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A
HISTORY OF THE CHURCH
IN
THE TIME OF OUR LORD



The Days of the Son of Man

A

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

IN

THE TIME OF OUR LORD

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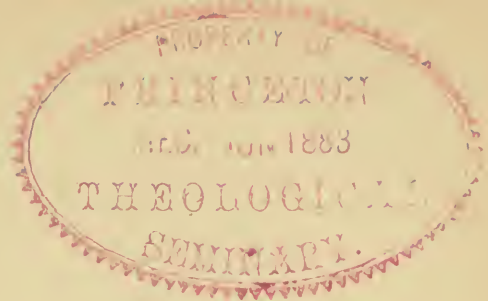
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ERRATA.

- Page 11, l. 24, *for* "that" *read* "ministries."
,, 15, l. 28, *for* "not" *read* "scarcely."
,, 23, l. 9, *for* "without" *read* "almost without."
,, 52, l. 8, *for* "Celicia" *read* "Cilicia."
,, 52, l. 8, *for* "Bythinia" *read* "Bithynia."



THE
HISTORY OF THE CHURCH
IN THE TIME OF OUR LORD.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE history of the Church, at the period with which we shall have to deal in the following pages, brings us into direct contact with the greatest event which ever took place throughout all its annals, and on this account, as well as for other reasons, possesses paramount claims to our attention—claims which, it need hardly be said, have always been fully recognised.

By the Church in the time of our Lord will here be understood the personal followers of Christ during His ministry on earth.

Definition
of terms.

These men are known under more than one designation in the Gospels. Our Lord sometimes called them His "flock," or "sheep"—His "little flock;"¹ "His sheep which heard His voice and

¹ Luke, xii. 32.

followed Him"¹—titles of the Church universal common to both the old and the new dispensation.² They also received from Him another name derived in like manner from Old Testament forms, and by which the followers of our Lord were commonly recognised for some time after the Day of Pentecost—namely, that of "Brethren": indeed, "the Brethren" continued to be a customary appellation for all believers in Christ throughout the whole apostolic age.³ The same remark likewise applies to the term "Disciples," a term by which our Lord's personal followers are in the Gospels found to be more frequently designated, both by Jesus Himself and by the evangelists, than by any other, and which is also used in the Acts of the Apostles to describe the members of the Christian Church generally.⁴ It had already a recognised meaning both in Judea and in other parts of the world. In its original application to those believers in Christ who followed our Lord in the days of His flesh, the name is well worthy of our attention. It indicates one very important relation in which they stood to Jesus, and He to them. He was their Rabbi—that is, Master or Teacher—and they His scholars, who were receiving instruction in the mysteries of the kingdom of God, that they might be fitted for the

¹ Cf. John, x. 27, x. 16.

² Isa. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 3-31; Acts, xx. 28, 29; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

³ Mat. xxiii. 8, xxviii. 10; John, xx. 17; Acts, xii. 17; 1 Cor. i. 26; Col. i. 6; 1 John, iii. 4.

⁴ Mat. xxvi. 18, &c.; Acts, xi. 26.

special work afterwards to be committed to them—namely, that of “teaching” (or making disciples of) “all nations.”¹

The personal followers of our Lord do not appear ever to have been recognised during the period in question under the name of a Church. The word “church” occurs only twice in the Gospels;² in both cases being used by our Lord Himself, and used in both cases, as it would seem, in its ordinary New Testament acceptation.³ But in both instances the passages in which the word is thus found refer, as do so many others in our Lord’s discourses generally, to the future rather than to the then present position of the disciples.

By whatever names they might be known, however, the personal followers of Christ were, in the days of our Lord Himself, the representatives of His Church, and the only persons entitled to be so considered.

That they were already members of that “Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all,”⁴ the Catholic or universal Church of Christ, may here be assumed. By outward religious profession, as we shall afterwards find, these men were still in all respects to be regarded as members of the Jewish polity. They worshipped in the Temple of Jerusalem, or in the Jewish synagogues, and worshipped after the

¹ Mat. xxviii. 19; xvi. 15.

² Mat, xxvii. 18; xviii. 17.

³ Cf. Bengel, Olshausen, Alford, *in loc.*; Trench’s Gr. Synonyms, sec. 1; Buxtorf, Synagoga, p. 517.

⁴ Eph. i. 22, 23.

manner of their fathers. Nor had they any separate organisation as disciples of Christ, or any religious rites and ceremonies which distinguished them from other Jews. This was their position all the time that Christ went in and out among them. The Christian Church, as a community, with institutions and observances peculiar to itself, was not founded till the mission of the Comforter on the great Day of Pentecost. But a distinction must be drawn between the Christian Church and the Church of Christ. The latter is a term which applies to the faithful in all ages, as well before Christ came in the flesh as after His decease; not excepting, of course, such of them as lived in the days when the Saviour personally ministered among men. All true believers are members of that Church, which, like Him who purchased it with His own blood, is essentially the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

But even of the Christian Church—the visible Church of the new dispensation—the personal followers of Christ were at the earliest period of their discipleship entitled to be regarded as representatives. When it was afterwards organised, they became its first members. They already formed its germ—the grain of mustard-seed of which the goodly plant was to be the development, and in which it was already contained; hidden, but not non-existent. I have referred to the fact that many of the same designations which were applied to the members of the Church after Pentecost were used

by our Lord in speaking of His personal followers in the time of His manifestation to Israel. They were "the disciples" before as after the mission of the Comforter; at both periods they bore the name of "brethren"; they were "the flock" of the Saviour at both periods. Nor did the formal institution of the external polity under which these men were eventually placed, with the vast accession to the number of believers in Christ which followed the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, or their participation in the gifts of the Spirit, or the remarkable progress which from thenceforward they began to make in spiritual knowledge, change their identity any more than it changed the names by which they had been previously known. There is an unbroken continuity in their religious history from first to last; that is, from the moment that they first obeyed the call of Christ, and became His personal followers, till we lose sight of them in the course of the apostolic age, at a time when the Church was already fully consolidated, and was gathering within its walls multitudes of persons in all parts of the world, who, unlike themselves, had never seen the Lord Jesus, and who only believed in Him through their word.

It remains here to be added that we do not know any other Church of the days now referred to than that which has just been indicated.

When we speak of the disciples of Christ as representing the Church in the time of the manifestation of our Lord in the flesh, it is not certainly to be

forgotten that these men formed no more than a section of a much larger body which itself claimed to be the Church of God—a body, too, from which, in regard to all external forms and institutions, they were not in any way distinguished. Any difficulty, however, which might be found in determining, on general principles, what position in the history of the period in question ought to be assigned to the unbelieving Jews, is obviated by the explicit statements on this point which were made by our Lord Himself. In its organisation, in its priesthood, in its rites and ceremonies and religious institutions, the Jewish Church, as a whole, retained as yet its integrity. But “they are not all Israel which are of Israel.”¹ The form of a Church including the whole Jewish people survived; but apart from the remnant of grace which attached itself to the ministry of our Lord, Judaism was without spiritual life. Her house was already left unto her desolate. It cannot be said that among those who as yet did not publicly confess Christ there might not be found true worshippers of God, or men who had true faith in the promises. We know that numbers of the Jews who remained aloof from the Saviour while He was still going in and out among them, afterwards, by joining themselves to the disciples, proved that they were not, at least, wholly reprobate. But our Lord Himself has left us no alternative but to conclude that, as a rule, the true Church of His own days, as far as it could

¹ Rom. ix. 6.

be recognised, found its representatives alone in His own disciples. "Every one that is of the truth," He said, "heareth my voice."¹ Again, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me."² Again, speaking to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye neither know me nor my Father; if ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also. . . . If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I came forth from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. . . . He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."³

By the Church in the time of our Lord is then here understood the little company—that is, *little* in comparison with what it has since become, and even in comparison with what one might have expected it then to be—which formed the following of our Lord in the days of His manifestation in the flesh. The circumstances in which the Church, as thus defined, was placed, were unprecedented, and have since remained, and must ever remain, without a parallel.

Special circumstances of the Church.

(1.) In the first place, these men were the witnesses of a series of events such as the world has only once seen throughout all its annals—a series of events so transcendent in their own nature, as in their results, that it is impossible to speak of them in any terms that must not appear inadequate.

¹ John, xviii. 47.

² John, x. 14.

³ John, viii. 45-47.

Their grandeur is best recognised in the forms invariably adopted by the whole of the evangelists. No reader of the Gospels can fail to be struck, not merely with the absence of everything approaching to inflated and declamatory expressions, but with the severe simplicity, almost coldness, of the language employed by these inspired writers in their relations of the most marvellous and stupendous facts of the history of our Lord. They sometimes report the wonder and astonishment expressed by the spectators of the miracles of Christ, or by those who listened to His doctrine. Thus, after the raising of the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue at Capernaum, the witnesses of the miracle are said to have been "astonished with a great astonishment."¹ When Christ stilled the tempest on the Galilean lake, "the men," we are told, " marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"² After another of the miracles, Peter, it is said, "fell down upon his knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,"—"for," it is added, "he was astonished, and all that were with him."³ So in like manner, on the occasion of one of our Lord's appearances after the resurrection, the disciples are described as at first "terrified and affrighted," and then "not able to believe for joy."⁴ The evangelists themselves, however, never, even by

¹ Mark, v. 42.

³ Luke, v. 8.

² Mat. viii. 27.

⁴ Luke, xxiv. 37, 41.

the use of so much as a single phrase inappropriate to ordinary history, invite the attention of their readers to the in fact inexpressible greatness of the events which it was their part to put on record for the instruction of the Church. No attempt is ever made to remind us how far those things which the personal disciples both saw and heard were things transcending the ordinary experiences of mankind. This remarkable repression of the tendency which all men must feel when they speak of the life of Him who was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world ; of His miracles and discourses ; His death and resurrection and ascension—not so much to employ the language of exaggeration, but rather to use words which shall at least come up to the occasion : this constant restraint upon themselves, as to any such tendency, is observable in all the evangelists. No one can for a moment suppose that it arose from any insensibility on their part to the true magnitude of the events of which they are the historians. Was it not that they felt that the facts speak for themselves ?

It is enough, then, to say that of all which our Lord Jesus was and did in the time of His manifestation to Israel, the men who constituted the Church of these days were the witnesses. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them, and they beheld His glory.¹ They were eyewitnesses of His majesty.² They heard with their own ears

¹ John, i. 14.

