single word in the original. This is the sixth word from the Cross, but is the last recorded by St. John. St. Luke gives the seventh word, which our Lord spoke in dying : ‘ Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ’ (St. Luke xxiii. verse 46) ; and St. Matthew adds : ‘ And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent ’ (St. Matthew xxvii. verse 51).

And so the only Perfect Life on earth was finished, and the Perfect Victory won. Of His own free choice our Lord gave up His Life, as He had said : ‘ I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again ’ (St. John x. verse 18).

The Jews thought it was finished in a very different sense : they thought they had finally got rid of this Prophet of Nazareth. They had carried through successfully their daring conspiracy of getting Him tried, condemned, and executed the same day, and now they had only to make His death certain, and get His Body buried away out of sight.

‘ The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs : but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out



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blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe ' (St. John xix. verses 31-35).

The blood and water which flowed from the pierced side was, perhaps, a sign of life in death, a sign of the beginning of the change completed in the Resurrection. Our Lord in dying provided for the supply of the virtue of His human life, of which blood was the symbol, and also for the outpouring of His spiritual life, of which water was the symbol.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE GOSPELS (THE BURIAL—THE RESURRECTION—THE APPEARANCES OF THE FIRST EASTER DAY—THE APPEARANCES OF THE FORTY DAYS—THE ASCENSION)

THE Crucifixion, the narrative of which we have followed through the four Gospels, was now over, and the crucified ' King of the Jews ' hung dead between the crucified thieves. Already the serene majesty of His bearing upon the Cross had produced lasting effects on some of the onlookers. The centurion in command of the soldiers who carried out the execution, was so impressed by all he saw that the involuntary confession burst from his lips, ' Truly this was the Son of God ' (St. Matthew xxvii. verse 54). Two of His secret disciples, both men of high position and wealth, who had not had the courage openly to confess their discipleship in His lifetime, were moved by His death fearlessly to avow their discipleship and their devotion to their master's memory. Joseph of Arimathæa went boldly to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Nicodemus, who had formerly come to Jesus by night, came now in broad daylight to assist at His burial, bringing a rich man's costly offering, a compound of the gum of the myrrh tree and of the fragrant powder of aloe-wood, of no less than one hundred pounds weight, in which to encase the whole body, in the Jewish—as distinguished from the Egyptian—method of embalming. All they could do now was to honour the sacred Body of their Master, and that they did. Theirs was a love quickened into intensity by the consciousness of the supreme worth of their Master and the hopeless sorrow of their irreparable loss.

When Joseph of Arimathæa after the burial ' rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed ' (St. Matthew xxvii. verse 60), he left Mary Magdalene there and the other Mary sitting

over against the sepulchre. The two broken-hearted women, sitting desolate in view of the tomb, fairly represent the despair of the whole body of disciples. The burial of the Master was the burial of their last hope, and soon the great stone was sealed fast, and the chief priests' guard made the sepulchre sure. How the Apostles and the other disciples passed that terrible Sabbath-day of utter darkness and disillusionment, who shall say? Some of the women found comfort in the very womanly planning of a last service to Him they loved; and the only service they could think of was to complete the honour done to all that remained of Him, His dead body, by anointing it with spices to repel the approaches of decay.

Late on the Sabbath-day two of them came to view the sepulchre, eager to begin their work of reverence and love, one of whom, apparently the leader in this good work, was Mary Magdalene, the last at the tomb after the burial on Friday, the first at the tomb on Saturday afternoon. The spices were not yet bought, and could not be bought till the Sabbath-day was over, at six o'clock on Saturday evening.

'And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him' (St. Mark xvi. verse 1).

Then very early on the Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, still the leader, with Mary the mother of James, and Salome, and other women, set out for the sepulchre in the thick darkness, not yet thinning into twilight. Mary Magdalene hurried on before the others, and arrived while it was yet dark at the sepulchre. She saw the great stone had been removed, and hurried away at once to tell Peter and John. We now give St. Mark's account of the experiences of the other women, reserving St. John's account of Mary Magdalene's experiences till later.

'And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed

in a long white garment ; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted : ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified : he is risen ; he is not here : behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre ; for they trembled and were amazed : neither said they any thing to any man ; for they were afraid ' (St. Mark xvi. verses 2-8).

One might have imagined the women would have been talking about their dead Master, but the simple record tells of a womanly concentration of attention on the details of the task on hand, and one feels that this absorption in the practical difficulty of moving the stone is perfectly true to nature. To these same women a little later (after the appearance to Mary Magdalene) an appearance of the Lord was granted, recorded by St. Matthew alone.

' And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid : go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me ' (St. Matthew xxviii. verses 9, 10).

Now turn to St. John's account of what happened to Mary Magdalene after she arrived at the tomb (John xx. 1-18).

A very fully reported appearance of this first day recorded by St. Luke alone is that to two disciples, one of whom may very well have been Luke himself, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, on the road to Emmaus. Certainly the account comes, and comes, it seems, immediately, from one of the two, so vivid is the narrative and so manifest the marks of the eye-witness.

Mary had not recognised the Risen Lord till He made Himself known, and so it was with these two disciples. See St. Luke xxiv. 13-22.

After this, there was an appearance to Peter, of which we have no account, what passed between the Risen Lord and the disciple who had denied Him being too sacred for the public ear. The two to whom the Risen Lord had revealed Himself at Emmaus hurried back with the news, and found the Apostles gathered together, and the other disciples with them, and were greeted with the good news

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that the Lord had appeared to Simon Peter. The two disciples from Emmaus told the others their wonderful experiences, and how the Lord had made Himself known in the Breaking of the Bread. The 'Breaking of the Bread,' it may be observed, is the expression used to signify the Lord's Supper, and the way in which our Lord blessed and broke bread at Emmaus, and so made Himself known, suggests that the breaking of bread at Emmaus was a sacramental meal.

The fifth appearance, the last on the Day of Resurrection, was that which took place in the Upper Room at Jerusalem, the sacred last meeting-place of the disciples and their Lord. St. John and St. Luke both give accounts of this appearance. St. John, of course, as one who was present, is the higher authority, though St. Luke's account records details omitted by St. John, who purposely avoided the words and deeds already recorded by another.

The point peculiar to St. John's account of this appearance to the disciples as a society (the Ten and others with them) is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and its application in giving or withholding the power of the new life. This gift of absolution was to the whole Church. It is the commission of the whole Christian society. The gift of remission of sins comes from Christ, and it is the Church's business to apply it to all. He who accepts the Gospel receives with it remission of sins, and he who rejects it, rejects that remission. To set man free from sin and to declare his forgiveness is the duty of the Church in general; and of the clergy as the Church's representatives in particular. St. Luke's account adds some vivid details, particularly the dismay with which the disciples first saw what they thought was a ghost, and the way in which the Lord took away their fear.

The next appearance took place a week after, and is recorded only by St. John.

'But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and

Thomas with them : then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side : and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed ' (St. John xx. verses 24-29).

The words in which our Lord offered Thomas the proofs he had required in the very language in which he had uttered his doubt convinced him of His omnipresence and His Divinity, and Thomas thereupon uttered the highest confession of that Divinity hitherto recorded, ' My Lord and my God.' This must have pleased our Lord, who always desired His disciples to discover for themselves the facts about His Person, His Messiahship, and His Divinity.

St. John gives the account of another appearance, the seventh, peculiar to his Gospel, in the twenty-first chapter, which is a sort of appendix to the Gospel ; an appendix or epilogue rendered necessary by the circulation of a saying of the Lord as to St. John : ' Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die : yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die ; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ' (St. John xxi. verse 23).

In this appearance the Lord reveals Himself as present to men, engaged in the work of life. He does not awaken recognition in the eyes of His disciples, either by His appearance, or by His voice. He is recognised only in the results that follow obedience. Our Lord in His risen Body was not easily recognised : Mary Magdalene did not know Him till He called her by her name. The disciples, on the road to Emmaus, listened long to His expositions of the Scriptures without realising who it was, till He made Himself known in the Breaking of the Bread. We can, indeed, trace a growing difficulty of recognition, when we remember that the seven disciples at the lake had all of them probably seen Him more than once, and were therefore conscious that He might appear at any moment. The explanation seems to be that He was passing gradually further and further from the conditions of the earthly life to the conditions of the heavenly. His message to His brethren,

through Mary Magdalene, on the morning of the Resurrection, declared this: 'I am ascending to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God' (St. John xx. verse 17). That is to say, the change, of which the visible Ascension was the symbol, had begun on the first of the Great Forty Days, and was to go on till their close.

The eighth appearance also took place in Galilee. It differed from the other appearances in this—that the other appearances were not expected, but this was by appointment. There was an obvious reason for this. All the disciples were to be given an opportunity of attending. The purpose of our Lord, as revealed by His action, was to give to His Church the great commission to evangelise the whole world. As regards the 'some' who 'doubted,' it is plain they could not have been of the eleven, who had seen the Lord repeatedly.

'Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen' (St. Matthew xxviii. verses 16-20).

This appearance is probably to be identified with one recorded in the earliest mention in the New Testament of the appearances of the Risen Lord, which is to be found in 1 Corinthians xv. verse 6: 'After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some have fallen asleep.'

It is clear that an appearance to so large a number of persons as five hundred may reasonably be identified with the one appearance recorded to have been by appointment; the one, moreover, at which the missionary character of the Christian Church was given, and the Promise of a Real Presence with the Church even to the end of the world. As the Church at Jerusalem numbered only one hundred and twenty persons, the five hundred must have included a large number of Galileans; and probably the appointment

for the appearance took place in Galilee, because the great majority of the disciples were Galileans. The Revised Version brings out the meaning of some of our Lord's words much more clearly, and may therefore be added here : ' Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Here we have in the missionary charter of the Church the duty and the formula of baptism, containing the doctrine of the Trinity in its plainest shape. Observe the singular ' name,' not names, and that it is ' into,' not in. This, if we accept the identification, is the eighth appearance.

The ninth appearance is merely mentioned by St. Paul, and comes after the appearance to the five hundred : ' After that, he was seen of James ; then of all the Apostles ' (1 Corinthians xv. verse 7).

The appearance to James is followed in this passage by the appearance to all the Apostles, which we may identify with the appearance which immediately preceded our Lord's Ascension, and closed the appearances of the Great Forty Days. It is indeed very probable there were more appearances than are recorded ; and this is, at least, suggested by St. John's words : ' And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book ' (St. John xx. verse 30). These signs were done apparently after the Resurrection.

Be that as it may, the last recorded appearance of the forty days ended in the Ascension. After the Lord had fully confirmed the Apostles' faith in the Resurrection by many appearances and much teaching, after He had taught them their duty as a society, and their duty as individuals, and so prepared them for the fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, He appeared to them and conversed with them for the last time. In His other appearances, attention is drawn to the way He came. In this last appearance, attention is concentrated on the way He departed ; and that departure is what we call the Ascension. This last appearance and final departure took place quite close to Jerusalem. The spot generally assigned to the Ascension is a summit of the range called the Mount of Olives, about three-quarters of a mile from the site of the Temple. Here our Lord talked with His disciples at the end of the forty days. During that period He had appeared to them repeatedly and proved to them that His Presence when invisible was as real as when they

saw Him (*e.g.*, His words to Thomas) ; He had prepared their minds for the Ascension by such utterances as the words spoken to Mary Magdalene : ' Touch me not ; for I am not yet ascended ' (St. John xx. verse 17), which plainly implied that when He had entered on the life, to which the Ascension was the doorway, they would be really, because spiritually, closer to Him and more in touch with Him than ever. Indeed, the preparation had begun at a much earlier date, during His ministry on earth, in such utterances as we find in St. John vi. verse 62 : ' What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before ? ' And in St. John iii. verse 13 : ' And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. '

From the first the Incarnation carried with it the necessity, alike of the Passion and of the Resurrection and of the Ascension : the elevation on the Cross was the direct way to the elevation on the right hand of God, of which the visible Ascension was the symbol.

The Ascension is very briefly described in the two Gospels that record it, in St. Luke's and in St. Mark's ; but a fuller description is given in the Acts of the Apostles, which we shall deal with in its place in the next chapter. St. Luke's account in the Gospel is found in chapter xxiv. verses 50-53 :

' And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy : and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen. '

The Ascension is the last event recorded in the Gospels, and the first event recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. It is the transition from one dispensation to another ; it is the gateway by which Christ went to the Father, in order that in the Spirit He might be with His Church always, even to the end of the world. His local and temporal presence was changed to a spiritual and universal Presence ; and this change, in order to interpret it to the disciples' sense-bound understanding, was represented sacramentally in the visible elevation of the glorified humanity of the Lord, in His visible Ascent heavenward till ' a cloud received him out of their sight ' (Acts i. verse 9).