² 2 Pct. i. 16.

the voice of Him who spake as never man spake. They saw His miracles with their own eyes. He came into their houses; He sat at meat with them; He suffered them to minister to His necessities; He called them His friends, admitting them to His most intimate confidence in those hours which He spent in retirement from the world. Three of them were selected to witness His transfiguration,¹ and at a later period accompanied Him to the garden of Gethsemane, when, being in an agony, He prayed that if it were possible the cup which the Father had given Him to drink might pass from Him.² Some of them were present at the crucifixion, standing by when that sacrifice was offered by which the world has been redeemed.³ They were witnesses of the resurrection.⁴ To them He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days.⁵ They were also witnesses of the ascension. Accordingly, they could afterwards speak of the facts of the Gospel history in such language as that which we find in the writings of one who was probably the latest survivor of the personal disciples, and who, more than half a century after the death of Christ, addressing himself to a generation few of whom could have been born when our Lord died, thus dwelt with significant iteration on the memories of his early years: "That which was from the beginning," says St John, "*which we have heard, which we*

¹ Mat. xvii. 1.² Mat. xxvi. 37.³ John, xix. 25, 26.⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 5, 6.⁵ Acts, i. 3.

have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."¹ They were, in fine, those to whom our Lord Himself said, "Blessed are the eyes which see these things which ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them."²

(2.) Again, the members of the Church at this period were the immediate objects of the ministry of our Lord. I shall afterwards have occasion to inquire at some length into the true character and aims of the personal ministry. It may here be stated very generally, that with whatever distinctions—distinctions in the special aims contemplated by Him, and in the means by which they were carried out—our Lord Himself did fulfil in His own person a ministry analogous at least to that which He in other times commits to the instrumentality of men, and a ministry of which the persons who then constituted His Church on earth were the immediate objects. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we find the apostle alluding to divisions, or schisms, which had arisen in that Church, and which had led to the assump-

¹ 1 John, i. 1, 2.

² Luke, x. 24.

tion by the contending parties of distinctive names. He writes to them, "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." It has sometimes been supposed that the reference is to the ministries under which the persons who ranged themselves under these party names had been brought to the faith, and especially that by those who said they were "of Christ" are meant some of the original disciples of our Lord, or at least disciples who had been brought into personal relations with Him — as, *e. g.*, by having themselves seen Him in the flesh.¹ It is very doubtful if this represent the true meaning of the words. The distinctions between the different sections of the Church at Corinth which they were meant to express had probably reference to the doctrinal views rather than the personal relations of the different parties.² But the first disciples, the members of the Church in the days of our Lord, *were*, in point of fact, at that period, "of Christ," in very much the same sense that other believers in the succeeding age were "of Paul," or "of Apollos," or "of Cephas." For a time they lived under a ministry fulfilled by our Lord Himself, in very much the same way as, for instance, the believers in Ephesus, "by the space of three years," lived under the ministry of St Paul. To understand how truly this was the case, we have only to compare the remarkable

¹ Cf. 2 Cor. x. 7 ; 1 Cor. ix. 1. See Stanley, *Epp. to Cor.*, p. 29, 139, 428.

² Olshausen, *in loc.*

address in which Paul took leave of the elders of the Ephesian Church at Miletus with the prayer in which, before His death, our Lord commended His personal disciples to the Father. "Ye know," St Paul said to the representatives of "the flock" at Ephesus, . . . "after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. . . . And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."¹ How did our Lord speak of the personal disciples in His intercessory prayer recorded in John, xvii.? "I have manifested," He said, "Thy name to the men which Thou gavest me out of the world. . . . For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me. . . . While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled."² It is unnecessary, however, to prove a fact so apparent in every page of the Gospel as that the personal followers of Christ are not to be regarded only

¹ Acts, xx. 18-27.² John, xvii. 6-12.

as those who believed when He was Himself in the world, and were the witnesses of all that He did and taught and suffered, but were also the objects of the ministry which He then fulfilled. It is not to be imagined, certainly, that the ministry of our Lord during those years which, beginning from the baptism of John, continued to that same day when He was taken up into heaven, was intended exclusively for their benefit. It embraced, even among their contemporaries, many who, though He taught in their streets, and did among them such works as no other man ever did, never became His disciples. Above all, we shall find that it was not meant only for the Church in any one age, but for the instruction and edification of all mankind, however far removed by distance of place or time from the scene of the personal labours of our Lord: who certainly did not go about teaching in the towns and villages of Galilee, or in the city of Jerusalem, only for the benefit of the Church of that day—for the benefit of Peter, and James, and John, and Zaccheus, and Mary Magdalene, and Lazarus and his sisters—any more than He, for their sakes alone, offered on the cross that sacrifice by which He became a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. But these men and women were ministered to by Christ as no others ever were or can be; their relations to His ministry were direct, immediate, personal, in a sense which (except, to some extent, as regards their unbelieving contemporaries) is true of them

only among all mankind. For even those parts of the doctrine of Christ which have most obviously a universal application, and are most evidently meant for all the world, were first of all addressed to the personal disciples, and adapted to their special state and circumstances; and these disciples were the members of the Church in the time of our Lord.

(3.) I shall only refer in a single sentence to one other unprecedented characteristic of the Church at this period; namely, that among its members were the men whose destiny it was to become the founders of the future Christian Church. It is not only during the three years of the personal ministry of our Lord that the earliest followers of Jesus can be traced. Some at least of the disciples of the Gospels reappear in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Apostolical Epistles. They had an after-history—a history subsequent to the departure of Christ Himself out of the world, when they were placed under the guidance of “another Comforter,”¹ and in the midst of a new dispensation; an after-history not less remarkable than that of the days when our Lord was yet with them in person; an after-history, intimately connected with that of our Lord on the one hand, and the Church of all future times on the other. Into the proceedings of the apostles after the cessation of the personal ministry, it is not within the scope of the present volume to enter at all. But the work assigned to them in bearing testimony to the facts

¹ John, xix. 14.

of the life of our Lord, in making known His doctrine, and in instituting His Church, gives to the period of their history with which we *are* here exclusively concerned a character which, like all its other circumstances, is without a parallel in the annals of the Church of Christ.

What has now been said will serve in some degree to show the great importance belonging to the history of the Church in the time of our Lord, and will enable us to determine the nature of its more special claims to our attention.

What constitutes the true value of this period of Church history.

These claims, it must be carefully noticed, are, like the facts of the history itself, of an exceptional character. The narrative of the evangelists, even as far as it relates alone to the first disciples, has an importance in some respects which is exclusively its own. In other respects it will be found comparatively valueless. Thus, to take a single example, the history of the Church in later times, and especially in the immediately-succeeding age, is chiefly studied, and demands our most careful investigation, because it throws, or is generally supposed to throw, light upon many points connected with the organisation of the Christian Church, and with the forms of Christian worship, which have always since been matter of controversy. In the days of our Lord, the forms in use among the disciples, as regards Church government and divine worship, were anomalous and exceptional, and cannot be expected to furnish us with any direct pre-

cedents for our practical guidance in the application of the general principles laid down in Scripture on these points. It must not be forgotten, certainly, that as to both of them the instructions which our Lord addressed to the disciples are of invaluable importance.

It is hardly necessary to disclaim, on behalf of the history of the Church at this period, one kind of value which we might perhaps, *a priori*, have expected it to possess. We need not be surprised if men sometimes approach the annals of those days with the anticipation that here will be found—among other things unexampled in after-times—the portraiture of a perfect Church; a true communion of saints; a Church in which, if not as regards external prosperity, yet, as regards all spiritual graces and attainments, is realised the ideal of perfection set before us as the ultimate aim of believers in every age. The Saviour Himself was in the world. He had come down from heaven, and was dwelling among men. Might we not hope to discover that there was also, at such a time at least, dwelling among men, in her ideal purity, the mystical bride of Christ—she who is “arrayed in fine linen, clean and white”; “a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but . . . holy and without blemish.”¹ Might we not expect in the immediate followers of our Lord, in those who listened to His voice, and lived under His eye, and had at every moment before them His

¹ Rev. xix. 8; Eph. v. 27.

purity and glory, to find perfect models and exemplars of the Christian life? It need hardly be said that this we do not find. We do not find a perfect Church in any of those times which are sometimes called primitive—a term applied indefinitely to the first two or three centuries of our era. There never was a perfect Church of Christ on earth. As to the first disciples—with whom we are here especially concerned—it is no disparagement to these men to say that the greatness of their privileges was not the measure of their attainments. They were not without true faith; ardent love to their Master, for whom they made so many sacrifices; devoutness; purity; and blamelessness of life: it is inconceivable that they should have continued so long in intimate association with the Saviour without having imbibed something of His own spirit. The dispensation of the Personal Ministry, indeed, must otherwise have failed in accomplishing some of its chief aims. But they were neither saints to whom we owe a cultus subordinate only to the worship due to their and our common Master, nor (even after Christ) perfect models and exemplars of the Christian life. At most, they were men of like passions with ourselves, whose lot it was in extraordinary circumstances, as in a prominent position, to manifest, with the graces and virtues attainable by believers in every age of the world, the errors and weaknesses to which at all times believers are liable, and from which, even during our Lord's own

ministry on earth, they were not by any means exempt.

It is mainly, then, to the fact that it forms a part of the life of Christ Himself that the history of the Church at this period owes its importance. In this aspect its importance can hardly be overstated.

The disciples were the witnesses of Christ's life and passion; they lived at this time under His ministry; they were the persons primarily contemplated in His teaching—that teaching which was meant for all the world, but which was in the first instance addressed to them, and adapted to their special spiritual condition and external circumstances, nor can be rightly understood except when regarded in its relation to them. Their history throughout these eventful years cannot therefore be separated at any moment from that of the life on earth of our Lord Himself. At every moment it brings us into His presence; and it is impossible for us to follow the accounts of all that He began both to do and to teach in those days when, once for all, He, the Light of the world, manifested Himself for the enlightenment of all who in every age believe in His name, without at every moment taking it into account. The very weaknesses and errors of the first disciples in this way served an important purpose, and must receive special attention, having been the means of bringing out many aspects of the character of our Lord, and calling forth many of the lessons to be found in His

doctrine, which we have set before us in the Gospels, and which are of the greatest value to us.

Nor has the history of the Church in these days only indirect bearings on the life of our Lord. The history of the Church is a history of the ministry of Christ, as well as of those to whom He ministered. In the following pages we shall have direct occasion to speak of the Master even more than of His followers.

A few words as to the special purpose contemplated in the present work. The history of the Church in the time of our Lord is to be found in Aim of this Work. the narratives of the four evangelists. With the exception of some incidental statements in the Acts of the Apostles and the Apostolical Epistles, the only direct information of any value we possess on the subject is to be found in these inspired records. I set aside the Apocryphal Gospels as in every case destitute of authority of any kind. Some of them are evidently to be traced to a very early age, probably as far back as the latter half of the second century. It would be unwarrantable to describe them uniformly as forgeries, though this appears to be a true account of several of these travesties of the inspired books; some of them being written in the interest of heretical sects, others possibly in the interest of orthodoxy. Many of the spurious Gospels are probably to be included in the same class with the passion-plays of the middle ages, consisting of avowedly fictitious works, in which the Gospel history is made the

basis of narratives, for whose details their authors did not profess to be indebted to historical sources, but purely to imagination. It is to be doubted whether any of them even embodied ancient traditions, though it is certain that many traditions which in the course of time found currency in the Church, and which have been preserved in the Romish lives of the saints, in some Romish festivals, as that of the Immaculate Conception, and in the paintings of Raphael, and earlier as well as later masters in the department of sacred art, are derived from such writings as the 'Protevangelium of James' and the 'Acts of Pilate.' Even if they had not been destitute of any pretence to authenticity, the Apocryphal Gospels would have been worthless as materials for the history of the times of the ministry of our Lord. Most of them are professedly narratives of the events of the infancy and childhood of Jesus. None of them add anything to the facts to be found in the "Canonical Gospels," which is not either, if true, trivial and immaterial (as, *e. g.*, the names of the two malefactors who were crucified with our Lord, and some other names omitted by the evangelists), or self-evidently false—hardly anything to which both of these alternatives do not apply.¹ The traditions preserved in the writings of the early Christian fathers as to the first disciples,

¹ Tischendorf's *Evangelia Apocrypha*; Cambridge Essays, 1836, p. 153; *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations*—Clarke, 1870—introduction; Lardner's *Works*, vol. iv. 460-466; Jamieson's *Hist. of our Lord*, as exemplified in *Works of Christian Art*, *passim*; Didron, *Iconographie Chrétienne*, p. 4.

relate almost exclusively to their history after the close of the personal ministry. For the history of the Church during the period in question, as far as regards direct information on the subject, we must look almost alone to the Gospels, where that history is, in fact, told with a fulness and an authority which leaves us no reason to regret the absence of other sources of information.

In the following pages it is proposed not to attempt to rewrite the history of the Church of the time of our Lord, but to offer some illustrations of that history as it is already made known to us in the writings of the evangelists.

CHAPTER II.

PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.

AMONG the external circumstances in the midst of which the Church subsisted in the days of our Lord, it is especially necessary that we should take into account the actual condition of the Holy Land, that land which occupies in every way a pre-eminent position in the history of the Church at this period. Christ was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel ;¹ His disciples, as far as we know, were without exception Palestinian Jews ;² He never Himself during His ministry on earth, from the moment when as a child He was brought back from a temporary residence in Egypt, till He accomplished His death at Jerusalem, crossed, except on a single occasion, for apparently no more than a few days, the narrow boundaries of the land ; and the whole history of His ministry, with the very forms in which His teaching was embodied, bring us continually into contact with the physical aspects of the coun-

¹ Mat. xv. 24.

² Acts, ii. 7 ; Winer, *Biblisches Real-wörterbuch*, s. v. Hellenisten.

try, and the customs, manners, political institutions, and religious beliefs and usages of the people, as well as with whatever belongs otherwise to their social and national life. In attempting to set before the reader a very general view of the state of Palestine as it existed in those times, I shall of course confine myself to those aspects of the country and people which have more or less direct relation to the contemporary history of the Church.

Our sources of information on all such topics are, in the circumstances, unusually abundant and valuable. Let it, however, here be noticed that even under the most favourable conditions it is impossible to arrive at perfectly distinct, and at the same time accurate, conceptions of the actual condition of any country in an age so remote from our own as that with which we are here concerned—a fact to which it is the more necessary we should be careful to attend, because it is very apt to be constantly overlooked. Sufficient allowance is not, at all events, always made for it in our treatment of the difficulties which are confessedly found in the narratives of the evangelists, and which, it is certain, frequently arises, and may possibly arise more frequently than we think, simply from the unavoidable incompleteness of our knowledge of local circumstances and the circumstances of the times. The rule applies to every country in days remote from our own. It is impossible to ascertain so much as the physical conditions under which an ancient people lived, although here we have

the advantage to some extent of personal knowledge,—a thousand changes which take place in a country advancing, or even keeping its ground, in material prosperity on the one hand, on the other hand depopulation, the neglect of husbandry, the convulsions of nature, the ravages of war, the decay of forests, which no means have been taken to renew, and the disappearance of towns, harbours, bridges, roads, public monuments, in a land surrendered (as Palestine has in a great measure been for more than a thousand years) to all the destructive influences which time brings along with it, without any attempt to counteract them—transforming the very face of nature, obliterating ancient landmarks, depriving us of the means of identifying the most celebrated localities, and even, it is said, sometimes materially affecting the climate. Still more difficult is it, of course, to ascertain many of the other conditions of a national life which has long since perished. It is sometimes imagined that in their contemporary literature, their works of art, their architectural remains, their extant laws and other public documents, as well as in the formal histories of the times by writers who lived in the midst of the scenes and events which they describe, we have in some cases at least the means of knowing peoples long since extinct, as thoroughly as they were known by themselves. It is said that they are made to live again in those records. But statements of this kind are not to be accepted as more than partially true. No actual resurrection

of the past is possible in any case ; at best we exhume the dead body, and do not reanimate it with a living soul. Nor does Palestine, as it existed in the days of our Lord, form any exception to the law now referred to. Abundant sources of information as to its condition in many respects are, as has been already acknowledged, accessible to us, and from these much valuable knowledge has been obtained. Indeed the researches of the learned—men learned in every branch of science without exception—devoted for successive generations with unexampled industry to the illustration of a country and a period possessing so great an attraction to all thoughtful minds, have resulted in making Palestine in the age of our Lord almost as familiar to us as any other country or times but our own. Let it, however, be remembered to how little such an assertion at most amounts.

I. It is not necessary to attempt here to determine the precise boundaries of the country which in the time of our Lord was generally known as the Land of Palestine. This name was originally peculiar to that portion of the coast lying between Judea and the Mediterranean, which then was, as it had almost always been since the Israelites first entered Canaan, possessed by the Philistines ; but it had become the common designation of a much larger territory, including not only Philistia proper, but also the whole extent of the regions on both sides

Geography
of the Holy
Land.

of the Jordan, which were in the occupation of the Jews as a people. The name Palestine appears to have been commonly used in this extensive acceptation both by Jewish and heathen writers, as well as in coins and inscriptions, at the period with which we are here concerned.¹ What were the precise limits of the land inhabited at this time by the Jews, or regarded by them as their own country, is, however, a question into which it would be out of place to inquire in detail. By the land of Palestine may be understood generally that country which in the time of our Lord embraced the Roman province of Judea (including Samariā), the tetrarchite of Galilee, together with the districts of Peræa and Ituræa beyond Jordan. Such are in effect the limits assigned to his own country by Josephus.²

By its situation, the land allotted to that people whose destiny it was to exercise throughout its whole history so great an influence on the rest of the world, was placed "in the midst of the nations"³—that is, in the midst of those nations which at different periods in its annals, from first to last, were the most considerable nations of the earth. No country might have appeared to be more completely secluded from foreign intercourse. Standing midway between the two greatest empires of more ancient times—those of Assyria and

Position in relation to other countries.

¹ Reland, *Palæstina*, tom. i. p. 37-47.

² B. J., III. 3.

³ Ezek. v. 5.

Egypt—it was separated from each of them by the almost impassable barrier of a terrible desert. From the Western world, which at a later period gained predominance in civilisation and in power, it was shut out by the Mediterranean, with its almost harbourless coast.¹ No country, however, had in fact greater opportunities of communication with the rest of the world. Even the formidable natural ramparts by which Palestine was, in the language of the prophet, “hedged round about,” were typical signs of a spiritual separation between the Jews and the heathen world, rather than (as all their history proves) real impediments to intercourse with it: an intercourse for which abundant facilities, in one shape or another, always existed, and which always prevailed. It lay in or close to the ordinary path of communication between the West and the East—the path by which in times of peace the merchandise of these great divisions of the ancient world was carried, and also, often with disastrous results to the Hebrews, the route of their armies in times of war. Ewald has pointed out its favourable situation in reference to civilisation, “inasmuch as it lay on the coasts on whose innumerable promontories and islands all the higher and freer forms of the life of the Western nations manifested themselves,” and speaks of it as an absurd idea, that Palestine was cut off at any period from inter-

¹ Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 6; Stanley, *S and P.*, p. 112.

course with other nations ; showing that "either with or against their own wish, they must especially have been drawn into the busy whirl of life surging around the Mediterranean Sea."¹ About the time of our Lord, the facilities of intercourse with Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece, Macedonia, and even Italy, are abundantly proved by the rapid journeys of St Paul to and from many of those parts of the world, and especially by the names of the countries which, as we find from the New Testament, were accustomed to send Hellenistic representatives to the great festivals at Jerusalem.

In the small extent of its area, Palestine affords one of many illustrations of the fact that ^{Extent of} material conditions do not alone deter- ^{the country.} mine the space which a country will fill in the history of the world. Some very inconsiderable nations, as far as nations are measured by the number of square miles included in their territories, have at various periods exercised a paramount influence on the general progress of mankind. The narrowness of the limits of the Holy Land was not only, however, no hindrance, it was doubtless a help to the accomplishment of its destiny. Of this we ourselves are in some degree able to judge. One great purpose, for instance, contemplated in the creation of the Hebrew commonwealth, was the ultimate dissemination, through its means, of a knowledge of the true religion over all the earth. Now, for this end, the selection of a

¹ Ewald, *Gesch. d. Volkes Israel*, einleit. iv. § 2, 3.

small territory for the occupation of the people was a favourable condition rather than the reverse. That "the place was too strait for them"¹ itself formed the most powerful of all stimulants to foreign emigration, and thus aided other means for carrying out that dispersion of the Jews, far and wide, among the nations, which had so direct an influence in preparing the world for the Gospel. If we were better able to connect effects with their causes, and means with their end, we should no doubt find that, *in all respects*, the land was, whether by its extent or its other physical conditions, perfectly adapted to the accomplishment of the purposes to which it was set apart by Almighty God. It is chiefly, however, as a fact which must be constantly kept in mind, if we would intelligently follow the narrative of events in the history of our Lord's ministry, that the actual limits of the land of promise must here be noticed.

There are some differences in the measurements to be found in different authorities, these arising from differences in the principles adopted in determining the actual boundaries. But in any case the result is very much the same. Including the trans-Jordanic territories, Palestine may be described as about 180 miles in length, with a breadth of about 80 miles, and an area of about 15,000 square miles. Thus its superficial extent was equal to about one-fourth that of England (with Wales), and among the European states approxi-

¹ Isa. xlix. 20.

mated most nearly to Hanover, Belgium, or Switzerland. It was not a third of the extent of so inconsiderable a kingdom as Bavaria.¹

In those parts of the country with which the Gospel history brings us most in contact, it is important to notice that the distances from place to place were accordingly not by any means so great as might at first sight be imagined. Dean Stanley has noticed the surprise with which the traveller finds himself passing in the course of one day's journey from the capital of Judea to that of Samaria, and seeing such places as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron in a ride of eight hours.² Many particulars of the same kind will be found in an appendix to the second volume of Robinson's 'Researches,' and in Reland's 'Palæstina.' Reland has collected from the oldest extant itineraries (*e.g.*, the *Vetus Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum* [A.D. 333]), and from details furnished by Josephus, Arrian, Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, and the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius, as corrected by Jerome, valuable information as to the distances by the ancient roads—roads which were probably in use in the days of our Lord Himself. One or two examples may here be given. By these old roads the journey from Jerusalem to Neapolis, or Sychar, was 40 Roman miles, and from Sychar to the Lake of Tiberias 32 Roman miles. In accordance with this statement, it is mentioned by Josephus that

¹ Winer, BRW., s. v. Palästina ; Kitto, Phys. Geog., p. 7.

² S. and P., p. 114.

the journey between the two places occupied three days,¹ the ordinary rate of travelling being 25 Roman, or 23 English, miles a-day. From Jerusalem to Bethlehem the distance was 6 r. miles; from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, by Lydda, 71 r. miles; from Jerusalem to Jericho, 18 r. miles; from Jericho to the Dead Sea, 6 r. miles; thence to the part of the Jordan where our Lord was baptised by John,² 5 r. miles; and from the Jordan to Arabia Deserta (not improbably the scene of the Temptation), 25 Roman miles.³

Though thus so contracted in area, Palestine was (as of course in most respects it still is) characterised by the extraordinary diversity of physical character. variety in geographical structure, natural appearances, temperature, fertility, and vegetable and animal life which it exhibited—a fact of which we have abundant evidence in the wide range of illustration from the phenomena of nature to be met with in the figurative language both of the Old Testament prophets and of our Lord Himself, and to which every writer on the geography of Palestine has given prominence.