CHAPTER XXX

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (THE ASCENSION—PENTECOST—THE SANHEDRIN—STEPHEN—PHILIP—THE CONVERSION OF SAUL—CORNELIUS—PAUL AND BARNABAS—THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY—COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM—SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY)

WE come now to the Acts of the Apostles, which contains the history of the building of the Christian Church, the laying of the foundations of which we have read about in the Gospels. The Apostles whose acts are the subject of the book, are for the main part of the narrative St. Peter and St. Paul. About St. John and St. James we learn very little. We gain from the Acts of the Apostles most valuable knowledge of the growth of the Christian Church, from its small beginnings at Jerusalem after the Ascension, to its expansion all over the Roman world, in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy; we learn, moreover, something of the nature of the Apostles' teaching from the many and interesting reports of their sermons and addresses. The Acts of the Apostles was written by St. Luke, the author of the Gospel that bears his name. The purpose of his Gospel was to describe accurately, from trustworthy reports and documents, the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus. The purpose of his book of the Acts of the Apostles was to describe, from the best sources he could command, the growth of the Christian Church in the Apostles' days.

St. Luke had the gifts of an historian, and the historian's concern for accuracy. His sources of information, for the main body of his work, were excellent. From chapter xx. onwards, to the end of the book, he was an eye-witness of what he describes, as also in chapter xvi. verses 10-40. Parts of the first five chapters were apparently based on written documents, and the same may be true of some later



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narratives, such as those of St. Peter's labours (ix. verse 32 to xi. verse 18). For the account of St. Paul's conversion, as for the account of the journeys during which he was not with St. Paul, he would have the best possible information from St. Paul himself. The story of St. Stephen, chapters vi. and vii., was probably, if we may judge from the full report of St. Stephen's speech, based on a written document, which he obtained at Jerusalem, when he was there with St. Paul, and this would be certified by St. Paul himself, who had been present at St. Stephen's martyrdom. The history of Philip's work in chapter viii. may well have been obtained from Philip himself during the visit of St. Luke in St. Paul's company to Philip's house in Cæsarea mentioned in Acts xxi. verse 8. It may be added that St. Luke's statements and descriptions, where they can be tested, are found remarkably accurate; for example, the story of St. Paul's labours is confirmed by St. Paul's Epistles, and the description of the place of St. Paul's shipwreck is given with such careful exactitude, that it has been perfectly identified.

If we had not in the Acts of the Apostles the words as well as the deeds of the Apostles, the book would seriously lose in value. Before His Ascension the Lord commissioned His Apostles to be His witnesses, and make disciples of all nations, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth. The sermons and speeches of the Apostles recorded in the Acts are part of this witness-bearing. The question naturally arises, 'How were the sermons and speeches obtained?' Probably notes were carefully taken down by disciples who were present. Some sort of shorthand existed in those days. Galen, in the second century, tells us that the medical students took down his lectures which they attended. Moreover, St. Luke may have submitted his version of the speeches to the Apostles themselves, and this it is more than probable he did in the case of St. Paul; and even in the case of St. Peter's speeches the same course may have been taken, for St. Luke may have met him at Jerusalem, and even at Rome, where, says Irenæus, St. Peter and St. Paul worked together.

We noticed in our last chapter that the Ascension was the last event recorded in the Gospel, and the first event recorded in the Acts. This event occupies a more prominent position in the Acts

than in the Gospels. Our Lord's enthronement at the right hand of God, symbolised by the visible manifestation of the Ascension, was the fitting climax to the other manifestations of His Glory, which followed the Resurrection. The beginnings of that universal reign over man's heart and life which He entered on by that enthronement, are related in the Acts of the Apostles.

The long account of the Ascension with which the Acts begins must now be considered. After briefly recording the order of the Risen Lord to His Apostles to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, the baptism with the Holy Ghost, St. Luke gives the following report of the Ascension, a report supplementary to that which he gives in his Gospel.

'When they therefore were come together, they asked of him saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men sat by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven' (Acts i. verses 6-11).

'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance' (Acts ii. verses 1-4).

It was the early dawn (as the original words signify) and they were all together in one place. The identification of this place, mentioned in verse 1, with the Upper Room is of course possible, and on the surface seems probable; but even the courtyard of a

house at Jerusalem could hardly have contained the tenth part of the huge crowd that listened to St. Peter's sermon (three thousand of these were baptized); whereas if we take it that the Temple was the scene of the gift of the Holy Spirit, all becomes intelligible.

Speaking with tongues is best understood by examining what St. Paul says to the Corinthians on the subject (1 Corinthians xiv.). It seems to have been the emotional utterance of persons in a state of religious ecstasy. The manifestation was striking, but St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, ranked it by no means as one of the highest gifts. Whatever the speaking with tongues may have been, exalted emotion and disinterested enthusiasm are mighty powers in the religious life, and these powers from this time distinguished the Apostolic Church and were recognised as a gift of the Spirit. St. Peter took the opportunity offered by the immense crowd, and stood up with the rest of the Apostles, and acted as their spokesman. He chose the text of his sermon (the first sermon preached in the Christian Church) from Joel ii. verse 28, a great prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. His sermon may be summarised as Jesus and the Resurrection shown to be a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. The effect of the sermon was marvellous, and the conversion of thousands to Christ testified to the efficacy of the Old Testament Scriptures as a preparation for the coming of the true Messiah.

St. Peter had laid down the conditions of membership in the Apostolic Church, which remain the conditions to-day. They were as follows:—Repentance and Baptism in the name of the Lord for the remission of sins. Baptism in that name is still the door of entrance to the Christian Church, and Repentance and Faith are still required of those who enter. As yet, the primitive Church had favour with all the people. This day of Pentecost is rightly regarded as the birthday of the Christian Church, a second Nativity, the birth of Christ's new and glorious Body, which was then, and is now, intended to be the instrument of His Holy Spirit, as the body of His humiliation was in the days of His earthly ministry.

From this day forth the Apostles began to understand the teaching, so mysterious at the time it was given, which had followed

the Last Supper, the teaching, namely, that the Lord's departure was to be a gain and a joy to His disciples. The joyous experience of a society animated by the Holy Spirit of Christ, a society in which each lived for all, in which the interest of the community was paramount with the individual, in which each bore the other's burden, and so fulfilled the law of Christ, cast light on such once dark sayings as, 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; it is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you ' (St. John xvi. verse 7).

The Acts of the Apostles is the earliest historic record of the first years of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, who reigned at that time in the Church as a King within the Kingdom of God, the community of those who believed in and belonged to the Lord Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles is the Book of the Holy Spirit, the great record of His work. It has a special message for us, who are living under the same dispensation. We see in that book that the earthly founders of the Church were conscious instruments under the direction of the one Spirit. We cannot doubt that it was this conscious submission of their lives in every detail to the personal guidance of the Spirit, that gave such power to the work of St. Peter and St. Paul, of St. Stephen and St. Philip.

But the infant Church was not to remain long in favour with the people. Peter and John were going up to pray in the Temple. 'Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour' (Acts iii. verse 1). At one of the gates they saw a lame man on whom Peter fixed his eyes with John, and said, 'Look on us.' The man looked. 'Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none ; but such as I have give I thee : In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up : and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God' (Acts iii. verses 6-8).

Crowds collected in the Temple courts, at the sight of the healed man, and Peter improved the occasion and preached to them, his main points being that they had killed the Prince of Life, whom God

had raised from the dead, and that faith in His name had accomplished the miracle that they had just seen done.

While Peter was preaching, the Priests, the Captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees arrested the Apostles and put them in prison for the night ; but a great many who had heard the sermon believed, and the number of men in the Church rose thereupon to five thousand. Next day they were brought before the same judges who had condemned their Lord—Annas, Caiaphas, and others. They might well be alarmed at their danger. They were the same Apostles who had deserted their Lord when He was arrested : but now they felt the influence of the Risen Lord, ' the power of his resurrection,' and Peter on behalf of all answered boldly to the question, ' By what power or by what name have ye done this ? '

' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole ; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole ' (Acts iv. verses 8-10).

The High Priest and the rest of the judges were astonished at the boldness of Peter and John, and recognised that they were disciples of Jesus, ' and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.' They could not deny that the miracle had been performed, and they let Peter and John go after commanding them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Up to this time there had been no attempt to extend the Church to the Gentiles. The Church was composed of devout Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and the Saviour whom God had raised from the dead. They worshipped in the Temple, and continued all the observances of Judaism. Undeterred by the warnings of the High Priest, the Apostles continued to frequent the Temple, and fresh converts were added, and great miracles were wrought on the sick by Peter, till multitudes poured in from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one. Then the Sadducee

High Priest and his supporters of the same party, furious at the preaching of the Resurrection, arrested the Apostles and put them in the common prison. Miraculously delivered from prison, they boldly went straight to the Temple and again taught the people. Arrested again, they were brought before the Council, and the High Priest again rebuked them. 'Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than man. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them' (Acts v. verses 29-33).

Then a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a learned man of great reputation, commanded the Apostles to be removed, and in their absence advised the Sanhedrin to let them alone. They took his advice, and contented themselves with beating the Apostles, and commanding them not to speak in the name of Jesus.

'And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ' (Acts v. verses 41, 42).

In the sixth chapter of the Acts we read of the appointment of the seven Deacons, to look after the interests of the foreign Jews, who complained that their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. The Deacons were selected by the body of the Church, but ordained by the Apostles who, when they had prayed, laid their hands on them, just as Ordination is carried out to-day. Two of these Deacons, Stephen and Philip, proved to be notable evangelists: Stephen, especially, produced such an effect by his miracles and his powerful preaching, that the Jews, whom he had worsted in argument, worked up an agitation against him, and dragged him before the Sanhedrin. False witnesses were brought against him, as they had been brought against his Lord. The account of Stephen's trial reads like the description of one who had been present at it, especially such a touch as this: 'And all that sat in the council,

looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel' (Acts vi. verse 15).

A question from the High Priest drew from Stephen a long and powerful apology. The stoning and death of the first martyr followed immediately on the close of his address, and his last words show the effects of the Crucifixion, being clearly inspired by his Lord's words, spoken as they nailed Him to the Cross.

A party to the stoning of Stephen, as we learn, was the young Pharisee, Saul, in whom Stephen's faithful witness-bearing, and the wonderful glory of the Christ-likeness, the Christ living in His servant, were soon to bear fruit. The death was the signal for a great persecution, in which Saul took a leading part. We can easily guess from whom St. Luke obtained the account of Stephen's trial and martyrdom, when we remember that St. Luke was the companion and friend of St. Paul, the sometime persecutor Saul.

The persecution had an opposite effect to that intended. It scattered the members of the Church from Jerusalem, not only through Palestine, but beyond its borders, and in so doing spread the Gospel and the Church far and wide.

'Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word' (Acts viii. verse 4).

The first of those of whose work we read is Philip, the deacon, who went down to the city of Samaria to proclaim Christ to them.

Impressed by Philip's miracles of healing, the multitude joyfully received his teaching. This was a first step towards evangelising the Gentiles, for the Samaritans were regarded by the Jews as half heathens. The Apostles showed their large-mindedness by at once sending Peter and John to Samaria, and all was done under authority, decently and in order.

Upon their way back from the town of Samaria, Peter and John preached the Gospel to many Samaritan villages. Then a message came from God to Philip to go south towards Gaza. There he met an Ethiopian official of great position, returning from worship at Jerusalem, and reading the prophet Isaiah. Here we see the Spirit at work. 'Go near,' said the Spirit to Philip, 'and join thyself to this chariot' (Acts viii. verse 29). Philip ran to him, and heard him reading, and said, 'Understandest thou what thou readest?'

(verse 30). The Ethiopian knew he did not understand, and with wise humility asked for guidance. He was reading the most wonderful prophecy in the Old Testament, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the prediction of the suffering servant of God literally fulfilled in the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

‘ Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus; . . . and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing ’ (Acts viii. verses 35–39).

This baptism of the Ethiopian was the first definite step of which we know towards making Christianity a religion for all mankind.

Meanwhile the persecution of the disciples of the Lord by the Jews of Jerusalem grew fiercer under the leadership of Saul. Not satisfied with driving them out of Jerusalem and Judæa, he wished to follow their flight and hunt them down wherever they found refuge, even in distant lands.

‘ And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink ’ (Acts ix. verses 1–9).

‘ The Way ’ is the earliest name for the Christian religion, for the name ‘ Christian ’ did not yet exist.



Painting

THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL
THE BASILICA OF SAN PAOLO AT ROME
CAMUCCINI (1778-1841)

This appearance to Saul is classed by him with the other appearances after the Resurrection as being objective and personal like them. It was a long time after the Ascension that this appearance took place, probably six or eight years, 'And last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also' (1 Corinthians xv. verse 8).

'And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ' (Acts ix. verses 20-22).

Not long after this wonderful change, Saul retired into Arabia, no doubt for solitary meditation and prayer, and as a preparation for the life-work which the Lord's words had already revealed to him he was appointed to do. Thence he returned to Damascus. Here we must leave him till he reappears after a period of several years, briefly referred to in Galatians i.

Meanwhile the Church in Palestine was gradually broadening under the leadership of St. Peter. After the conversion of Saul the persecution which he had headed cooled down.

'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied' (Acts ix. verse 31).

Peter took advantage of the peaceful condition of things, and went to visit the Churches, in the exercise of that Apostolic overseership, which was in due course by God's appointment to develop into Episcopacy.

The persecution that arose after the martyrdom of Stephen had scattered abroad the followers of Christ, who preached the Word (that is, the Gospel message—the good news of God) wherever they went, but to Jews only. Afterwards some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, came to Antioch, and preached the Lord Jesus to the Greeks, of whom a great number turned to the Lord. When the news of this great conversion of Gentiles reached Jerusalem the

Church there sent to them Barnabas, probably because he was a Cypriote, and the movement was of Cypriote origin. Barnabas, after he had done much by his own preaching, went to Tarsus to seek for Saul, who was apparently in retirement there, waiting for God's call.

The two returned together to Antioch, where they laboured for a whole year and taught much people, 'and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch' (Acts xi. verse 26). This universal name of the followers of Christ seems to have originated among the heathen populace.

Antioch was a great city, the capital of Syria, and it might have seemed that there was ample work for Barnabas and Saul to do there, but the Holy Ghost guided to a different conclusion the Church, which numbered among its teachers and prophets men from North Africa and Cyprus, and one from a king's court, Herod's foster-brother, Manaen, who as a boy had been brought up with him at the Emperor's court at Rome. The mighty invisible force, the spirit of the Lord Jesus, which had led the Church at Antioch to choose its best men, Barnabas and Saul, now sent them forth, as conscious instruments solemnly ordained for their work by prayer and the laying on of hands, as our clergymen are ordained now.

To the eye of any heathen philosopher or man of affairs who had known the fact and the purpose of their going forth, there would have seemed to be something supremely ridiculous in the mission of two poor Jews, to change the religion and the life of the cultivated and wealthy world of the Roman Empire. The vastness of their task emphasized the inadequacy of their equipment. But it is not the seen things but the unseen things that are eternal. Obedient to the heavenly Guide who had so miraculously appeared to him, and ever afterwards directed his steps, the Apostle to the Gentiles began his work.

The destination of the messengers was Cyprus, and they sailed from Seleucia, the port of Antioch. At Paphos, in Cyprus, a struggle took place between Paul and a sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar Jesus, or Elymas, who was endeavouring to prevent the Roman Pro-Consul, Sergius Paulus, a man of uncommon understanding, from listening to the Gospel. So vigorous and convincing

was Saul, that the Pro-Consul believed, and from this time the Man of Tarsus stands first in the record of the journey. His name, too, is from this time changed to Paul. The missionaries came to Cyprus, Barnabas and Saul: they left it 'Paul and his company' (Acts xiii. verse 13).

From Paphos they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, a Greek city with a celebrated temple to the goddess Artemis. From Perga they pushed at once through the wild ranges of the Taurus, to Antioch in Pisidia. Paul, as usual, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and addressed his countrymen there. This is the first sermon of Paul's recorded in the Acts, and there is not a little resemblance to Stephen's sermon recorded in Acts vii., an indication perhaps of one of the influences which had worked for Paul's conversion. The sermon made a great impression, and Paul was invited to speak the next Sabbath-day.

When the day came, almost the whole city collected to hear the word of God. But the Jews, jealous of the Gentiles, contradicted and blasphemed, and Paul and Barnabas then boldly laid down the missionaries' future line of action. The word of God must be spoken to the Jews first, but when they rejected it the missionaries turned to the Gentiles. This encounter, at Antioch in Pisidia, with the Jews who succeeded afterwards in expelling Paul and Barnabas from the city, disclosed the source of the main opposition which Paul had to encounter throughout his missionary work. The 'perils by mine own countrymen' to which Paul referred in one of his Epistles (2 Corinthians xi. verse 26), were sufficiently in evidence during this first missionary journey.

Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, thus completing what is known as the first missionary journey of St. Paul. The date of this missionary journey of St. Paul is about A.D. 48.

A meeting of the Church was held at Antioch, at which the missionaries told all that God had done for them, and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Some time after, however, men arrived from Judæa, and taught the Brethren 'except ye be circumcised . . . ye cannot be saved' (Acts xv. verse 1). Discussions followed, and Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to the Apostles and elders about this question. The Apostles and

elders and the rest of the Church met together, and Peter declared against laying the burden of Circumcision and the Law on the Gentiles that believed. The body of the Church, however, said nothing, while Paul and Barnabas told the wondrous works which God had wrought by them. When they had done, the head of the Church at Jerusalem, James, the brother of the Lord, gave it as his judgment that the Gentiles who turned to God ought not to be troubled with the Ceremonial Law. It is probably safe to assume that this council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. verses 1-23) is that which is described by St. Paul in Galatians ii. verses 1-10.

Paul seems to have shown extraordinary power of persuasion and the gifts of a born leader of men in the way he won over the pillars of the Church in Jerusalem, James and Peter and John, to acknowledge his apostleship to the Gentiles, that to him had been entrusted the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, as to Peter the Gospel of the Circumcision. This was a great triumph for the cause Paul had at heart, the loosening of the fetters of Judaism from the Gospel of Christ, that it might become supreme, as the universal religion of mankind.

The second missionary journey, which followed the Council, was marked by the extension of St. Paul's campaign to Europe, and the writing of the first letters which we possess, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. If we date the first journey approximately about A.D. 48 we may date the second about A.D. 51. Paul took Silas as his companion. Silas was a prophet and a Jew, and, like Paul, a Roman citizen. They went first through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches. Then they went to South Galatia again. At Lystra they added to their party Timothy, the son of Eunice, a Jewess and a believer. Timothy was evidently a convert of St. Paul's own making, and the dearest of all to the Apostle's affectionate heart. Paul was still the unconscious and obedient instrument of the Holy Ghost.

At Troas, a night vision came to Paul, asking for help to be given to Macedonia, and in obedience to what he held to be a call from God, he set sail for Macedonia. Luke was now with Paul, for he speaks of 'we'—*e.g.*, 'We sought to go forth into Macedonia' (Acts xvi. verse 10), and so we know Paul had the author of the Acts

with him. The principal places visited in Europe were Philippi, Thessalonica, Beræa, Athens, and Corinth.

At Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, the Jews, moved with jealousy, organised an attack of the rabble on the missionaries, raising a transparently false charge of sedition. From Thessalonica the Brethren sent Paul and Silas, by night, to Beræa, where the Jews gave Paul a fair hearing, searching the Scriptures to verify his statements, and the consequence was that many believed. At Athens, Paul was met by certain Epicureans and Stoics, who found the kernel of his preaching in 'Jesus and the Resurrection,' but took the latter word (*anastasis*) for the name of a deity. 'And they took hold of him and brought him unto the Areopagus' (*i.e.* Mars' Hill), 'saying, May we know what this new teaching is which is spoken by thee?' (R.V.).

'Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious ('somewhat religious,' R.V.). For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE ('AN,' R.V.) UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.'

The address had not much effect on the Athenians, though Dionysius, the Areopagite, believed, and Damaris, and others with them.

From Athens St. Paul went to Corinth, where he joined one Aquila with his wife Priscilla, who had had to leave Rome owing to the decree of the Emperor Claudius for the expulsion of the Jews. Though strongly opposed by the Corinthian Jews, Paul preached the Gospel with great effect to the Gentiles, and stayed in Corinth eighteen months.

The Jews, however, brought him before Seneca's brother, the Pro-Consul of Achaia, Gallio, who dismissed the case with scorn, and took no notice when the Corinthians beat Paul's accuser, Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, before the judgment-seat.

The first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the earliest book in the New Testament (A.D. 51), was written from Corinth, and the second Epistle from the same place soon after the first.

After he left Corinth he sailed for Syria, intending to return to

Jerusalem, from which he had been absent three years. He was anxious to keep up harmonious relations with the Apostles and the mother-church there. His compliance as a loyal Jew with the Jewish law is recorded in this passage of the Acts, 'having shorn his head in Cenchrea; for he had a vow' (Acts xviii. verse 18). This means that he had taken a Nazarite vow and let his hair grow long in accordance with it. It was permitted to cut the hair without waiting to arrive at Jerusalem provided that the hair was kept and burnt under the sacrifice of the peace-offerings, which the Nazarite had to offer there. From Cenchrea he visited Ephesus, promising to return again, and sailed from Ephesus, landed at Cæsarea, saluted the Church at Jerusalem, and returned to Antioch. This was the end of the second missionary journey.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY—JERUSALEM—RIOT—ARREST BY ROMANS—CÆSAREA—FELIX—FESTUS—KING AGRIPPA—APPEAL TO CÆSAR—SHIPWRECK AT MALTA—FIRST IMPRISONMENT—LAST MISSIONARY JOURNEY—LAST IMPRISONMENT—MARTYRDOM)

THE third missionary journey, which is described in Acts xviii. verse 23, to xxi. verse 17, began from Antioch, where St. Paul had been staying for some time, about the year A.D. 54. He first went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, visiting and strengthening the Churches he had founded. Then he came to Ephesus, to which he had promised to return when he visited it hurriedly towards the close of the second journey. Paul remained in Ephesus three years. It was the city in which he made his longest stay and did his greatest work, to judge by the Epistle to the Ephesians, which only enlightened Christians could have understood and appreciated. At first he taught in the synagogue, but when attacks were made on the Way (*i.e.* the Church), he separated from the Jews, and taught in the school or lecture-room of one Tyrannus. He appears to have taught from eleven to four daily. He continued teaching there for two years, and all that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Ephesus was a great city, the chief city of the Roman province of Asia, a great centre of trade, a great centre of luxury and learning, with a large population of many races.

The most magnificent building in this magnificent city was the great temple of Artemis (the Latinised form of the name is Diana), celebrated throughout the ancient world. The city rejoiced in being called the Temple-keeper, or Temple-warden, of the goddess and of her image, which was supposed to have fallen down from heaven.

Her rows of breasts represent her function as the nourishing or nursing mother of all life. She was an Asian goddess (Asia means the Roman Province) and very unlike the chaste Artemis of Greek literature and mythology. She personified the reproductive power of nature and the nourishing power of the earth. She had close analogies with the Phrygian Cybele, and her worship was carried on by troops of priests, the vilest and most degraded of mankind. Inside this vast and magnificent temple, with its pillars of Parian marble, were masterpieces of sculpture by Praxiteles and Phidias. Of the paintings, the most celebrated was the portrait of Alexander the Great, by Apelles, the most renowned painter of the ancient world, valued at about five thousand pounds.

Ephesus was not only a sink of every sort of immorality, but it was also full of dark superstitions and sorceries. On this heathen population St. Paul produced marvellous effects by his preaching, emphasized by his miracles. Diseases were cured and evil spirits were cast out by the power that worked in and through the great Apostle. The strolling Jew exorcists who tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus to help them in their trade, failed completely, though their attempt shows how widespread was the Apostle's reputation for success. 'And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed' (Acts xix. verses 17-20).

The books burned were estimated to be worth over £1700, and the sacrifice proved the sincerity of the erring converts' repentance. While he was at Ephesus, St. Paul wrote his first letter to Corinth, about some serious troubles that had arisen there. In it he mentioned that a 'great door and effectual is opened unto me' (1 Corinthians xvi. verse 9).

Then Paul went to Macedonia. When he had visited that region and exhorted them, he went to Greece. He spent three months

there, and then returned through Macedonia, and, sailing from Philippi, arrived at Troas.

At this town we have a very striking account of early Christian worship, and how it was carried on at that time with the approval of St. Paul. See Acts xx. 7-12.