One of the peculiarities of the land in this respect, and one which in a great measure accounts for all the others, is found in the enormous differences of its elevation in different parts of the country, “from the Jordan valley, sunk 1300 feet *beneath the sea-line*, to the Maritime plain, thence

¹ Vita, § 52.

² See Gresswell, Diss., vol. ii. p. 196.

³ Reland, Palæstina, tom. ii. p. 401-425.

to the highland centre, averaging 1500 feet above the level of the sea, up to the northern mountain-range 10,000 feet high.”¹ As a rule, Palestine is a mountainous country ; every part of the higher lands, too, being more or less of an undulating character, and some of the heights extremely rugged and precipitous. But there are at the same time extensive plains, as that of Philistia on the sea-coast, measuring 40 miles in length, and having an average breadth of 15 miles ; the plain of Jericho ; and the great plain of Esdraelon, between Tabor and Carmel, celebrated in the history of the wars of Palestine in all periods of its history, from the times of Deborah and Barak to our own day. The differences of climate correspond to the other physical conditions of the land. They range from the tropical heat of the deep valley of the Jordan, where even in the depth of winter the thermometer marks from 60 to 80 degrees, or the plain of Zuweirah in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, at which place, during the same period of the year, Tristram found the ground carpeted with beautiful flowers in blossom, many of Abyssinian and South Arabian, and some of Indian types, to that of the heights of Lebanon and Hermon, covered with perpetual snow, and subject to snow-storms even in the month of May.² Nor are there only such extreme variations in the climate of

¹ Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, 12.

² Stanley, *S. and P.*, 127 ; Tristram, *Nat. Hist.*, 12 ; Thomson's *Land and Book*, 90.

Palestine. In some parts of the country there appears to be what Josephus calls a happy mingling of the seasons.¹ The plain of Gennesareth, on the Sea of Galilee, is especially thus distinguished. Ritter speaks of it as even at this day realising "the ideal of a perfect climate, . . . the nearest possible approach to a perpetual spring."² The greatest diversity, however, is found in the character of the country in relation to fertility. That upon the whole the Holy Land was remarkable for its fruitfulness, appears to be ascertained on sufficient evidence. It has been already noticed that even as regards the physical conditions of a country, one cannot always judge of its state in former times from present appearances. Neglect of cultivation, and the destructive agencies of nature itself, in the case of a land which requires, as Palestine appears to have done, the fostering aid of art to develop its productiveness, may turn even a fruitful land into a wilderness. But even at this moment, by all accounts, there are proofs in abundance of the former title of the Land of Promise to the attribute ascribed to it as "a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil-olive, and honey."³ What it was in the time of Christ, and before, may be gathered from contemporary history. Tacitus, for instance, says it was more fertile than Italy, not only yielding the fruits of his own country in pro-

¹ Jos., B. J., III. 10, § 8.

² Geog. of Palestine, Clarke's ed., ii. 240.

³ Deut. viii. 8.

fusion, but also producing balsam and palm-trees.¹ And in some places, as in the neighbourhood of Jericho and on the borders of the Sea of Galilee, its fruitfulness was unexampled. In the land of Gennesareth the soil resembled the climate, so that those plants which are naturally enemies to one another agreed together—walnuts, palms, figs, and olives.² But even in that day there were at the same time large tracts of desert, or land yielding only scant pasturage, and even of “bare, arid wilderness; an endless succession of shapeless, yellow, and ash-coloured hills, without grass or shrubs, without water, and almost without life.”³

It might be desirable to introduce here some notice of the construction of the cities and towns of the Holy Land. Our information on this subject is, however, very scanty. There are comparatively few architectural remains which can be traced to the time of Christ, and of these comparatively few have been as yet explored; and the details which can be collected from other sources are not numerous. Several of the larger cities had been built or restored by the Herods, and contained magnificent palaces and other public buildings, of which some general account is found in Josephus. They were constructed after Roman or Grecian models. It is probable that the purely Jewish towns, as a rule, differed little from those which

¹ Tacitus, *Hist.*, v. 6.

² *Jos.*, B. J., III. 10, § 8.

³ Van de Velde's *Syria and Palestine*, ii. 99, quoted in *Smith's Dict. of Bible*, s. v. *Palestine*.

are still to be found in the East.¹ In a paper by Captain Wilson, in the recent narrative of explorations and discovery in the Holy Land, entitled 'The Recovery of Jerusalem,' some interesting particulars as to the towns of Galilee will be found. The following is Captain Wilson's account of the ruins of Chorazin: "Many of the dwelling-houses," the writer says, "are in a tolerably perfect state, the walls being in some cases 6 feet high; and as they are probably the same class of houses as that in which our Saviour dwelt, a description of them may be interesting. They are generally square, of different sizes—the largest measured was nearly 30 feet—and have one or two columns down the centre to support the roof, which appears to have been flat, as in the modern Arab houses. The walls are about 2 feet thick, built of masonry or of loose blocks of basalt. There is a low doorway in the centre of one of the walls, and each house has windows 12 inches high, and 6½ inches wide. In one or two cases the houses were divided into four chambers."² Of the ruins at Tel Hum, which he identifies with Capernaum, the same explorer says: "The synagogue, built entirely of white limestone, must once have been a conspicuous object, standing out from the dark basaltic background. It is now nearly level with the surface, and its capitals and columns have been for the

¹ Renan, *Vie de Jesus*, 23.

² *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 1870, 347.

most part carried away or turned into lime. The original building is 74 feet 9 inches long, by 56 feet 9 inches wide. It is built north and south, and at the southern end has three entrances. In the interior we found many of the pedestals of the columns in their original positions, and several capitals of the Corinthian order buried in the rubbish. There were also blocks of stones which had evidently rested on the columns, and supported rafters. . . . It may be asked what reason there is for believing the original building to have been a Jewish synagogue, and not a temple or church? Seen alone, there might have been some doubt as to its character, but compared with the number of ruins of the same character which have lately been brought to notice in Galilee, there can be none. Two of these buildings have inscriptions in Hebrew over their main entrances—one in connection with a seven-branched candlestick, the other with figures of the paschal lamb, and all without exception are constructed after a fixed plan, which is totally different from that of any church, temple, or mosque in Palestine. . . . If Tel Hum be Capernaum, this is without doubt the synagogue built by the Roman centurion. . . . It was not without a strange feeling that, on turning over a large block, we found the pot of manna engraved on its face. . . . Around the synagogue, and stretching up the gentle slope behind, are the ruins of the ancient town, covering a larger extent of ground than we had been prepared to expect.

The whole area, half a mile in length by a quarter of a mile in breadth, was thickly covered with the ruined walls of private houses, amongst which we thought we could trace a main street, leading in the direction of Chorazin.”¹

II. Such were some of the physical conditions of the land. I now pass on to a brief account of the population by which it was inhabited in the time of our Lord.

The inhabitants of Palestine. That the country was very thickly peopled, we have every reason to believe. Josephus, speaking of Galilee alone, describes the cities there as lying very close, and the very numerous villages as so populous, by reason of the richness of the soil, that the least of them contained above 15,000 inhabitants.² According to the same authority, the number of towns and villages in Galilee was 204.³ The district of Carmel was so populous that the town of Jamnia and the neighbouring hamlets could furnish 40,000 soldiers.⁴ The population of Galilee has been computed as amounting at this period to a little above 3,000,000 souls.⁵ This was probably about one-half of the total population of Palestine; but, if not in the same degree as the northern tetrarchy, both Judea and Samaria were also very full of people.⁶ The ordinary inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem num-

¹ Recovery of Jerusalem, 344.

² B. J., III. 3, § 2.

³ Vita, § 45.

⁴ Strabo, Geog., xvi. 2, § 28.

⁵ Gresswell Diss., ii. 270.

⁶ Jos., B. J., III. 3, § 4; Tacit., Hist., v. 8.

bered as many as 200,000 persons. Mr Gresswell's estimate that the gross population of the three divisions of the country, including Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, did not fall short of 6,000,000, an estimate founded on various independent calculations, cannot be far from the truth, and is corroborated by the statement of the numbers who perished at the siege of Jerusalem under Titus. If the testimony of Josephus may be depended on, the total loss of life on the part of the Jews during the siege was 1,356,460, and to this list of the killed we must add, as included in the sufferers by the Jewish war, at Jerusalem alone, upwards of 100,000 prisoners.¹

The population of Palestine at the commencement of the Christian era was, as it had ^{Jewish} always to a considerable extent been, ^{population.} composed of various, and in some respects incongruous, elements. Very much the greater number of the inhabitants were Jews or Hebrews, the descendants of the race to which, two thousand years before, the land had been given under circumstances and for purposes which are familiar to every reader of the Old Testament. To what extent there was an admixture of Gentile blood even in the strictly Jewish population, it is impossible to determine with exactness. It could not have occurred otherwise than as an exception to the general rule. Notwithstanding confident assertions to the contrary,² the Jews at this time

¹ Jos., B. J., VI. 9, § 3; Milman's Hist. of the Jews, iii. 7.

² Renan, Vie de Jesus, 22.

may be regarded as truly children of Abraham—children by descent as well as in name. That there had been frequent intermarriages between native Jews and the women of other countries, at all periods of the history of the chosen family, is well known. But, except in the case of the priests,¹ such unions were not as a rule forbidden by the law of Moses. There was a special prohibition of the marriage of an Israelite with a Canaanite;² and after the return from Babylon, the prohibition was extended to the Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines, public opinion having also from that period discountenanced all such intermixtures of blood.³ Intermarriage with the heathen was not otherwise forbidden, and, especially as regarded the union of an Israelite with a foreign woman, had all along occasionally occurred, finding its justification in the example not only of Solomon and Joseph, but of Moses himself.⁴ But we do not find, either in the discourses of our Lord or in the writings of St Paul, even when the occasion would most probably have called forth such a fact, had it existed, any imputation to the effect that the Jews of those days were as a people otherwise than true Hebrews by descent. Up to the destruction of Jerusalem, the genealogies of the different families appear to have been carefully preserved. Josephus takes care to mention that he had trans-

¹ Jos., *Contra Ap.* I. 7.

² Exod. xxiv. 16.

³ Neh. xiii. 23, 25; Jos. *Antiq.*, XII. 4, § 6; Tacitus, *Hist.*, v. 8.