Here we have a picture of how Sunday was kept in the primitive Church. The day may perhaps be identified with April 24th, A.D. 57. The members of the Church met in an upper room, no doubt in memory of the Upper Room in Jerusalem. They met to break bread, that is to join in the Holy Communion. It was an evening service prolonged till after midnight, and there were many lights in the upper room. It is from the use of lights, a necessary part of evening Communion in the primitive Church, that the use of lights in our celebrations of Holy Communion in the morning is derived. The only regular service at this time and even in the second century, in the time of Justin Martyr, was gathered round the Holy Communion or Eucharist. In the second century, these evening services were forbidden by the Roman Emperor, and morning services substituted. This record of the service at Troas comes from St. Luke himself, who was present. The 'we' is resumed at Philippi, and where the 'we' occurs in the narrative, we know throughout the Book of the Acts that St. Luke is with St. Paul.

From Troas, Paul's companions sailed to Assos, where they took in Paul, and touching at Mitylene, Chios, and Samos, arrived at Miletus, where Paul sent a message to Ephesus to summon to him the elders of the Church.

Ephesus was the town where, as we have observed, Paul's longest stay was made, and perhaps his greatest missionary work was done. Paul himself had a high opinion of the opening for the Gospel which he had found in Ephesus, as we have noted in his two letters to the Corinthians. The elders came as Paul had invited them to do. St. Luke, no doubt, was present to take down a report of the address, which is one of the most beautiful and moving recorded as delivered by the Apostle. See Acts xx. 18-35, which ends :

'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inherit-

ance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts xx. verses 18-35).

The Ephesian elders were deeply affected by the address. They wept, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for his words (which proved too true) 'that they should see his face no more.' Paul had done a great deal of work after he had left Ephesus, though the account in the Acts of the Apostles is very brief. He wrote several of the letters to the Churches, which we still possess; the second Epistle to the Corinthians was followed by the epistle to his own Galatians, who had fallen a prey to the Judaizers, to the great grief of Paul's loving heart.

A little later he wrote the great Epistle to the Romans, a weighty treatise on the complete sufficiency of faith in Christ for all the needs of man. While Paul was in Greece he revisited Corinth, and there and at the other churches which he visited, he received collections of money for the poor members of the Church of Jerusalem.

Paul's purpose during his missionary journey was to organise on a large scale a company of delegates from the Gentile Churches, who would come with him to Jerusalem and offer the money collected for this purpose to the Church there. The main object of this collection, though no doubt it was needed by the poorer members of the Church at Jerusalem, was to promote brotherly feeling between the Jewish Christians and the Gentiles.

Paul well knew from personal experience that the special vice of the Jew was pride in regard to himself and contempt in regard to others. The Jewish Christians, or at any rate the Judaizers among them, were by no means free from this failing.

Paul journeyed to Jerusalem by way of Cæsarea, where he and Luke and the other members of the company stayed for a time with Philip the Evangelist. He was well received by James, the Lord's brother, the head of the Church at Jerusalem, and by the elders of the Church, who all glorified God when Paul told what had been

accomplished by his ministry. James and the elders told him that he was under suspicion among the Jewish believers, being accused of teaching the Jews who were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, not to circumcise their children, and not to walk after the customs. This was not really true. It was only on the Gentiles that he taught that the old ceremonial law was not binding.

When principle was not at stake, Paul was most conciliatory, and he now took the advice of James; and complied with certain Jewish customs, so as to satisfy the Jewish Christians that he was a strictly orthodox Jew. But some Jews from Asia stirred up the Jews in Jerusalem against Paul, distorting his liberal teaching, and declaring that he had taken into the Temple a Greek from their own town of Ephesus, and so defiled it. An excited multitude dragged Paul out of the Temple, and would have killed him had not the Tribune in command of the Roman cohort at Jerusalem come to the rescue. Paul was about to be brought into the Castle, and as he came upon the stairs asked the chief captain to allow him to speak to the people. Leave was given, and Paul told his countrymen the wonderful experience of his own conversion. They gave him a good hearing till he came to the words which the Lord Jesus had spoken to him, 'Depart, for I will send thee forth far hence to the Gentiles.' At this, they behaved as if their rage had driven them mad. The very idea that the Gentiles could be God's people seemed grossly insulting to these bigoted Jews. The chief captain was on the point of scourging Paul, when he told the centurion he was a Roman. The chief captain when he heard it not only gave up the scourging, but was afraid, because he had no right to bind a Roman citizen uncondemned. Next day, Claudius Lysias, as the chief captain was called, ordered the Sanhedrin to meet, and brought Paul before them. This was the court that had condemned our Lord, and had also had before it Stephen, and Peter and John. Paul very skilfully appealed to the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin on the question of the Resurrection, an abstract belief in the possibility of which they shared with him. The contest between the rival parties in the Sanhedrin became so hot that Paul was in danger of being torn to pieces, and the Roman soldiers had to rescue him once more. Next day the discovery through information supplied by

his sister's son of a plot which forty Jews had made to kill Paul, induced the chief captain to send him strongly guarded to the Roman Procurator, Felix, at Cæsarea. After Paul had been five days at Cæsarea, the high priest and some elders from Jerusalem came up and accused him before Felix. The result of this was that the trial was postponed till Lysias, the chief captain, should come down.

After two years, during which Paul remained in prison, Felix was succeeded as Procurator by Porcius Festus. Paul's enemies pressed Festus to send him to Jerusalem for trial, intending to kill him on the way, but Festus preferred to examine him at Cæsarea.

At the trial, Festus, being evidently inclined to curry favour with the Jews and possibly to give the prisoner up to them, Paul formally appealed to Cæsar, that is, to the highest tribunal in the Empire. As Paul was a Roman citizen, Festus was obliged to accept the appeal, and send him to Rome to plead before the Emperor. Before he went, however, Agrippa, the last and worst of the Herods, visited Cæsarea.

Festus told him about Paul, and aroused his curiosity. By Agrippa's desire Paul was brought before him, and made an eloquent defence, in which he told again the story of his conversion. Its effect on Festus gives us an idea of the deep excitement with which St. Paul recalled those marvellous experiences, for Festus interrupted the prisoner, saying that his learning was driving him mad. Paul's argument to King Agrippa, who represented the position of the educated Jew, is this, that he (Paul) was a perfectly orthodox Jew, and preached nothing but what the Prophets and Moses had predicted. Christianity as set forth by St. Paul was simply the appointed fulfilment of Judaism. Paul's argument was not intended for Festus, who, being a Roman, could not understand it, but for King Agrippa, to whom he made his final appeal: 'King Agrippa, believeth thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.' The king answered with some haughtiness, 'With but little persuasion (*i.e.* cheaply), thou wouldst fain make me a Christian' (R.V., Acts xxvi. verses 27, 28: incorrectly translated in A.V., 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian').

The idea that a king, the friend and favourite of the Emperors

Claudius and Nero, should be induced to join a despised little Jewish sect by a mere appeal to the Prophets seemed supremely ridiculous. In Agrippa's mouth the term Christian was unmistakably a term of contempt, and it is to be observed that St. Paul does not accept the term as applicable to himself.

The result of Paul's appearance before Agrippa was his virtual acquittal. Agrippa's words to Festus summed up the situation: 'This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar' (Acts xxvi. verse 32).

Paul and certain other prisoners were given into the charge of a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan cohort, and sent on the first opportunity to Rome. The story of the voyage to Italy is evidently the record of an eye-witness, the prisoner's friend, Luke. Paul had also the companionship of Aristarchus of Thessalonica, who had been his companion in travel and had faced great risks during the riot at Ephesus.

The voyage lasted for about two months and was full of storm and peril, and must have been very trying to Paul when we remember that the prisoners were chained by the wrist to the soldiers who had charge of them. The great storm that caught them near Crete evidently gave the opportunity for Paul to assert himself, as a man out of the common. This he did by words of wisdom and good cheer which encouraged all that were in the ship. Moreover, we find that he and Luke, to whom the narrative is due, helped in some of the work, for instance in securing the boat and lightening the ship. After many days of great hardship, in which they were all supported and encouraged by the fervent faith and calm confidence of Paul, the voyage ended with a shipwreck from which they all escaped safe to land. The wonderful accuracy of Luke's narrative of the voyage and the shipwreck has been fully tested and proved, the measurements and soundings of the traditional St. Paul's Bay corresponding marvellously with the description in the Acts. From Malta, where they stayed three months, the great missionary and his companions went on in a ship of Alexandria, which touched at Syracuse in Sicily, and finally landed them in Italy, at Puteoli, near Naples, the great port where the Egyptian corn-ships landed their cargoes. At this port they were received by the Christian Church of that place, and

were persuaded to stay seven days. They had still a hundred and forty miles between them and Rome. Forty-three miles from Rome, at the Market of Appius, the Brethren met them, and again ten miles on, at the Three Taverns. At Rome they found themselves in the capital of the Roman Empire, which comprised the whole of the civilised world at that time, from Persia to Spain and from North Africa and Egypt to Britain.

In the spring of the year A.D. 61 in the seventh year of the reign of Nero, Paul arrived in Rome. He was handed over to the care of the Prefect of the Prætorian Guard. The Prefect that year was the good Afranius Burrhus, and the prisoner, who came with the favourable report of all the Roman officials that had had to do with him, was treated with leniency. He was allowed to rent a house, and to have free intercourse with his friends. But he was chained by the wrist to the soldier who guarded him.

‘ And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him ’ (Acts xxviii. verses 30, 31).

The two years in which this passage tells us St. Paul preached the Gospel probably ended about A.D. 63. During this period a great work was accomplished.

It was during these years that the four Epistles of the First Captivity, as they are called—the Epistles to the Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—were written. It was probably after the death of Agrippina, but certainly during the ascendancy of Poppæa, that Paul arrived at Rome.

The Apostle’s mild imprisonment appears to have ended in his acquittal, possibly after a trial before Nero in person. After the Apostle was set free, he seems at once to have carried out the intention of visiting the Churches he had founded, revealed in the Epistle to Philemon and in that to the Philippians. He had years before planned to visit Spain, and this he appears to have done, if we accept the evidence of Clement.

The references in the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) to a last missionary journey in the East, previous to the second imprisonment, are sufficiently clear.

From 1 Timothy i. verse 3, we gather that this Epistle was written in Macedonia, from whence he writes Timothy directions for his work at Ephesus. Taking A.D. 61 to 63 to be the period of his first imprisonment at Rome, and A.D. 67 to be the date of his martyrdom, four years are left for the visitation of the Eastern Churches, for the missionary visit to Spain, for the missionary tour in Crete, and for the tour in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia, referred to in the Pastoral Epistles. This last missionary journey ended with the second imprisonment and second trial. It was during the absence of Paul on these missionary journeys (if we accept the chronology given above) that an event had taken place which completely altered the position of Christians at Rome.

In July A.D. 64 a great fire broke out in Rome, which raged for nine days and destroyed a large part of the city. Suspicion fell upon Nero as the author of the fire, and in order to clear himself he laid the guilt of the conflagration on the Christians. The persecution which thereupon began at Rome, by the Emperor Nero's orders, changed the position of Christians over the whole Empire.

St. Paul was perhaps arrested at Troas, where, in the haste of the arrest, his books and parchments and cloak were left behind, and sent to Ephesus first for trial, and thence to Rome. At Rome he seems to have appeared before Nero, to whom he probably refers as the lion (compare the wild beast in Revelation) in his latest Epistle, 2 Timothy iv. verse 17: 'And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.'

His deliverance was only temporary. He was remanded and brought up for trial, and probably in A.D. 67, or, according to tradition, June A.D. 66, he was beheaded about three miles outside the walls of Rome, in a spot not far from the Ostian Road, then known as Aquæ Salviæ, now as Tre Fontane. The condemnation and execution of the great Apostle has been handed down by a Roman tradition which is probably correct.

From the New Testament we know nothing later than the Apostle's own utterances during his second imprisonment, contained in the second Epistle to Timothy. In that Epistle he writes that he had already appeared at the bar of the Empire, and though without human support, yet with the Lord by his side, he had fully pro-

claimed the Gospel message. He was waiting now for the end, for this time he expected condemnation and death. Indeed, he felt his life was already being poured out like a drink-offering, and the time when the offering would be completed he knew had almost come. He waited for that end, in calm and happy confidence that the Lord whom he had served would reward him : ' For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight (*i.e.* run a good race), I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing ' (2 Timothy iv. verses 6-8).

This is the Apostle's brave and happy farewell to earthly life.