⁴ *Dict. of the Bible*, s. v. Marriage.

cribed the account of his own family from the public records.¹

Although, however, consisting chiefly of Hebrews, the population of Palestine at this period was, as has been said, a mixed population; and it is of some importance we should attend to the large numbers of non-Jewish inhabitants. I shall afterwards speak of the Samaritans, whose position was exceptional. I refer at present exclusively to the strictly heathen element in the population of Palestine. A number of causes must have tended to introduce considerable numbers of the Gentile races into the land of the Jews. (1.) The country was on every side surrounded by, and in many directions in close proximity with, heathen nations. Thus, on the Mediterranean coast, the Maritime plain, though originally granted to the chosen people, and now placed under the same Roman governor as Judea, had been always, with brief intervals, retained in the possession of the Philistines; and the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, with which the Jews had constant commercial intercourse, formed the territory of the Phœnicians, a people addicted to heathen worship in its grossest forms. The Syrians in the north, and the nomad races beyond Jordan, were in like manner heathens, and among their nearest neighbours. (2.) Again, the frequent occupation of the country in comparatively recent times by foreign conquerors must be taken into account. Thus we know that the Græco-Syrian settlers,

¹ Vita, § 1; Contra Ap. I. 7.

established in Judea by Antiochus Epiphanes, were never wholly dispossessed even during the reign of the Maccabees.¹ (3.) There were other causes in the encouragement given by the Herods to foreign immigration and foreign customs, and in the fact that at this moment the greater part of the country was in the condition of a Roman province, under a resident Roman governor, and garrisoned by troops belonging to the armies of Rome.

Of the fact at least that foreigners were at this time found in considerable numbers in Palestine, and even in those parts of the country which were strictly Jewish territory, we have ample evidence. Probably the Judæan city which had the largest heathen population was Cæsarea. That city was the headquarters of the Roman garrison. The foreign troops stationed at Cæsarea, which never amounted to so much as a legion, or 6000 men,² consisting partly of Italian,³ but at least invariably of non-Jewish cohorts, did not by any means constitute the chief part of its heathen inhabitants. As the seat of government and the usual residence of the governor, very many foreigners of all classes, in ever-increasing numbers, were naturally led to take up their residence within its walls and in the neighbouring villages.⁴ Cæsarea, indeed, had been more a Gentile than a Jewish city from the time of its foundation; Herod the Great, by whom it

¹ Milman, *Hist. of Jews*, ii. 58.

² Ewald, *Geschichte d. Volkes Israel*, v. 13.

³ Acts, x. 1, xxviii. 1.

⁴ Ewald, *ut supra*, 13.

was built, having colonised it from the first chiefly with foreigners.¹ The theatre, amphitheatre, and temple dedicated to Cæsar, which were among the magnificent public buildings it owed to its founder,² afford significant evidence of the prevailing character of the population. Josephus describes it in his day as “a very great city of Judea, for the most part inhabited by Greeks.”³ That the Greek language was spoken in Cæsarea, and the Greek version of the Scriptures used in the synagogue there, is sometimes noticed as indicating the extent of the heathen population ;⁴ but we shall afterwards find that such a rule was not peculiar to those cities of Palestine in which foreigners and foreign customs obtained a footing.

Even in and around Jericho, to turn to another part of the country, though this “city of palm-trees”⁵ was then one of the most important stations of the Jewish priesthood, where no fewer than 12,000 priests had their ordinary residence,⁶ the number of foreigners was also considerable. Strabo speaks of the whole plain as inhabited by mixed tribes of Egyptians, Arabians, and Phœnicians ;⁷ and here, we know, were the same heathen customs in use as in Cæsarea—the hippodrome and amphitheatre of Jericho having a peculiar interest in connection with the circumstances of the

¹ Milman, ii. 112.

² Jos., Antiq., XV. 9, § 6 ; XVI. 5, § 1. ³ B. J., III. 9, § 1.

⁴ Smith's Dict. of the Bible, s. v. Cæsarea. ⁵ Deut. xxxiv. 53.

⁶ Lightfoot, Works, x. 94. ⁷ Geog. xvi. 2, § 34.

death of Herod the Great,¹ which took place in the royal palace of this city. The number of Egyptians is accounted for by the fact that the revenues of this rich district had for some time been in the possession of Cleopatra, to whom they had been assigned by her lover, Mark Antony.

As to the region of Decapolis, the facts are notorious. Decapolis was within the limits of Israel, though for the most part lying beyond the Jordan, and not only sent multitudes to hear our Lord's discourses in Galilee, but was visited by Him personally on more than one occasion. The cities which gave this name to the district were in every case *chiefly* inhabited by Gentiles.² Josephus calls them "Grecian" or "Syrian" cities:³ not that they did not also possess a certain proportion of Jews among their ordinary inhabitants.⁴ They were, in fact, so truly heathen, that they were exempt from the operation of the Mosaic code, and, as regarded local administration, subjected to laws peculiar to themselves.⁵ Let me extract from Lightfoot some of the particulars noted by that learned author as to the principal cities of Decapolis. Bethshean, or Scythopolis, lying west of the Jordan, was "always inhabited by heathens."⁶ Hippo, situated not far from Tiberias, "was replenished with Greeks, but not a few Jews mixed

¹ Jos., B. J., I. 23, § 6, 8.

² Lightfoot, Works, x. 24, 240.

³ Antiquities, XVII. 11, § 4.

⁴ Ibid., 144.

⁵ Winer, BRW., s. v. Decapolis.

⁶ Lightfoot, Works, x. 240.

with them.”¹ “That Pella was inhabited by heathens, the words of Josephus make plain. The Jews recovered these cities of the Moabites from the enemy. . . . But [Pella] they overthrew them because the inhabitants would not endure to be brought over unto the customs of the country. Behold the citizens of Pella vigorously heathen, so that their city underwent a kind of martyrdom, if I may so call it, for retaining their heathenism! And when it was restored under Pompey it was rendered back to the same citizens, the same Josephus bearing witness.”² Gadara, again, “was of heathen jurisdiction.” . . . “Hence we are not afraid to pronounce that possessed Gadarene (Mat. v.) to be a heathen.”³ It must be added, however, that in the region of Decapolis there were intermingled with these “Grecian” cities, inhabited chiefly by Gentiles, many towns which were inhabited principally or exclusively by Jews.⁴

Decapolis was partly situated within the borders of Galilee; but it was not only in that region that the northern province was characterised by features which justify the name assigned to it by the prophet—namely, “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Isa. ix. 1, 2; Mat. iv. 15). There is evidence that Cæsarea Philippi in the extreme north,⁵ with Tiberias, Magdala, and other cities on the Lake of Gennesareth, were full of Gentiles; and it is

¹ Lightfoot, Works, x. 144.

² Ibid., x. 242. ³ Ibid., x. 241.

⁴ Winer, BRW., *ut supra*.

⁵ Reland, ii. 918; Lightfoot, x. 244.

not improbable that the disrepute in which the Galileans were held by the natives of Judea is attributable to the extent in which a heathen element was found in the population of that division of Palestine generally. Among the indications of the number of heathens in the cities around the Sea of Galilee is the prevalence there of a class of outcasts—the “sinners” of the Gospel—which, with all their immorality, were always discountenanced by the Jews. We have unusually full information as to Tiberias. Tiberias was the capital of the tetrarchy, and one of the greatest cities in Palestine. It had been built by Herod Antipas, after the birth of our Lord, and was situated within a few miles of the principal scene of the Saviour’s ministry, though we have no reason to believe that it was ever visited by Him. Josephus speaks expressly of its “Greek” inhabitants.¹ Herod himself had passed most of his early life in Italy, and though by religious profession a Jew, was a foreigner by descent, and all his sympathies were with foreign manners and customs. His gorgeous palace, with its gilded roof and walls adorned with idolatrous sculptures, was destroyed in the Jewish war as offensive to the religious feelings of the nation; but the fact that the city was ceremonially unclean, as being built on the site of a place of sepulture, must alone have limited the proportion of its Jewish inhabitants.²

¹ Vita, § 12.

² Smith’s Dict. of Bible, s. v. Tiberias; Jos., Vita, sec. 12; Reland, Palæstina, ii. 1036.

So much with regard to the purely heathen population of Palestine, a characteristic of the country not unrecognised in the teaching of our Lord, who frequently alluded to the heathen as a class with whom His followers were accustomed to be brought into intimate relations.¹ It is not possible to determine what proportion of these Gentiles of Palestine were proselytes to Judaism. The majority probably clung, like the inhabitants of Pella, to their own faith and forms of worship. But there was an important section of the people who, though of heathen extraction, cannot be described as either holding by the religion of their fathers, or as having adopted that of the country in which they were settled. Their history, as part of the ordinary population of Palestine, goes back to a period of about 700 years before Christ, when, after the deportation of the ten tribes from the kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians, the portion of the Holy Land which had been possessed by them, being thus left utterly desolate, received from its conquerors a colony of Cuthites and other strangers to supply the place of its former inhabitants. "The king of Assyria," we are told, "brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof."² Instructed by a priest of the captive tribes, sent to

¹ Mat. xi. 7, &c.

² 2 Kings, xvii. 24.

them at their own request from Assyria for the purpose, in the "manner of the God of the land" of which they had received possession, they, from an early period, adopted some of the religious beliefs and forms of worship of the Israelites, but adopted these after a fashion with which the cities of Samaria had previously been too familiar. "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods";¹ and after this manner they continued openly to attempt to reconcile the worship of Jehovah with idolatry for many generations,² if indeed they ever wholly abandoned it. The Samaritans of the time of Christ, the descendants of this mixed race of colonists, are found, at this period, as much a separate people as in the earliest years of the history of their fathers—a people almost completely isolated from their Jewish fellow-countrymen. They were regarded even by our Lord Himself as aliens in blood³ and in religion;⁴ and by the Jews generally they were treated with an aversion which they did not fail to reciprocate. The mutual enmity between the races found expression on both sides not only in occasional acts of open hostility, but in their refusal, at all times, to hold any intercourse with each other. That the unneighbourly feeling referred to by the woman of Samaria in the words, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" was stronger on the part of the older race, appears from the Gospel history, no less than the fact that in some

¹ 2 Kings, v. 33.² 2 Kings, v. 41.³ Luke, xvii. 18.⁴ John, iv. 24.

respects the Samaritans showed a more religious spirit. The good seed sown at Sychar by our Lord Himself, afterwards bore fruit in the early Church established in Samaria by the apostles. It may be added that the Samaritans held only a few towns and villages in the central part of the division of Palestine, from which they derived their name, that their numbers were not considerable,¹ and that they appear to have had their full share in the calamities, if they partook of few of the privileges, of the people among whom they dwelt as strangers.

III. It is impossible to form any just conception of the condition of Palestine at this period without taking into account the intimate relations with the rest of the world into which it was brought by means of its foreign colonies, the Jews of the Dispersion.

The Jews
of the Dis-
persion.