CHAPTER XXXII

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES GROUPED CHRONOLOGICALLY—THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS—THE SEVEN CATHOLIC EPISTLES—JAMES—I AND 2 PETER—I, 2, AND 3 JOHN—JUDE

ST. PAUL'S chief legacy to mankind was the freeing of the Christian Church from the cramping bondage of Judaism, and the carrying out of the intention of the Church's Head of making His religion a universal religion, and the Church a Catholic or universal Church. He left another legacy of priceless value, the thirteen Epistles that have survived out of his correspondence. These Epistles are not arranged chronologically in the New Testament ; but to gain a full knowledge of their contents it is most important to arrange them in groups according to their true chronological order. Thus best can we understand the true inwardness of the Apostle's teaching by taking account of the difficulties and the needs it was intended to meet. For this purpose the Epistles may be divided into four groups. The first group consists of the first and second Epistles to the Thessalonians, written from Corinth about the year A.D. 51. The first Epistle is probably the earliest document in the New Testament. It contains a striking description of the resurrection of those that sleep in Jesus, and comforts the brethren with the hope of reunion with their loved ones hereafter. The second Epistle was written soon after the first. These Epistles teach Christian doctrine generally, and specially about the last things ; that is, the second coming of Christ in judgment on a wicked world, which was then expected immediately.

In 2 Thessalonians ii. there are apparently allusions (*e.g.*, the mystery of lawlessness) to the growing Cæsar-worship, the worship of the Emperor as a god, which was spreading rapidly throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire. As long before as the year

A.D. 39 Caligula had attempted to set up his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem ; but it was not till the latter part of the reign of Nero that persecution for refusing to worship the Emperor really set in. St. Paul, like St. John at a later date, perceived clearly that worldliness, then specially expressing itself as Emperor-worship, was the real rival of the worship of Jesus Christ. By insisting on that worship as a test of loyalty, the State arrayed the Empire against the Church, and made the religion of Christ fight for its life.

The second group of letters may be dated from A.D. 55 to 58. They comprise the two Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians, and the Epistle to the Romans. These are the great Epistles of the controversy with Judaism. The first Epistle to the Corinthians, which comes first in this group, was written at Ephesus. Corinth was a wealthy heathen city, celebrated for its commerce and notorious for its luxury and immorality, and it is not at all surprising that Paul's converts had relapsed into the vices they had learnt in their heathen days. To meet the needs of Corinth, Paul found only one power effectual, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Cross he found the only cure for sin. To crucify the flesh, to die with Christ, proved to be the only way to substitute the life of the Spirit for the life of the flesh.

In the eleventh chapter the irreverent conduct that had arisen in connection with the love-feasts and the subsequent celebration of the Lord's Supper is dealt with in a way which gives us an exceedingly interesting picture of the public worship of the primitive Church. We find the great Sacrament of the Lord's Supper fully established as the central act of Christian worship. Chapter xiii. is the beautiful and well-known chapter, every sentence of which should be treasured, on Charity or Christian Love, which the Apostle values as superior even to faith and hope.

In the second Epistle, which was perhaps written from Philippi, the Apostle returns to the subject of the Resurrection, and the spiritual body, which in the first Epistle was contrasted with the heavenly body, becomes the heavenly house contrasted with the earthly. He had at this time to deal with a kind of mutiny in the Church at Corinth which had been fomented by Judaizing emissaries. In this Epistle, even more than in the former Epistle to the Corin-

thians, Paul maintains that he is an Apostle equal to the chiefest of the twelve.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters contain a grand apology for the Apostle's own life.

The Epistle to the Galatians was called forth by the attempt of certain Judaizing teachers who had followed in St. Paul's steps to persuade the Gentiles that they must keep the Jewish ceremonial law and be circumcised. St. Paul dealt with this with great plainness of speech. 'Behold, I Paul say unto you, If ye receive circumcision Christ will profit you nothing' (Galatians v. verse 2). In the earlier part of the Epistle he gives a most valuable sketch of part of his own life and of the attitude of the chief Apostles towards him.

This Epistle was probably written after the second Epistle to the Corinthians, and before the Epistle to the Romans, either from Macedonia or Corinth. The Epistle to the Romans deals with the question of Judaism and the Law, that is, the relations of Christianity and the old Jewish religion; but being addressed to a Church which Paul had not yet visited, it deals with the question in a more detailed and more conciliatory way. The vehemence of the personal appeals to the Galatians in the Epistle to them is changed to a large and luminous exposition of the Gospel truth. The Epistle is rather a profound treatise on its subject than a personal letter, and, relying on its central doctrine of justification by faith, has the calm of conscious victory.

Perhaps the noblest of many noble chapters in the Epistle to the Romans are the eighth and the twelfth chapters, both of which if space permitted would be quoted in full.

The third group of Epistles may be called the Epistles of the first captivity, and were written during the first mild imprisonment about A.D. 61 to 62. The Epistle to the Philippians should stand first in point of time in this group. This Epistle arose out of the visit of Epaphroditus, an elder of the Church at Philippi, who had come up with a contribution in money from the Church for the help of their beloved teacher. We shall probably be not far wrong in attributing to the influence of that good, generous, and wealthy woman, Lydia, Paul's first convert in Philippi, some of the tender

thoughtfulness and liberality of the Philippians. It will be remembered that Lydia, after she and her household were baptized, had insisted on making her house the home of Paul and his company, and after the imprisonment of Paul and Silas at Philippi, they were again received in her house. As the Lord Jesus had been ministered to on earth by devoted women, so had his Apostle been ministered to by Lydia and by the mother of Rufus, the wife of Simon of Cyrene, of whom he spoke affectionately as one who had given him the care of a mother and won from him the affection of a son. Paul had the joy of having Timothy with him at this time, and that, no doubt, added to the warmth of the spirit of rejoicing and gratitude that pervades the whole Epistle. Though written by a prisoner, the letter breathes a peaceful and happy confidence which is the final fruit of a consecrated life. This finds expression in such exhortations as these :

‘Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things ’ (Philippians iv. verses 4-8).

The note of thanksgiving with which the Epistle begins continues to the end. It is a letter full of sweetness and light, for the Philippian Church was the one Church that really satisfied the Apostle’s ideal of what a Church should be. The other Epistles in this group, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, stand together as written late in the first imprisonment, probably in the year A.D. 62. Colosse, an ancient and at that time decaying city of Phrygia, was situated on the river Lycus, ten or eleven miles from Laodicea, and a little further from Hierapolis. Epaphras, a Christian missionary of Colosse, had visited St. Paul at Rome, and made known to him the difficulties of the Christian Church in that place. These difficulties, not yet sufficiently developed to be called a heresy, apparently sprang chiefly from Judaizing teaching, complicated by the kind of religious speculation to which the Phrygian mind was prone. The report of Epaphras drew forth the Epistle from the Apostle.

All the Colossians’ consciousness of their need of assistance to attain to fuller wisdom and knowledge was (the Apostle points out)

perfectly met in Christ Jesus the Lord, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians ii. verse 3).

'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power' (Colossians ii. verses 8-10).

We also learn that some at least of St. Paul's letters to the Churches were intended to be read not only in the Church to which they were sent, but in other Churches :

'And when this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans ; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea' (Colossians iv. verse 16).

The words 'The salutation by the hand of me Paul' remind us that owing to St. Paul's ill-health his letters were written by an amanuensis at the dictation of the Apostle. Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who, with Tychicus, carried Paul's message to the Colossians, was the principal subject of Paul's next letter, the letter to Philemon. This is the shortest and slightest of all St. Paul's letters, and is the sole specimen we possess of the Apostle's private correspondence with his personal friends. The tenderness, tact, and delicacy which the Apostle displays in dealing with a difficult situation, give the letter unique interest as a trustworthy revelation of character.

Philemon was an intimate friend of St. Paul, 'our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer' (verse 1), and apparently one whom he had led to Christ.

'I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it : albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me thine own self besides' (verse 16).

It is evident from the references to his hospitality to the saints that Philemon was a man of means. The purpose of the letter was to entreat him to receive back a runaway slave whom Paul had won to Christ ; to receive him, not as a slave, but as a brother beloved, that is, a member of the Christian brotherhood. Onesimus, the slave, had fled to Rome, where he had been converted by Paul, who was now sending him home to his master. The Apostle shows

a joyous confidence in Philemon's generous reception of his slave, basing his request not only on Philemon's friendship for himself, but on the mutual brotherhood of master and slave in Christ. He does not ask him directly to emancipate his slave, but he is certain that Philemon will do more than he asks him to do.

'Knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say' (verse 21). This delicate persuasiveness practically leaves Philemon no other alternative than to free his brother in Christ. Onesimus appears to have robbed his master, and for this and running away would have been very severely punished by a heathen master had he fallen into his hands. Society in the Roman Empire was based on slavery. Slaves were regarded as mere chattels; they were also absolutely in a master's power to be flogged or put to death at his will. Christianity dealt with the evil of slavery gradually, not by direct attacks but by positive teaching of the brotherhood of all in Christ, and depended on the influence of this truth, when realised, to make slavery impossible.

The remaining Epistle of this group, the Epistle to the Ephesians, is the Epistle of the great ideal of the Universal or Catholic Church, the society predestined to unite all mankind in one purpose and one spirit, in living one life, the Christ-life, that is, the life of God. The plea for unity in this Epistle is really based on our Lord's prayer for the unity of His Church, especially at the passage recorded in St. John xvii. 'And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.'

In this Epistle, as in the Lord's great prayer for the unity of the Church in the passage quoted above, the main teaching is that the union of Christians with Christ implies the union with one another. The Epistle as a whole is rather a great inspired revelation to the Universal Church than a mere letter to an individual Church.

It seeks to win Christians to live the higher life by the picture of the Church in its perfection, which the Apostle draws with a hand, as it were, guided from heaven. The appeal to the whole Church to live the life of Christian unity is admirably put in Ephe-

sians iv. verses 1-16: 'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

The fourth and last group of St. Paul's Epistles, best known as the Pastoral Epistles, consists of the first Epistle to Timothy, the Epistle to Titus, and the last Epistle we possess, written near the close of St. Paul's life, the second Epistle to Timothy. The first Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus were apparently written after the Apostle's release from his first imprisonment at Rome. If his first imprisonment at Rome ended in the year A.D. 63, the visitation of the Churches he had founded in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece, the missionary work in Crete with Titus referred to in the Epistle to Titus, the possible missionary visit to Spain (referred to by St. Clement and the Muratorian Canon) would fill the years before the second imprisonment and trial, which may be dated about A.D. 67.

But in any case these Pastoral Epistles contain genuine accounts of St. Paul's movements after his first imprisonment at Rome. When the first Epistle to Timothy was written, Paul had been with him a short time before. The Epistle consists of practical counsel to Timothy, who had remained at Ephesus as the Apostle's delegate in charge of the work there. The main purpose is summed up in chapter iii. verses 14, 15:

'These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.'

In Timothy's position as St. Paul's delegate is to be found the germ from which the Episcopate developed. While this Epistle witnesses to the delegation of Apostolic authority even more fully than do Titus and 2 Timothy, it is also important as a first handbook of Church discipline.

The Epistle to Titus was probably written, like the first Epistle to Timothy, during St. Paul's missionary visitation to the Churches he had founded in Greece and Macedonia, after his first imprison-

ment in Rome. It is evidently a private letter, not intended to be read in the churches. St. Paul and Titus had been in Crete together, and Titus had been left by the Apostle to act as his delegate to appoint presbyters, and to complete the organisation of the Churches. The letter gives a picture of the development of the ministry in the early Church, and shows how the beauty of the well-ordered religious and family life of the Christians recommended itself to those who were outside in the Roman Empire. As in others of St. Paul's Epistles, the humblest duties are connected with the highest hopes.

'Exhort servants (slaves) to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'

The second Epistle to Timothy is clearly of later date than the other two Pastoral Epistles: St. Paul when he wrote had been some time in a Roman prison. A short time before he wrote this Epistle he had been travelling in Asia Minor and Greece, and he had been deserted in his bonds by all the brethren in Asia. Demas had forsaken him, 'having loved the present world.' No one but Luke remained with him. Onesiphorus indeed had searched him out in his lonely prison and comforted him, but he longed for his beloved child Timothy: 'Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me' (2 Timothy iv. verse 9).

'Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us' (2 Timothy i. verses 13, 14).

This letter is particularly interesting as supplying the chief evidence concerning Paul's life after the close of the Acts of the Apostles. It mentions the second imprisonment and the second trial, as well as the missionary work in the interval between the two imprisonments. Its portrait of the aged Christian minister unconsciously given by its writer is even more interesting than the portrait of the ideal minister which he sets before Timothy.

One of the finest passages in the Epistles shows us the dauntless old missionary in sight of martyrdom, which in the second imprisonment he knew would be the end of his earthly life.

' For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight (*i.e.*, run the good race), I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a (' the,' R.V.) crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing ' (2 Timothy iv. verses 6-8).