At how early a period of their annals enforced or voluntary emigration from their native land, on the part of the Israelites, began to take place on any extensive scale, is a question which need not here be considered. The date at which the history of the Dispersion properly begins is that of the conquest of the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, about the year B.C. 606: though perhaps the conquest and deportation, a hundred and fifty years earlier, of the ten tribes, notwithstanding the obscurity in which the fate of these tribes is involved, may be regarded as part

¹ Jos., Ant., XVIII. 4, § 1; B. J., III. 7, § 32.

of the same great epoch in Jewish history. The conquest in the former, as in the latter case, was followed by an extensive expatriation of the inhabitants, and their removal to the land of their conquerors. The deportation of Judah was certainly not so complete as that of Israel. A remnant of the poor of the land was left to be employed as vine-dressers or husbandmen,¹ but otherwise the land was emptied of its inhabitants. Two separate deportations are mentioned in the Book of Kings, with an interval between them of ten years. In the first case the captives numbered 10,000, including all the princes of Judah, 7000 "men of might," 1000 craftsmen and smiths, with all that were strong and apt for war;² and in the second, after another siege of Jerusalem, when the city with the temple itself was burned to the ground, embraced, with the exceptions already referred to, all the inhabitants of the country.³ When after a long captivity, extending to about seventy years, the Jews were permitted to return to their own land, only about a third of the people availed themselves of the privilege. The generation which had been carried away captive had already died out, and the new generation had formed ties and acquired interests in Babylon which proved stronger than the love of their country. Time passed on. The Babylonian Jews were by various means dispersed over many lands, and the colonies thus formed continued in the different periods of disaster to which Judea

¹ 2 Kings, xxv. 12. ² 2 Kings, xxiv. 13-16. ³ 2 Kings, xxv. 11.

was again and again exposed, as well as at all times to receive considerable accessions from the mother country. Many Jews doubtless left Judea of their own accord to push their fortunes abroad. Other causes concurred to swell the numbers of the Dispersion. Alexander the Great, who had transported 8000 Samaritans to Thebes as escorts, also made use of Jewish soldiers in his armies. Ptolemy I. carried away very many prisoners from Judea to Egypt, placing no fewer than 30,000 of them as garrisons in his strong places in different countries. As an example of the manner in which the Jews of the Dispersion were more and more scattered through foreign nations, we find Seleucus Nicator transporting many of the Jews who had already been soldiers in his armies into those cities which he built in Asia and lower Syria, as especially into his new capital, Antioch, where he gave them the same privileges as the Macedonians and the Greeks,¹ and where a great Jewish community is afterwards discovered. Again, we read that Antiochus the Great transported 2000 Jews out of Mesopotamia and Babylonia into the territories of Lydia and Phrygia, because he could trust their fidelity. The exigencies of commerce and trade were also the occasion of their wider and wider dispersion.² The general result was, that in the days of our Lord, and even before these days, Jews were found often in great numbers residing as a part of the permanent population in almost every

¹ Jos., Antiq., XII. 3, § 1.

² Ewald, Geschichte, iv. 263.

city throughout the wide extent of the Roman empire, and even beyond it ; or, in other words, the most considerable part of the world, certainly in all those places which were the most considerable in point of influence. From the writings of Philo, we learn that at this period Judea had colonies in Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, and also the more distant regions of Pamphylia, Celicia, Bythinia, and the furthest corners of Pontus ; in Thessaly and Bœotia, and Macedonia, Ætolia, and Attica, and Argos, Corinth, and all the most fertile and the wealthiest districts of Peloponnesus ; in all the most celebrated islands, as Eutæa, and Cyprus, and Crete,—to say nothing of countries beyond the Euphrates. As to the latter, the same author says, except a very small portion, all of these countries, including Babylon and every one of the Satrapies which possessed any advantages of soil and climate, had Jews settled in them.¹ Their numbers were very great in many of these foreign settlements. In Rome, about this time, the Jewish colony became so formidable in point of number that it was found necessary, in the reign of Claudius (41-54 A.D.), to issue a decree of banishment against them as a source of danger to the peace of the city.² In Alexandria, according to Philo, they constituted two-fifths of the population ; and on the same authority, the Jews throughout Egypt numbered not fewer than one million souls.³

¹ Philo, *De Legat. Ad Caium*, xxxvi.

² Acts, xviii. 2 ; Suet. *Claud.*, 25. ³ *Contra Flaccum*, § 87.

This is not the place to speak of the important influence which the Jews of the Dispersion exercised on the foreign peoples among whom they lived, and the great part they thus fulfilled in preparing the world for the Gospel. Let it only be said in passing that that influence can hardly be over-estimated. Wherever they went the Jews carried the faith of their native land with them; they carried with them the Holy Scriptures; and the Holy Scriptures, not only in the Hebrew, but after the Greek translation, known as the Septuagint, came into use (circ. 150 B.C.);¹ in a version in which the truths of the Old Testament revelation were presented in a language almost everywhere spoken throughout the civilised world; and wherever they lived they erected synagogues for their acts of worship, and for the public reading of the Scriptures, which were open to, and not unfrequented by, the heathen.² Nor though, as a rule, all Jews were looked upon with prejudice, and often hatred, by the heathens, did they in foreign lands live in a state of isolation from their Gentile fellow-citizens, whose civil privileges they for the most part shared on equal terms, and with whom they were in many ways brought into the most intimate relations.³ The facilities thus given for the general diffusion of the knowledge of revealed truth, did not fail to be followed by important consequences. Vast numbers of proselytes were to

¹ Lightfoot, Works, iv. 179, *ff.*

² Acts, xiii. 14, *sq.*, &c.

³ Jos., Ant., XVIII. c. 10.

be found in all foreign cities.¹ In Damascus, for instance, it is said that almost all the women were proselytes.² We have evidence that, before the advent of Christ, Messianic expectations prevailed over almost the whole Roman empire ;³ and many traces of a partial acquaintance with the Old Testament Scriptures are to be found in contemporary heathen literature.⁴ Above all, we see the effects of the Jewish dispersion in the rapid propagation of the Gospel in heathen lands under the preaching of the apostles.

It is, however, with the relations of the Hellenists, not so much to the world beyond Palestine, but rather to their brethren in the mother country, that we are here concerned. And the influence they exerted on their fellow-citizens in Rome, or Athens, or Corinth, or Alexandria, or Antioch, or Babylon, however momentous in its results, cannot be dwelt upon in this place. Its connection with the history of the Church belongs rather to the after-age than to the epoch of the personal ministry. It is more to our present purpose that we should keep in view the influence of the Jews of the Dispersion on the actual condition at this moment of Palestine itself. That influence could not fail to be of the most important nature. The Hellenistic Jews were in every way ready means of communication

¹ Tac., An., ii. 85 : Hist., v. 5 : Philo, Leg., § 323 : Jos., Ant., XIII. 9, § 1 ; II, § 3 ; 15, § 4.

² Jos., B. J., II. 10, § 2.

³ Suet., Vita Vesp., c. iv. ; Tac., Hist., v. 13.

⁴ See Hengstenberg, Christology, Clarke's ed., iv. 272, ff.

between the outer world and the Holy Land; a channel through which impressions both good and evil must have been always passing to Palestine from the great centres of intellectual, political, social, and religious life among the most cultivated, and at the same time the most corrupt, peoples of the earth. It is sometimes imagined that the Palestinian Jews in the time of our Lord were wholly beyond the range of those ideas which prevailed in the world at large. If we had no other facts in our possession than those connected with the Dispersion, we should have sufficient means of exposing the grossness of such an error.

That the Hellenistic Jews, born and living most of their lives in heathen lands, speaking their language, familiar with their customs, acquainted with their literature, and partaking in their advantages and disadvantages, had at the same time intimate relations to Palestine, need hardly be said. Even those of them who belonged to families which for generations had been naturalised in the lands of their residence, had not by any means broken up all connection with their brethren in Judea. Apart from the sentiment of patriotism that formed a ruling passion in the heart of every descendant of Abraham, the forms of their religion associated all Jews over the whole world together by the most intimate ties. Thus the holy tax, or the impost for the maintenance of the temple-worship, was as regularly transmitted to Jerusalem from those Jews who had their residence in foreign

countries, as it was collected within the bounds of the Holy Land itself.¹ Above all, however, representatives of the Hellenistic Jews formed at all times an important integral part of the actual population of Palestine.

In the first place, we must take into consideration the numbers who visited Jerusalem from time to time for the purpose of being present at the great religious festivals. By the Old Testament law, every Jew of full age was required every year to "appear before the Lord," or to go up to the holy city and to the temple at the times of the three Pilgrimage Feasts, as they were called—namely, the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. It was of course impossible that this rule could be rigidly observed by all foreign Jews. But it seems to have been at least so far complied with by them, that the Hellenists were as a rule represented among the worshippers at the feasts by a very large number of persons from all parts of the world. Mr Gresswell estimates the number of the Jews of the Dispersion who attended the passover, A.U. 819, at not less than 1,000,000,² or a third of the whole body of worshippers. That it was customary for them to attend the other feasts as well as the passover in large, if not in equally large, numbers, is well known.³ It is probable that those Jews who came up to Jerusalem from more distant countries, and

¹ Ewald, *Geschichte*, iv. 275.

² *Diss.*, ii. 272.

³ *Acts*, ii. 5, *sq.*

whose attendance was necessarily irregular, remained in the country, on such occasions, for a longer period than others—perhaps long enough to admit of their presence at more than one of the feasts. But in any event, from the Jewish new year's day to the end of harvest, the period at which, with intervals of about two months, the great feasts were held, large numbers of foreign Jews every year found their way to Jerusalem, and both there and in their journeys to and fro must have been brought into close contact with the Palestinian Jews generally.

We must also, however, in the second place, recollect that many Hellenists appear to have been always found among the permanent population of Judea. It seems probable that the Jews, "out of every nation under heaven," who "were dwelling (*κατοικοῦντες*) in Jerusalem" at the time of the miracle of Pentecost, consisted, at least in part, of ordinary residents.¹ It was natural that, from love of country or religious feeling, Jews of the Dispersion should frequently be led to return permanently to the fatherland to spend their last days in the country which they never ceased to regard as their true home, and where they could alone fully enjoy the privileges of their religion. A special motive to such a course operated at this time in the general expectations entertained by the Jews that the reign of the Messiah was now at hand. And the banishment of the Jews from Rome in the reign of Clau-

¹ Acts, ii. 5; De Wette, *in loc.*; Meyer, *in loc.*

dius, already referred to, suggests to us other possible reasons for the same fact—a fact which is sufficiently established by the account in the Acts of the Apostles of the appointment of the seven deacons in the early Christian Church at Jerusalem.¹ Not only do we there find Grecians as well as Hebrews among the regular members of the Jerusalem Church at that period, but, if one may judge from their names, the whole of the new officers then appointed to administer the funds of the community were Hellenistic Jews.

IV. In connection with the last topic, a few words Language must be said on a subject of very great of Palestine. interest, especially in so far as the actual state of the Holy Land at this period has relations to the history of the Church.

The mother tongue of Palestine in the time of our Lord was, as it had been for an uncertain period previously, Syro-chaldaic, or what is known as Aramaic.² This was sometimes called “the Hebrew tongue,”³ and might not improperly be so designated, being the vernacular language of the Hebrews *of that day*. The *ancient* Hebrew, however, had now ceased—had ceased probably since the time of the Captivity, but at all events for a considerable period—to be spoken in the Holy Land, or even to be understood, except by the

¹ Acts, vi. 1.

² Westcott, in Smith's Dict. of Bible, s. v. New Testament, ii. 531; Winer, Gram., i. sec. 3.

³ Luke, xxiii. 38; Acts, xxi. 40, &c.

learned. Accordingly, we find that in the synagogues when the Hebrew Scriptures were read in the original dialect, it was a part of the duty of the Reader to interpret them, or to translate them into a language more generally known.¹ While, however, Aramaic was the mother tongue of Palestine, it was not the only language in common use among the Palestinian Jews.

At this period, over almost the whole Roman Empire, either alone or side by side with the national dialect, the language of ancient Greece was employed as a kind of universal language. To a very great extent, indeed, there was now, and not without results which justify us in ascribing the fact to the special interposition of Providence, a temporary suspension, as it were, of the laws by which, since the times of the building of the tower of Babel, the language of men had been "confounded." Again, for a time, "the whole earth was of one speech, and of one language."² We have found that Greek was the dialect in use among the Jews of the Dispersion, who were indeed thence called Hellenists. Why was it so employed by them, but because it formed a common dialect in all the lands throughout which they were scattered? It was, of course, spoken in Macedonia and Achaia as the native language. It was spoken in the many Greek colonies which existed in Asia Minor and else-

Greek a
universal
language in
the time of
Christ.

¹ Lightfoot, xii. 276; Vossius, de Sybillinis Oraculis, c. xvi; cf. Neh. vii. 8.

² Gen. xi. 1, ff.

where. It was spoken in Antioch and Alexandria, the former capitals of the Ptolemys and Seleucidæ, and throughout Syria and Egypt. It was spoken in Rome, where it threatened to bring into disrepute the native Latin, and more or less in all the dependencies of the Roman empire.¹ That it was in more general use in those countries which were directly related to Greece, or where there met together the greatest variety of races, or where there was most intercourse with the rest of the world, is probable; but that Greek was almost universally understood and employed over the Roman empire at this time, is a fact for which there is abundant evidence.

That Palestine was no exception to the rule, or, in other words, that Greek was also in use there—not alone, but side by side with the mother tongue—as in other parts of the world, must, even if we had no direct evidence, appear highly probable. Let me only refer to the two following considerations: (I.) There were all the same reasons for the prevalent use of Greek in the case of Palestine, as in almost any of the other countries in which that language is known to have been at this time a current form of speech. Thus, even in comparatively recent times, the Holy Land had been brought under the rule of Grecian monarchs, and occupied, often for long periods, by their troops and peoples.²

¹ Roberts's Discussions on the Gospels, 26, *ff.*, and authorities there cited.

² See, *e.g.*, 1 Macc. i. 33, 88.

The Greek tongue in the Holy Land.

Again, at this moment it was, as we have found, inhabited by a mixed population—a population consisting in part of Greeks, and at all events a population including races among whom Greek was elsewhere the common medium of intercommunication with one another and the rest of the world. Then, it had intimate relations with neighbouring peoples, where Greek was the dialect in ordinary use, as the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon,¹ of Antioch and Greek Syria, of Alexandria and other parts of Egypt, and of the Greek colonies in Asia Minor. And once more it formed an integral part of the great Roman empire. (2.) But, in the next place, while the same causes which led to the prevalence of the Greek tongue in the rest of the world were in operation in Palestine, there was also in the case of that country an influence at work in the same direction not less powerful than it was wholly exceptional. I refer to facts already noticed in connection with the Jews of the Dispersion. We have seen how intimate were the relations between the foreign Jews and the Jews of Palestine, and especially how vast were the numbers of these Hellenists who were in the habit of resorting year after year, and on three several occasions every year, to Jerusalem, to be present at the religious festivals of the nation, and were thus brought into continual and direct communication with the great body of the inhabitants of Palestine. How did the two classes of worship-

¹ Jos., Antiq., XIV. 12, § 2.

pers in the Temple maintain intercourse with one another? The Hellenists who came up to Jerusalem must either have spoken Aramaic, as well as their common Grecian dialect, or the native Jews Greek. Which, in all the circumstances, is the more probable of these alternatives?

But we are not left to inference for a determination of the question. We have direct evidence of the fact. as to the prevalence of the Greek tongue in Palestine at this period. It would be out of place to attempt to recapitulate here the proofs to be found in the writings of Philo, Josephus, and the Jewish Rabbis.¹ Let me only indicate very generally the testimony borne to the fact in the New Testament itself.

The first thing which must strike us when we have recourse to that volume, to which we are more indebted for a knowledge of the state of Palestine in the time of our Lord than to all other books, and which consists, at least in part, of writings composed by native Jews of the period in question, is the fact that it is itself written in the Greek tongue. One of the Gospels—the Gospel according to Matthew—and the Epistle to the Hebrews, are sometimes believed, on the authority of early tradition, to have been originally written in Aramaic. The evidence is stronger in the case of the former than in the case of the latter book; but against the theory of a Hebrew original we have

¹ See Lightfoot, Works, *passim*; Roberts's Discussions, Part I., ch. 2.

in both instances very cogent arguments, and especially we have the fact that it is in Greek alone that either work has come down to our own times; nor, indeed, do any of the authorities for an original Hebrew text appear to speak of it from personal knowledge. Omitting, however, the Gospel by Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews as *possibly* Greek versions of Aramaic originals; omitting also the Gospel according to Luke, which was probably the work of a Hellenist, or at least a man who was not a native Jew; and on the same ground omitting the Acts of the Apostles, and all the Epistles of St Paul; and confining ourselves to the second and fourth Gospels, the Epistles of St Peter, St John, St James, and St Jude, and the Apocalypse, we have, in the authors of these last-mentioned writings, undoubted examples of Jews of the time of Christ—Jews, too, not belonging to those classes in which any exceptional learning might be looked for, but to the humbler ranks of society; almost all of them, indeed, Galilean fishermen—who were able to express themselves, if not with classical purity, yet with ease and perspicuity in the Greek tongue.

In the next place, when we proceed to examine the contents of the writings of the New Testament, there is a fact not less significant with which we cannot fail to be struck as characteristic of the whole volume—namely, that wherever quotations from the Old Testament are introduced, the quotations are so rendered as to prove that they were,

as a rule, taken from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures.

This fact is not important in so far as it applies to writings which, like most of the epistles of St Paul, were addressed avowedly to Hellenists, or to other men to whom the Old Testament was alone known in the Septuagint version. But the same peculiarity is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and the Epistle to the Hebrews, in whatever language originally written, was, as is almost universally held, addressed to the Palestinian Jews.¹ The same peculiarity is also found in the report of the discourses of our Lord during his ministry in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Why did Paul, or whoever the author of the epistle just named may have been, in writing to the Christians in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Judea, quote the Greek version of the Old Testament, unless it was already familiarly known there? And why were the citations by our Lord from "the Scriptures," as reported by the evangelists, citations occurring in discourses spoken in Palestine to its ordinary inhabitants, taken, as they obviously are, from the Greek version? It must be remembered that the Septuagint—though considered as a purely human work, prepared by a number of persons, all of whom were not equally familiar with the original, or equally qualified otherwise for their task, it is a very faithful translation—does not by any means invariably render the Hebrew text with minute accuracy, or

¹ Bleek, *Hebräer*, i. 31, Ebrard, &c.

preserve the full import of the words of the inspired writers as perfectly as might be done. In this respect it resembles our own English received version of the same books. Why, then, did our Lord, in quoting Moses or the prophets, quote them in a comparatively imperfect form, rather than in the most perfect—from the Septuagint, rather than directly from the original? The only conceivable reason is the same which in our own day leads even those who are themselves acquainted with the Hebrew tongue, in their popular expositions of divine truth, to avail themselves, in quotation, of the authorised English translation of the Old Testament. In the latter case the version is used because, though not perfect, it is already familiarly known and commonly read in this country. It does not appear to be otherwise than most probable, if not certain, that a similar explanation must be given of the use made by our Lord of the Greek Septuagint when he taught in Jerusalem and in the cities and villages of Galilee.

One other direct proof from the New Testament may here be referred to. It is found in the account of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount, though intended primarily for the disciples, was addressed by our Lord to the whole multitude there assembled; for at its conclusion we find that “the people (*οἱ ὄχλοι*) were astonished at his doctrine.” Our Lord’s hearers on this occasion, however, included both Greeks and Jews. Some of

them were from Tyre and Sidon ;¹ whose habitual language was that of Greece ;² others were from the Greek cities known under the general name of Decapolis,³ which have been already referred to ; “ others were from Galilee, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.”⁴ It seems impossible to resist the conclusion which has been drawn from these particulars, that there was at the time of our Lord a common medium of instruction for the Jews of Palestine, the foreign settlers in the land, and the neighbouring peoples — a language used and understood by them in common, and that that language could be no other than Greek.⁵

The question is one which, in many of its aspects, is full of interest and importance. The prevalence of the Greek tongue in Palestine would, if established, afford a new and remarkable contribution to an important class of the positive evidences of Christianity. Taken in connection with the diffusion of the same language over the rest of the civilised world, the fact that in the country of the future apostles of the Saviour, the men commissioned to make disciples of all nations, a language so perfectly adapted for the expression of Christian doctrine, was also known, could not but be regarded as providential. Thus would at once the future members of the

Importance
of the ques-
tion.

¹ Luke, vi. 17. ² Jos. Antiq., XIV. 10, § 2, 3 ; XIV. 12, § 5.

³ Mat. iv. 25. ⁴ Mat. iv. 25.

⁵ Roberts's Discussions, p. 101, *sq.*

Christian Church among the Gentiles, and those men who were destined to be the instruments in the hands of God in bringing them to the knowledge and belief of the truth, be prepared for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. It has, since the third century, been the most prevalent opinion in the Church that, in the case of the latter, this preparation was effected by the gift of tongues on the great day of Pentecost. But the hypothesis that the supernatural gift in question had any such aim as that of conveying to the apostles the knowledge of foreign languages for practical use in preaching the Gospel to the Gentile nations is without any authority in Scripture, and is repudiated not only by writers of the schools of Paulus and Bunsen, but by many of those Biblical scholars who most fully acknowledge the reality of the miracle.¹

Whether or not, and how far, Greek was in general use in the Holy Land at this period, has been the subject of considerable difference of opinion. Among modern scholars, Renan and Ewald hold that Aramaic was the only language generally employed or understood. Credner's conclusion is, "that almost all the dwellers in Palestine understood Greek, but not all their own vernacular language;" and according to Vossius, "as in Egypt, Asia, and the rest of Syria, so likewise in Judea no language was heard but the Greek, especially

¹ See Alford, *in loc.*; Smith's Dict. of Bible, s. v. Gift of Tongues.

in the cities and towns.”¹ It has even been matter of controversy whether our Lord Himself understood, or ever on any occasion employed, the Greek language. That He sometimes spoke Aramaic is evident from the actual quotation of the words of this language, in which He on more than one occasion expressed Himself. At the same time, the preservation in exceptional cases of such native forms of speech, may imply that they were not customary. The thesis maintained by a recent and very able writer on the subject is to the following effect: “While it is now generally said that our Lord spoke *for the most part* in Hebrew, and only sometimes in Greek, what I venture to maintain is, that He spoke for the most part in Greek, and only now and then in Hebrew.”² Into these questions it is not necessary to enter further here.

V. By its original constitution the government of the Hebrew commonwealth was a theocracy. Almighty God was the lawgiver, king, and judge of the nation. Nor did the Jews ever abandon this great principle, which lay at the basis of their whole national life. The law of God, delivered by the hands of Moses, was their civil as well as their religious code so long as they continued to be a people; and the sovereignty of God not only

¹ Credner, Einl. in das N. T., § 75; Vossius, De Sibyllinis Oraculis, c. XVI.; see Roberts's Discussions, p. 41, 43.

² Roberts's Discussions, p. 16.

as Lord of the conscience, but as King over Zion, was recognised by them from first to last. And hence chiefly was a foreign yoke so peculiarly galling to the Jews. That people, however, was at the same time not without political institutions very much like those of other nations. At the very beginning provision was made for the appointment not only of inferior rulers and judges to administer the laws in subordination to Jehovah, but even for the after-introduction of an order of men who should bear the name and assume the state of the kings of the neighbouring peoples. And eventually the civil government of the land of Israel, though in principle it was still a theocracy, practically assimilated itself to ordinary forms.