Though the authorship and the date of the Epistle to the Hebrews cannot be fixed with any certainty, it is unquestionably one of the great writings of the New Testament. The author may possibly be St. Paul's friend and fellow-labourer Apollos, the learned Jew of Alexandria, for it shows a remarkable knowledge of Philo and of the Book of Wisdom, but can hardly be St. Paul, for the style and treatment are altogether unlike his. If the date cannot be exactly determined, the contents at any rate make it fairly certain that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Those who accept the conjecture of the authorship of Apollos might assume with some probability that it was addressed to Jewish Christians in the Church at Ephesus. It is at least certain that it was addressed to Jews who had accepted Christianity, and were in danger of relapsing into Judaism. The method the writer of the Epistle adopted to help the Jewish Christians wavering under the pressure of persecution to remain true to Christ was to offer them a very full comparison of the two religions, Christianity and Judaism. The opening sentence introduces the main argument by stating that the gradual and imperfect revelation of the past has been completed in the final and perfect revelation in Jesus Christ.

First the writer shows the superiority of Christ to the Prophets, then His superiority to the angels, then His superiority to Moses, then to Aaron, then he compares Christ's priesthood to what he considers a far simpler and profounder priesthood than the Levitical, the primitive priesthood of Melchisedec, then he goes on to show the superiority of Christ, our High Priest, to the high priest of Judaism, and the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old. This argument reaches its highest point in chapter ix. verses 23-26, where the writer of the Epistle succeeds in proving very fully that, to abandon Christianity and return to Judaism, would be to

exchange the substance for the shadow. Christianity, by its great High Priest, gave that open access into the very presence of God, of which Judaism could merely supply the symbolical representation.

All the comparisons and arguments with which the Epistle disposes of the claims of Judaism are based on the firm conviction of the writer that Christianity is the supreme and final religion, the only religion that has solved the problem of reuniting man with God. This high conception of Christianity is based on a high conception of Christ's Person as a Divine Being, one with God, and Himself pre-existent and the Maker of the Universe.

Peculiar to this author is the conception of earth as a place of shadows and heaven as a place of actual realities.

The remaining chapters are chiefly occupied with the glowing panegyric of the heroes of faith which was intended to show the Jewish Christians that, as Christians, they were closely linked to the old patriarchs and prophets, as possessors of what these had longed for and looked for. The inferiority of Judaism to Christianity stood confessed, in the opinion of the author of the Epistle, in the veil that separated worshippers from the most holy place. No such separation exists for the Christian. The most holy place is the open presence of God, into which Jesus has entered for us as our forerunner; that is, one who goes on in advance to bring others after him.

We come now to the seven Catholic Epistles, one of which bears the name of St. James, two of St. Peter, three of St. John, and one of St. Jude. There are differences of opinion as to why the term Catholic has been given to the Epistles of this group. Probably Catholic had in the beginning the sense of General; that is to say, Catholic Epistles meant Circular or Encyclical Epistles. James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and 1 John are addressed to wide circles of Christians in different lands, while 2 John, though its address to an individual is probable, was early taken to be addressed to the Church at large under the title of 'the Elect Lady;' and 3 John, though actually addressed to an individual, would naturally follow 1 and 2 John. These Epistles were first called Catholic in the Eastern Church, and from the sixth century Canonical in the Western. The first of this group is the general Epistle of St. James, which was

addressed ' to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad ' (James i. verse 1)—that is, to the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion—urging them to the patient endurance of their trials, and warning them with practical piety against many faults of conduct as well as some errors of doctrine. St. James was one of the Lord's brethren, but was not one of the twelve Apostles ; indeed, he was not even a believer till after the Resurrection. His conversion may probably be dated from the appearance of the Risen Lord to him, recorded in 1 Corinthians xv. verse 7. After the Ascension, he remained in Jerusalem in the company of the Apostles, waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit, and ten years later we find him the head of the Church at Jerusalem, and in another fourteen years later ranked among the Pillar Apostles, and in front of St. Peter and St. John.

On St. Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, St. James was president of the Council held to consider what were to be the terms of Gentile membership in the Christian Church. It was he who carried the momentous resolution not to trouble with the whole ceremonial law those Gentiles who turned to God. Again, when St. Paul returned from his third missionary journey, James, at the head of the elders of the Church, received him. It is interesting to observe that the speech recorded in Acts xv. at the second visit of St. Paul to Jerusalem, and the circular letter sent to Antioch by Judas and Silas declaring the terms of Gentile membership fixed by the Council, bearing a striking likeness in their language to the language of this Epistle. Though the ordinary tongue used in the home at Nazareth was probably Aramaic, yet all round the Lake of Galilee Greek was in common use, and St. James would have acquired enough Greek there to enable him to write the Epistle. The mark of our Lord's influence on St. James is to be found in the latter's large knowledge and continual use of the teaching of Jesus, especially of that teaching known to us as the Sermon on the Mount. The coincidences with our Lord's teaching reveal far deeper knowledge than if they were mere quotations, for they are the reproduction, in other words, of ideas and thoughts which the disciple had fully assimilated from his Master. The date of the Epistle is probably A.D. 51, or even earlier, taking that as the date of the Apostolic Council ; for if the Epistle were later, its author would have said something about the

decision of the Council as to the admission of Gentile converts to the Church. St. James was celebrated for his holy life. He was an ascetic as well as a man of deep piety. His great reputation for practical righteousness based on prayerfulness, gave him particular fitness to be head—Bishop, as we should call it—of the Jewish Christians and of the Church at Jerusalem, which he was in fact if not in name. He was called ‘Obliam,’ the bulwark or defence of the people, and his Epistle deals with the dangers of wealth and the duty of brotherhood among Christians of all nations in a way that explains that title. Hegesippus is quoted by Eusebius as saying of him, ‘His knees became hard like a camel’s because he was always kneeling in the Temple, asking forgiveness for the people.’ He was known as James the Just, or the Righteous One, and Clement of Alexandria states that Peter and James and John (the sons of Zebedee) elected James the Just to be Bishop of Jerusalem.

The first Epistle of Peter was written apparently by one who had studied the Epistle of James. It was addressed to members of the Christian Church in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, that is, in what we call Asia Minor. The Christians to whom St. Peter writes were some of them converts from Judaism, but most of them from heathenism. They were evidently exposed to persecution, but hardly, one thinks, to persecution directed by the State.

Many passages, such as 1 Peter iii. 9 and iii. 16, are not compatible with a State-directed persecution, while quite in keeping with a campaign of slander and insult to which their silent condemnation of heathen revelry and licentiousness by holding aloof from it often exposed the Christians.

Almost every exhortation in this Epistle is connected with our Lord’s example, or with His Passion, or with His Crucifixion, or with His Resurrection, or with His Return. In this Epistle too is to be found the only direct statement of that most mysterious part of our Lord’s redemptive work, which is referred to in our Creed, in the words ‘He descended into hell.’ The first of the two passages is found in 1 Peter iii. verses 18–20: ‘For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit :

by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison ; which sometime were disobedient when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.' This passage deals with the case of those who died in the great judgment of the Flood, the typical judgment of antiquity, selected as representative rebels against God, and the statement is perfectly plain that the Saviour of the world preached or proclaimed the Gospel to these disobedient spirits in prison in the Unseen World.

The second Epistle of St. Peter differs in style from the first. Its contents are less valuable, and its authenticity is less strongly supported by internal and external evidence. The writer refers in the first chapter to two experiences of his life as one of the inner circle of the disciples during our Lord's earthly ministry. They both occur in the first chapter.

The Epistle was evidently written in Peter's old age, and when long delay had shaken the confidence of many in a visible and immediate return. The main purpose of the Epistle was to warn the Christians to whom it was addressed against false teachers, whose doctrinal errors issued in immoral life.

In support of the old view of the authorship of the two Epistles of Peter, it may be said that there are a large number of features of resemblance between the Epistles, while there are of course a great many differences of style. A considerable number of coincidences have been noticed between Peter's speeches recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and this Epistle. The manifest differences of style between the two Epistles may perhaps be accounted for by the fact (which we know from Papias) that Peter used an interpreter, and may possibly have had the service of a different interpreter for each Epistle to translate what he had to say into Greek. But when all is said in admission of the inferiority of the second Epistle to the first, it must be added that, at any rate in the Authorised Version, there are passages that are not wanting in dignity and even in grandeur. For instance, 2 Peter i. verses 19-21 ; and iii. 11-14, 17, 18.

The three Epistles of St. John were in use in the Church at an early date, the first Epistle by the middle of the second century.

That the Epistles were written by the author of the Gospel is manifest on the internal evidence alone. The calm, transparent style, the simple way of saying deep things, is the same in the Epistles as in the Gospel. The letters, like the Gospel, were probably written at Ephesus, where St. John's later years were passed in organising the Churches in Asia, till his death at a great age in the days of Trajan.

The first Epistle begins with a characteristic impersonal reference to the fact of John's intimacy with the Risen Lord, whom he recognises as the manifestation of that eternal life which is with the Father. His object in addressing his readers was that they might have fellowship with him and those Christians with whom he classes himself, and so share his fellowship with God. His message is briefly this: 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all' (1 John i. verse 5). From this it follows that to walk in the light is necessary for this fellowship with God.

From fellowship with God the thought passes on to knowledge of God, the essential of which is simple obedience to God's commandments. He warns his readers against false prophets, on whom from time to time he flashes his righteous wrath, returning again and again to his favourite subjects—the keeping of the law of love and the keeping of the law of righteousness. From the former we may learn to anticipate the verdict of the Day of Judgment.

In this Epistle God is light: 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all' (1 John i. verse 5); 'God is love' (1 John iv. verse 8)—profound thoughts conveyed in the very simplest language. Christ is the Son, the Only Begotten, who was with the Father in the beginning, before He was born in a human form into the world. The powers of evil are described by St. John in their widest and most comprehensive form as The World, in which are to be found many evil spirits, chiefest of which is the spirit called Antichrist. Antichrist in the Epistles is not an enemy which assails the Church from without, but a false teacher within the Church that denies essential doctrines.

The second Epistle of St. John, like the first, was probably written from Ephesus, and is addressed to the Elect Lady, which is thought by some to be a figurative expression for an individual Church and by others for the Church generally.

If it be addressed to a Church it is probably one of the Asian Churches, but the private and personal character of the second Epistle, and the fact that the third is addressed to an individual by name, rather favour the idea that the Epistle was addressed to a Christian lady, of whom we know nothing except what we read in this Epistle. We gather from its contents that it was written as a warning against Docetic teachers of the Gnostic type already condemned in the first Epistle. The second letter does not enter at once on its subject as does the first letter, but begins with courteous personal greetings and personal commendation, such as we are accustomed to in St. Paul's Epistles. St. John goes on with affectionate tenderness to insist on the keeping of the commandment, 'Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another' (2 John, verse 5). He reminds his readers that fellowship with God can only be had by fidelity to the teaching of Christ. Then with that sternness against evil which belongs to intense devotion to the truth, he gives the order, 'If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds' (2 John, verses 10-11). The Epistle closes with a salutation to the Lady to whom the letter is addressed from the children of her elect sister.

The third Epistle is as short as the second, and is certainly addressed to an individual, 'the well-beloved Gaius' (3 John, verse 1). As for the place and date, it was probably written, like the other Epistles, at Ephesus, after the Gospel, towards the close of St. John's long life. We know nothing about Gaius, except what comes out in the letter, for we can hardly identify him with Gaius of Corinth, Paul's host, because both bore the same name, and were distinguished for hospitality. St. John's intention of seeing Gaius shortly face to face and telling him the many things he had to communicate, but was unwilling to commit to paper, suggests that this visit may have been part of the work of Apostolic visitation, which we know that he carried out in the neighbourhood of Ephesus. The Epistle appears to have been written in the following circumstances. Certain brethren, strangers, who were travelling through

the Churches, most probably as missionaries, had come to St. John and had reported to him the hospitable treatment, and the brotherly love Gaius had shown to them. St. John praised him warmly for this, and told him how well these brethren deserved a brotherly reception. Hospitality was an essential of those early days of Christianity. Neither the travelling preachers nor the travellers who came with letters could be allowed to stay at heathen inns, where the morals were even worse than the accommodation. 'Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles' (3 John, verse 7). But the purpose of the letter was not only to express the aged Apostle's pleasure at the well-doing of Gaius, but also to express his indignation at the misconduct of a certain Diotrephes. This man not only refused to receive the brethren, but had forbidden others to receive them. A pushing and ambitious man, he had disowned the authority of the Apostle. 'Wherefore,' writes St. John, 'if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church' (3 John, verse 10). The warning that follows is a specimen of that impressive Hebrew parallelism which characterises St. John's style: 'Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God' (3 John, verse 11). The letter, after bearing witness to the worth of one Demetrius, in language which is as characteristic of St. John as the rest of the composition, ends with a benediction and salutation. This letter gives us an interesting glimpse of the life of the Christian Churches that were under the oversight of the last of the Apostles, probably about the close of the first century. It was just at the point of transition from the Apostolic age, when the ministry of travelling preachers had not yet completely given way to the localised, fully organised ministry. It has been conjectured that Diotrephes was the first aggressive champion of the new order against the old, and certainly he seems to have regarded the brethren whom Gaius had received so lovingly rather as intruders to be cast out than as fellow-Christians to be welcomed.