During the times of the kings, those who occupied the throne of Israel, or (after the revolt of the ten tribes) the rival kingdoms, Judah and Samaria, were, with the limitation already referred to—a limitation not always regarded—absolute monarchs. The pomp and magnificence with which they surrounded themselves may be judged of from descriptions we have of the royal state of Solomon. The officers placed directly under the kings in the administration of their government are, with relation to the same monarch, enumerated in 1 Kings, iv. 1-6. In the administration of justice the chief place was held by the great Sanhedrim which met at Jerusalem—the court to which all questions of law possessing primary importance were remitted, and which was likewise a court of

appeal from the inferior judicatures. It consisted of about seventy members, including the heads of the priestly courses, or the chief priests, elders of the people (*πρεσβύτεροι*), and a certain number of scribes, men trained in a knowledge of the Jewish law,¹ and was sometimes, but not invariably, under the presidency of the high priest.² It sat in an apartment in the courts of the Temple, though on some occasions, as at the trial of our Lord, the members assembled in the high priest's palace. Its jurisdiction embraced all persons in the realm, and even extended to the Jews of the Dispersion.³ Besides the great Sanhedrim, there were in all larger cities sanhedrims of twenty-three members, which judged in some cases in matters of life and death; and in smaller towns a triumvirate or consistory was set up, consisting only of three judges, who had a more limited authority.⁴

To what extent the civil institutions of Palestine were affected by the Roman subjugation must be now considered. The country had been virtually brought under the yoke of Rome by the arms of Pompey sixty years before the birth of Christ; and in the years of the personal ministry, though Galilee and some of the territories beyond Jordan were still nominally governed by tetrarchs of the Herodian family, even these divisions of the land

¹ Mat. xxvi. 3, 57, 59; Mark, xv. 1.; Acts, v. 21.

² Lightfoot's Works, iv. 240; Wieseler, Chron. Syn., p. 168, *sq.*

³ Lightfoot's Works, ix. 339, iii. 198.

⁴ Jahn, Archæologia Bibl., § 246.

were in fact Roman dependencies; while Judea and Samaria already formed an acknowledged appendage to the Roman province of Syria, having no king but Cæsar. As regarded the civil institutions of the country, and the rights and liberties of the people, the practical effects of this departure of the sceptre from Judah, though considerable, were not so great as is sometimes supposed. In the government of the provinces the Romans were not accustomed to interfere unnecessarily with the pre-existing laws and usages of the subject people. Nor (not to speak of the rest of Palestine, in which the old forms were still more fully preserved) was Judea made any exception to the rule. That province, which included Samaria, was annexed to the neighbouring province of Syria, but with a resident governor of its own, who in subordination to the Syrian proconsul, and to the imperial government at Rome, had all the same powers as the old native princes, not excepting those of appointing and dismissing the high priests.¹ It was garrisoned by Roman troops. We have found that the headquarters of the five or six thousand men who constituted the chief part of the force at the disposal of the governor was Cæsarea. A single cohort was also permanently stationed in Samaria, and another in Jerusalem—the latter body of troops being augmented on the occasion of the great feasts by detachments from Cæsarea. Though care was taken that the number of Roman soldiers

¹ Ewald, *Geschichte*, v. 13, 14.

in Jerusalem was kept at the lowest point consistent with the preservation of public order, their presence at all in the holy city could not fail to be always a source of irritation to the Jews. The exclusion of the Roman ensigns was, on religious grounds, conceded by the government. An attempt by Pilate to set aside this rule produced an outbreak so serious that the governor was compelled to give way to it. The taxes were another grievance. At a later period the complaints of the Jews on account of their severity are said to have reached the ears of Tiberius, and to have received some attention from the emperor. We have frequent allusions in the Gospels to these taxes, and to the officers intrusted with their collection. The latter, there called "publicans" (not the *publicani* who, under the Roman government, farmed the public imposts, and were generally men of patrician rank, but the *portitores*, or local receivers, of the Roman institution), were held in the greatest abhorrence in Palestine, the odium which they owed to their office being increased by their frequent abuse of the powers with which it invested them. The taxes in question were raised for the benefit of the imperial revenues, which were indeed always to a very large extent derived from the provinces, and (to speak only of the more important of them) consisted of a poll-tax, a house-tax, and a tax on market produce.¹ Judea was, in fact, in no better or worse position as to its

¹ Jos. Ant., XIV. 10, § 6; XIX. 6, § 3; Ewald, Geschichte, v. 17.

dependence on Rome than the other provinces of the empire.

During the period of the ministry of our Lord, certainly, that position was, in the case of the Jews, rendered greatly more intolerable than it had previously been by the capricious, arbitrary, and oppressive manner in which Pontius Pilate, the acting governor of all those years, administered the affairs of the province. In every country subject to the mistress of the world in the times of the empire, the liberty and happiness of the people depended almost entirely on the character of the man to whom its government was intrusted. He had absolute authority within the limits of his jurisdiction as long as he remained in office. It must be kept in view that, by the theory of the Roman law, when a nation was annexed to the empire of Rome it ceased to have any separate existence—any existence apart from that of the vast *orbis Romanus* into which it had been absorbed; it had no longer any liberty, any property, any laws, or institutions of its own, even the private possessions, and social or family rights of every individual in the community, ceasing to be possessions or rights to which he had any legal claim. This theory was not, as a rule, carried out practically. Native laws and institutions were in fact, for the most part, allowed to remain in force; the liberties of the people were respected; the rights of private property were preserved. A master kept his slaves in subjection; a father had

authority over his children, as truly as if he did not belong to a race which had ceased to be free, and had fallen under the yoke of Rome. But the power remained with the sovereign government to carry out its principles when it so pleased; and as long as he held office, the governor of the province, within the limits of his jurisdiction, himself represented the sovereign government. The powers committed to him were despotic. If he abused his authority, he might be complained of and deprived of his office; but while that office was retained by him, his authority appears to have been practically absolute.¹ The character of Pontius Pilate was not wholly bad. What share he had in the crime, by his connection with which his name has been chiefly preserved—that greatest crime ever perpetrated in the history of the world—is a question of some difficulty. There have been, at all events, more profligate and oppressive rulers in every way than Pilate. But during his government of Judea, the Jews had abundant reasons for knowing how much more of the wellbeing of the commonwealth depended on the representative of the Roman power than on Rome herself. It was the principle usually followed by the emperors at this period to be especially tolerant of the religious convictions or prejudices of the subject nations, and this principle had been respected by Pilate's predecessors as regarded Judea. The attempt, already noticed, to introduce the idolatrous stan-

¹ De Coulanges, *La Cité Antique*, 3me. ed., p. 454, 57.

dards of Rome into the holy city, in wanton defiance of the strongest conscientious feelings of the people, and afterwards an (in their eyes) sacrilegious appropriation of the revenues of the Temple to the construction of an aqueduct,¹ are examples of Pilate's disregard for the liberties of the Jewish nation; and the excessive severity with which he punished all offences against public order, was in marked contrast with the practice of former governors.²

Upon the whole, however, even under Pilate the civil institutions of Judea and the freedom of its inhabitants were not seriously encroached upon. The forms of their law were maintained, and, except in regard to offences involving the punishment of death, its administration was also still intrusted to themselves.³ The great Sanhedrim continued to sit and to exercise its accustomed jurisdiction. The subordinate judicatories appear to have retained very much the same power which had formerly belonged to them. The payment of the Temple or holy tax, for the support of religion, was, if not enforced, at least permitted by the government.⁴ The great religious festivals were allowed to be held as before with the other days of religious observance. No such outrages against the liberty or religion of the people were attempted as had rendered infamous the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes, who even prohibited, under the penalty

¹ Jos. B. J., II. 9, § 4.

³ John, xviii. 31.

² Ewald, *Geschichte*, v. 33, *sq.*

⁴ Ewald, *Geschichte*, iv. 275.

of crucifixion, the observance of the Jewish ritual, and substituted the worship of Jupiter for that of Jehovah in the Temple.¹ And that against any very serious oppression the people of the province were not without a remedy, appears from the fact that it was owing to complaints on their part to the proconsul of Syria that Pilate was eventually deprived of his office.²

VI. Any account of Palestine in the time of our Lord would of course be incomplete, especially when viewed in connection with the subject of this treatise, if it did not contain some notice of the religious beliefs, religious institutions, and religious life of the people, to whose spiritual instruction our Lord, in His personal ministry, devoted Himself, and to whose actual condition in reference to religion that ministry was, as we shall afterwards find, always adapted. It would be impossible, however, within reasonable limits, to go into this subject in detail. It must suffice to indicate the leading facts, and to do so in very general terms.

(1.) The doctrinal beliefs of the Jews at this period may first be referred to.

That these beliefs did not by any means correspond with the teaching of the inspired writings which had been handed down to them by their fathers as the Word of God; which were

¹ Jos. Antiq., XII. 6, *sq.*

² Jos. Antiq., XXIII. 4, § 2.

in the hands of their teachers, and doubtless of many private persons among them; which all of them had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with in the service of the synagogues, where they were read to them every Sabbath-day in regular order; and which we know, as well from those writings themselves as from the express testimony of Christ and the apostles, were able to make them wise unto salvation,—is a truth which need hardly be recalled to mind.

In explanation of the variance between the beliefs of the Jewish people and the doctrine of the Hebrew Scriptures which thus prevailed, it must be remembered that—to say nothing of the native antipathy of the “natural man,” whether he be Jew or Greek, to the things of the Spirit of God, which he cannot receive, and cannot even know, without illumination from above, only to be obtained by those who truly seek for it—that people had long been, and still were, in a greater degree than most men similarly privileged, exposed to influences which must have tended to counteract the teaching of the divine Word. We must not think of them as of men who had been literally shut out from the rest of the world, hedged round about from the intrusion of all thoughts, and from the contact of all ideas but those brought before their minds in the Scriptures, or by teachers who faithfully set before them the truths of Scripture. The sins of their fathers had brought upon them the judgments of God; and some of these judg-

ments involved not only temporal but spiritual trials,—trials fraught with the greatest danger to the purity and simplicity of their faith. At no period of their history had the Jews been taught alone by God. They had sat at the feet of Moses and the prophets. But there had always been false teaching as well as true¹ within their reach, and false teaching to which they had been too ready to give ear. Above all, however, their seventy years' captivity, though it was not without important results of a beneficial character, as regarded the Israelites themselves, no less than the world generally, brought them into contact with a religious system which, while essentially different from their own, was singularly fitted to lay hold of the imagination of an Eastern people.² The ever-increasing intercourse with the West, which since their return had more or less familiarised them with the Grecian philosophy, must also be taken into account. However much or however little of their faith they had actually gained from foreign sources, however much or little foreign influences had in fact corrupted, consciously or unconsciously, their religious beliefs,—which they themselves at least supposed to be a pure reflection of the revealed will of God,—it is at all events certain, that all along, but especially since the era of the Captivity, the Jews, in the formation of their conceptions of the nature and will of God, were very far from

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

² Milman, *Hist. Christ.*, i. 62, *sq.*

being necessarily confined to the range of doctrines to be found in Holy