The Epistle of St. Jude was written by the Lord's brother Jude

or Judas. Like the rest of the Lord's brethren, he did not believe in Christ till after the Resurrection. In the first verse of the Epistle he styles himself a 'bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.' The place in which it was written was probably Jerusalem, where the brethren of the Lord would naturally hold a place of some influence, owing to the long headship of St. James. From the internal evidence of the letter, it was clearly addressed to a Church composed of Gentiles, or mainly of Gentiles. St. Jude writes about 'our common salvation' (Jude, verse 3) as a Jewish Christian to Gentile Christians, and the abuses condemned are very much the same as St. Paul found in the Church at Corinth. They came from the presence in the Christian brotherhood of Gentiles who had not abandoned the immorality and irreverence of their old life. The danger was not false doctrine, but vicious example. St. Jude therefore feels forced to call upon them to contend earnestly for the faith against the depravity of the men who had crept in among them, and by their misconduct were practically denying the only Master and Lord.

On the attitude that should be observed by the Church towards these depraved men, he gives some eminently judicious and charitable advice. They are not to treat them all alike. On the least guilty they are to have compassion, 'on some have mercy, who are in doubt, and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh' (Jude, verses 22, 23, R.V.).

As to the date of the Epistle, there is so much knowledge of St. Paul's Epistles shown that it may be assigned to a period within a year or two of the Pastoral Epistles and 1 Peter.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

THIS Book, which stands last in the Bible, is generally considered the most obscure and difficult of all the books, but the obscurity and difficulty, though real, have never been able to hide from Christians its main message and its main purpose. The message is: the Coming of Christ to Churches and Nations, as well as to individuals; and the purpose is: to prepare them by repentance and faith to be ready and rejoice to receive Him at His coming. The Revelation is really a continuation of the Gospels. As the Gospels describe our Lord's earthly life and His mighty works in Galilee and Judæa, so the Revelation describes His heavenly life in His Church and the spiritual miracles by which He aids it in its struggle with evil. The description of this heavenly life of the Risen Lord is made by means of an elaborate symbolism which is designed to enable the Churches to feel the reality of the Lord's Coming.

The Book is largely composed of Visions of the Coming, and though the details of these Visions may not always be possible to explain, yet enough is within the reach of the intelligent reader to enable him to receive the essential part of the Revelation or Unveiling of the Divine Spirit of the Ascended Lord.

While not attempting a detailed commentary on the contents, our endeavour will be to make the Book easier to understand. The superscription of the Book, which does not occur in the earlier manuscripts, is the Revelation of St. John the Divine, 'the Divine' being in the original, 'the theologian,' a title which well describes the author of the loftiest theology in the Bible, that of the Gospel which bears his name, as well as of this Book and of the Epistles.

The Revelation was given in the Island of Patmos, a small volcanic island off the coast of Asia Minor, to which St. John was

banished, as a Christian; no doubt on account of his influential position among the Churches of the mainland. Such a banishment for a religion regarded as dangerous by the Emperor involved hard labour in fetters under a taskmaster's whip. Life under such conditions was a living entombment, and certainly entitled the Apostle to describe himself in writing to the persecuted Churches as 'your companion in tribulation.' Some connection between the imagery of some of the visions and the earthquakes and volcanic disturbances of that region may be found in such passages as this: 'And as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea' (Revelation viii. verse 8).

It may be remembered that there had been an eruption of the volcano of Santorin, an island not far off, not many years before, and Laodicea had been destroyed by earthquakes as recently as A.D. 60.

The mind of St. John was so steeped in Old Testament prophecy that he used the old language to express his own new thoughts. In this description of Christ (chapter i. verses 12-17) the portraits of the Son of Man and of the Ancient of Days in Daniel vii., and the portrait of the Angel in Daniel x., have been freely used to describe an independent vision; the details taken from the Ancient of Days being an impressive assertion of the Lord's Divinity. The Divine figure is clothed with a garment down to the feet, a garment denoting Kingly and Priestly dignity.

Before the feet of the Risen Lord the Apostle fell in worshipping adoration. Tenderly the Christ laid His right hand on the disciple who had lain on his Master's breast at the Last Supper, and said: 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the Living One: and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the Keys of Death and of Hades'—the Unseen World (R.V., Revelation i. verses 17, 18).

The Apostle is told to write to the Seven Churches. It was not that there were not many other Churches in Asia Minor, but these seven were the representative Churches and stand here for the whole province, each being the chief among a group. Seven is the number which runs through the whole Book as being the ideal, or perfect number.

The Churches are represented by candlesticks, as being light-bearers to mankind: 'Ye are the light of the world.' 'Let your light so shine.'

The first message or letter is to the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, that is, the ideal in heaven which is represented by the Church on earth. This Church, of which we heard in a chapter dealing with St. Paul, if founded by Priscilla and Aquila, was of St. Paul's building up, and it is pleasant to find that he had not laboured in vain.

The next Epistle is to the Church in Smyrna. This city was very wealthy and a great trading centre, but the Church was poor in worldly goods, though rich spiritually. The Church was in danger of persecution, probably to force its members to submit to the prevalent Emperor-worship. There was a temple here to the wicked Emperor Tiberius, and the worship of such a creature might well be described as devil-worship. 'Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried' (verse 10).

The third Epistle is to the Church in Pergamos (R.V. Pergamum). This was an ancient city, the capital of Asia in the time of Augustus. Here was the first temple built for Emperor-worship and dedicated to Augustus. Emperor-worship is treated as the chief enemy of Christ throughout the Revelation, and is identified with Satan and Antichrist, though the latter word does not occur.

The fourth Epistle is to the Church at Thyatira, a rich and powerful commercial town in Asia. Here, as in all these Epistles, full credit is given for all well-doing of the Church addressed. After this comes the complaint—in this case a serious one: 'Thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols' (Revelation ii. verse 20).

It is evident that this woman was a definite person, and the question is, who? The description is of a woman who was a prophetess in the Christian Church, like Philip the Evangelist's four daughters, like Ammia of Philadelphia, and many other women of light and leading in the first century.

The fact is, that a great difficulty which met the early converts from Paganism is referred to here.

In Asian cities and, indeed, all over the Empire, trade guilds existed, and were highly prized and extremely efficient. This is well known in Asia Minor from the inscriptions, and we can remember this fact at Ephesus in the account of St. Paul's work there and the hostile faction of Demetrius the silversmith.

Great advantages, both social and financial, accrued from the membership of the guild. It was a sort of club, and brought men together, and was regarded as almost essential to the business of many trades. It was a great power of union, which, however, depended on a common religion and a common sacrificial meal. Thus the bond of union was a heathen god. This involved idolatry, and the common meal was apt to degenerate into revelry, and too much wine led often to immorality. Yet such was the convenience and attractiveness of these guilds that they had not yet been condemned by the Church at Thyatira; and indeed a chief teacher in that Church had championed the cause of compromise, and continued to do so only too successfully.

It had clearly not been decided there, though it had been in Ephesus, whether membership of a heathen trade guild was permissible to a Christian. This marks an early stage of Christian development, and supports an early date for the Book of the Revelation. Some time before this St. Paul had condemned such mixing in heathen social life as 'fellowship with devils' in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (chapter x. verse 20). The 'bed' mentioned in Revelation ii. verse 22, really means a banqueting couch, and the meaning is that the scene of revelry is to become the scene of retribution.

What was the action of the Apostles as regards this difficult question? An order of 'no compromise' was the Apostolic decision, as we see here, and the toleration of the practice of Church members belonging to a heathen club was before long abandoned. Perhaps this staunchness to principle had more to do with the ultimate victory of Christianity than appears on the surface.

The difficulty was a real one. To obey St. John meant to an artisan of Thyatira not only to lose pleasant social intercourse, but to risk loss of employment and loss of money. It is interesting to compare their difficulties then with ours to-day. A somewhat

analogous case to-day would be the custom of treating in public-houses to facilitate business. A working man may not only find it pleasant to meet acquaintances in public-houses, but helpful in getting employment, and not invariably leading to drunkenness. The public-house is practically his club-house ; and the question is, as in the case of the trade guilds at Thyatira, whether the associations and influence of the use of the place are elevating or the reverse. A very plausible case, no doubt, was made out on the surface by ' Jezebel,' the influential woman who taught that membership in a heathen club was perfectly permissible to a Christian. But St. John vehemently condemned the practice, and denounced the bare toleration of such teaching ; and the Church accepted his decision and St. Paul's, and the practice had to go.

How uncompromisingly would St. John have branded the English Bishops who patronise Vivisection, though it involves cruel injustice to the animal under experiment and the habitual suppression of Christ-like compassion in the experimenter !

The fifth Epistle is addressed to the Church at Sardis, which was the capital of Lydia, an ancient but decaying city. The message alludes plainly to the former greatness of the city (Revelation iii. verse 1), ' Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead,' and again to the want of watchfulness which had twice resulted in the loss of the citadel.

The sixth Letter is to the Church of Philadelphia, and is, like that to Smyrna, of almost unqualified approval. Philadelphia was a strong and wealthy city on the slopes of Mount Tmolus. It was a newly established Church with a great opening before it : ' I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it ' (verse 8). It had a difficulty which it shared with other cities : ' A synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie ' (verse 9). This apparently means that the Jews not only bitterly opposed Christianity, but made common cause with heathenism against it, as at a later date they helped to burn Polycarp at Smyrna.

The seventh and last Epistle is to Laodicea, a town a few miles from Colosse, which had become very powerful and wealthy under Roman rule. It had been destroyed a few years before by earthquake, and so proud of its wealth were its citizens that they rebuilt

the town themselves, thinking it beneath them to accept help from the Roman Emperor, such as other great cities had already obtained. The self-confident attitude of the citizens had not unnaturally repeated itself in the Church. Self-satisfaction had led to lukewarmness, and lukewarmness the Head of the Church condemns more severely than any other state. Revelation iii. verses 15-18: 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.'

The condemnation is intended to open the eyes of the Laodiceans to their real condition. Laodicea was a great banking centre, and the message seems to imply that the Church is not to depend on bankers, but on Christ for the true wealth; not on the black woollen cloth for which the town was famous, but on the white raiment of righteousness which Christ alone can bestow; and not on the celebrated local eye-salve called Phrygian Powder, manufactured in tablets in the town for weak eyesight, but on the spiritual eye-salve for dimness of spiritual sight, which Christ is ready to provide, and had indeed provided to some extent in His warning in this Epistle.

Our Lord's idea of what constitutes a Church is brought before us by the collective teaching of all these Epistles. That idea is not the idea of a select and exclusive body of very superior persons, far above the ordinary level, but of a brotherhood of ordinary men and women who are learning Christ; who are united by common faith to Him as Head, and to one another as members of His Body, the Church, striving to make the old common life of man a new one by living it in a new spirit; fortified by common worship and common sacraments, and the consciousness of the great fellowship in which they walk towards the perfect life of Heaven. Most of the Churches addressed are full of grave faults which are treated with loving severity; but faultiness is evidently regarded as a condition to be expected in the life of a Church on earth.

We must now turn from the first part of the Book, which ends with the Epistle to Laodicea, to the second part, which begins with the fourth chapter and ends with the twenty-second. The second part resembles the first in its arrangement, that is to say, it is arranged in sevens. As there are seven Epistles to seven Churches,

so there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven angels, seven thunders, seven vials, seven plagues, seven mystic figures. Seven, denoting completion, is the chief number in the Book, occurring altogether fifty-four times. Even the dragon as the rival of Christ has seven heads, as has the wild beast from the sea and the scarlet beast on which Babylon is seated.

This symbolical use of numbers is not confined to seven. Twelve comes next. The woman, the mother of Christ, has a crown of twelve stars, the new Jerusalem has twelve gates and twelve foundation stones; and ten and four are also favourite numbers. The subject of this great series of Visions is the Coming of Christ in judgment, and the results of that Coming to His enemies and followers respectively. These Visions open in the fourth chapter with the vision of Heaven, the imagery of which is largely taken from Ezekiel.

A long series of visions of judgment follow, the details of which it must be confessed have never yet been identified with events and personages in the history of St. John's time. The reason for this obscurity is not far to seek. Christians in Asia Minor, to encourage and help whom the Book was written, were suffering at the time under persecution, as were the Christians in other parts of the Empire, for the refusal to participate in Emperor-worship, which was held to involve disloyalty to the Empire. The visions were prophecies of the coming of Christ to triumph over the rule of Satan in the world in general, and the great representative of the rule of evil at that time, the world-empire of Rome in particular. Necessarily, the references to Rome and the Roman Empire had to be veiled as much as possible, for to speak plainly of the guilt and the punishment of Rome would have entailed deplorable consequences to the whole Christian community. Had the contents of the Book been easily understood by heathen readers, a general proscription of all Christians as enemies of the Empire would have followed. Persecution was going on from time to time in different places for the refusal of Emperor-worship, but there was no general proscription as yet throughout the Empire.

A great change had come over the attitude of the Christians towards the Empire since St. Paul in Romans, and St. Peter in

1 Peter, had both of them urged complete submission to the Emperor and his Government.

The Roman Empire, as the great enemy of the Church of Christ, had become identified in the eyes of Christians, when St. John wrote this book, with the Empire of Evil in the world. It possessed the authority and embodied the spirit of Satan. The Roman Emperor had become the Wild Beast, and the Church of Christ was engaged in a conflict the issue of which was to be settled by the coming of Christ in judgment and the fall of Rome, described in chapter xvii. as 'the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus,' who sits upon 'a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy' (verses 3-6).

What was the cause of this astonishing change? The immediate cause is to be found in the catastrophe which had taken place in Rome in July A.D. 64, the great fire which destroyed for nine days the capital of the Empire. This fire, which caused untold misery to vast multitudes, was universally attributed to the Emperor Nero, who, fearful of a revolution, determined to transfer the guilt with its punishment to the Christians in Rome, already unpopular owing to the strictness of their lives. As Tacitus had the worst possible opinion of Christianity, considering that it involved hatred of the human race, his evidence in the *Annals*, which is supported by that of Suetonius, cannot be questioned. 'A huge multitude were convicted,' he writes, 'not so much on the charge of incendiarism, as for their hatred of the human race.' These martyrs were put to death with the most frightful tortures, the Emperor's cruelty being on a par with his cowardice. The *Annals* tell the story: 'And various forms of mockery were added to increase their dying agonies. Covered with the skins of wild beasts, they were condemned to die by the mangling of dogs, or by crucifixion, or to be set on fire and burned after twilight to supply a nightly illumination. Nero offered his own gardens for this spectacle, and gave a chariot race, mixing with the mob, and dressed as a charioteer, or driving about among them.' The worst torture, the burning, with a stake to hold up the chin, as living torches, evidently made a lasting impression in Rome, to judge by Juvenal's allusions to it in his eighth satire.

The suddenness of this change in the attitude of the Imperial Government from protection to persecution must have greatly increased the horror with which the Christians regarded this atrocious injustice. The news of the sufferings of the Brethren would, of course, be carried to the Churches in all parts of the Empire, but something more than mere reports of persecution the writer had not witnessed is needed to account for the white-hot wrath against Rome and the Emperor which glows in the pages of the Revelation. The Neronian persecution in Rome made itself felt long after in a new attitude towards Christians, an increase in local persecutions in the provinces for the refusal of Emperor-worship, the demand for which was made the means of discovering Christianity and the refusal of which brought recusants to execution. Against this worship, the direct worship of the Emperor's image or statue, the Church spoke out decidedly, and St. John in this Book of the Revelation urges repeatedly the duty of Christians to refuse to comply, even at the cost of enduring torture and death.

St. John's message is, the certainty of the manifold coming of Christ to His Church and to the World and the certainty of His ultimate victory.

The whole Book pulses and thrills with a glorious faith in Christ which flames up in the teeth of circumstances, and faces present failure and even persecution and death in the realised consciousness of final triumph over evil. This was the dauntless, God-given faith in Christ and His Body, the Church, and His cause, the higher destiny of man, of which the same St. John wrote at a later date in his first Epistle: 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith' (1 John v. verse 4). Assuming that the book was written by St. John in his living entombment in Patmos, it is a splendid example of the liberty Christ bestows, for this voice from an earthly prison-house is full of the freedom and the joy of highest heaven.

There is an important identification in the book. It is to be found in chapter xvii., which tells of the Fall of Rome, unmistakably meant by the name of Babylon. The scarlet-coloured beast in this chapter is the Empire, and its seven heads the seven Emperors. We read in the tenth verse, 'And there are seven kings ;

five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come.' The five kings are interpreted to be : Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), Claudius, and Nero : the sixth king then reigning was thus Galba. Nero killed himself to escape capture in June A.D. 68, and Galba was murdered in January 69. The date at which the Revelation was given to St. John may, therefore, be placed between June 68 and January 69. This date is supported indirectly by the eleventh chapter, the beginning of which shows clearly that the book was written before the Temple and Jerusalem fell, in the year A.D. 70. The later date, in the reign of Domitian, though well supported by tradition, especially by Irenæus, is contrary to the internal evidence, and the earlier date, either in Galba's reign or at any rate before the fall of Jerusalem, helps us very materially to arrive at a right solution of the problem of the authorship.

The problem is briefly this : How could the mind which wrote the Revelation have written the Gospel ? and one may say at once that the difference of style is so considerable between these books that, if a late date in Domitian's reign be given to the Revelation, and an earlier date be given to the Gospel, it is impossible to understand how they could have had the same author. Spiritually the Gospel is far in advance of the Revelation. The man who wrote the Revelation might well advance, in years spent in Christian life and Christian meditation, to the calmer, loftier, and larger vision of truth in the Gospel. The man who had reached that standpoint, the highest reached by any writer in the New Testament except himself in a few passages in his first Epistle, could not have gone back to the cruder and less lofty standpoint of the Revelation.

Taking the date of the Revelation to be before the year 70 and the date of the Gospel to be nearly thirty years later, the spiritual progress shown is natural and credible. The early date which has been here assigned to the Revelation helps us also to explain the solecisms of style and especially the mistakes of grammar in the Revelation, as contrasted with the absence of such barbarisms in the Gospel. St. John, whose native tongue was Aramaic, attempts in the Revelation to use Greek as if, like Aramaic, it had no case endings.

By the time he wrote the Gospels, some thirty years later, he

had become sufficiently familiar with Greek (living in the Greek city of Ephesus and among Greek-speaking disciples) to write the Greek language without barbarisms, though without idioms. A comparison of the contents of the Revelation with the contents of the Gospel amply sustains the old view that the two books had the same author. Here are a few coincidences: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' begins the Gospel, and introduces a name of our Lord which is found also in Revelation xix. verse 13: 'And his name is called The Word of God.'

Our Lord's pre-existence, taught in the first chapter of the Gospel, is taught throughout the Revelation implicitly or directly. As the title 'the Word' is common to both Books, so is that wonderfully expressive and beautiful title, 'the Lamb,' which occurs twenty-nine times in the Revelation, and nowhere else in the New Testament as a title of our Lord, except in the Gospel. St. John i. verse 29: 'Behold the Lamb of God.' In the first chapter of the Revelation, seventh verse, we read, 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him,' and we remember that the piercing of our Lord's side by the soldier's spear is recorded in St. John's Gospel alone.

Again, in Revelation xxii. verse 17, we find: 'And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely': while in St. John's Gospel we read: 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.'

These coincidences (and the list might be added to) are quite sufficient for our purpose. The same remarkable mind is certainly to be discovered in both books: and thus the internal evidence confirms the ancient tradition of the Church. The religious value of the Book, while less than that of the Gospel, is very high: Christ begins and Christ ends it.

The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is as necessary to the Churches of the twentieth century as it was to those of the first. As the Risen and Ascended Christ was coming to the nations then—a manifold coming, which St. John in this Book strove to help the Church to realise—so He is coming now.

To help men to realise that manifold coming in the life of the

community, as well as in the life of the individual, was the main object of the message of the Book of the Revelation.

The coming of Christ is intimately connected with its result, which, as He comes and is received as Lord by the individual and the society, He gradually effects, namely, the conquest over evil in both. Our Lord's coming to us must be met by our overcoming evil for His sake, and by the power which our union with Him communicates to us we are able to overcome it. St. John remained an optimist, though looking out from Patmos over the whole world of that day lying in wickedness. His faith remained steadfast in Christ, the divine victor over evil, who could and would give victory at last to all His faithful followers. In the midst of his living death at Patmos, he saw the day of that victory as if it had already come. He saw before his eyes the firstfruits in the redemption of society. His faith, which has been marvellously justified through the centuries, in the very gradual but real fulfilment of his predictions, expresses itself in the vision of a new heaven and a new earth to which the redeemed society, represented however imperfectly by the universal Church, comes down from God. Revelation xxi. 1-6 : ' And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the Holy City, a new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.'

The vision of the new Jerusalem, the society of the future, the kingdom of God which Jesus brought to man, was intended firstly to sustain and encourage the persecuted Christians of the times when it was written, and secondly to fulfil the same office to all Christians for all time. The life of the citizens of this ideal society is simply the common life of man, redeemed and consecrated by the self-sacrificing love of Christ, who gives to those in union with Him, and through them to the world, this high and heavenly love as the inspiration of their lives.

Practical attempts to effect the regeneration of society are numerous, and deal with various aspects of the general evil from which society as well as the individual suffers. These attempts, where they proceed from an ardent desire for the betterment of the community, even when they do not claim the name of Christian,

are eminently Christian. We must content ourselves here, owing to our limited space, with mentioning one of the most hopeful of recent attempts to regenerate the rising generation—the George Junior Republic at Freeville, in New York State, which has worked out a wonderfully successful method of reclaiming boys and girls who have made a bad start in life. The essential principle of this method is self-government, the appeal to the latent capacities of citizenship in the young. The golden rule of the institution, learned from experience, is that the inmates should work for what they once received as charity—a rule long ago anticipated by St. Paul, when he wrote to the Thessalonians the command ‘that if any would not work, neither should he eat.’ The great principle of self-government, though its wonderfully good effect on boy and girl character was all Mr. George’s own discovery, was also long ago anticipated by St. Paul, who insisted on it as an essential principle of the Christian community, *e.g.*, ‘Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?’

In the George Junior Republic a single place of worship suffices for all the different denominations, being used at one time for one denomination and at another time for another. The idea of disciplining the character by an ordered mode of common life is, of course, not peculiar to Mr. George’s institution. The communities of monks that grew out of the early hermits exhibited the effective working of this idea, though in place of self-government they depended on the obligation of obedience to a Superior.

A word must be said in conclusion on an interesting feature of the Book of the Revelation: the Hymns of the Redeemed, the Songs of Heaven, in which we have perhaps the earliest hymns of the Church, except some passages in St. Paul’s Epistles. The hymns to be now given are taken from the Authorised Version printed in paragraphs. The singing of the first hymn is in Heaven. The Lamb alone has been found worthy to open the sealed book of God’s purposes for mankind. Revelation v. verses 8–14: ‘And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps,

and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.
And they sung a new song, saying,

Thou art worthy to take the book,
And to open the seals thereof :
For thou wast slain,
And hast redeemed us to God by thy blood
Out of every kindred, and tongue,
And people, and nation ;
And hast made us unto our God
Kings and priests :
And we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about
the throne and the beasts and the elders : and the number of them
was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands ;
saying, with a loud voice,

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
To receive power, and riches,
And wisdom, and strength, and honour,
And glory, and blessing.

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under
the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard
I saying,

Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power,
Be unto him that sitteth upon the throne,
And unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'

· Again in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation we hear the
Hymn of the martyrs who had suffered death for their refusal to
join in Emperor-worship. Revelation xv. verses 2-5 : 'And I
saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire : and them that
had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and
over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on
the sea of glass having the harps of God. And they sing the

song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and marvellous are thy works,
 Lord God Almighty ;
 Just and true are thy ways,
 Thou King of Saints.
 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord,
 And glorify thy name ?
 For thou only art holy :
 For all nations shall come
 And worship before thee ;
 For thy judgments are made manifest.'

Lastly may be given the Hymn of rejoicing with which the Church of Christ welcomes the mystic union with her Lord (Revelation xix. verses 6-8) : ' And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying,

Alleluia :
 For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
 Let us be glad and rejoice,
 And give honour to him :
 For the marriage of the Lamb is come,
 And his wife has made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'





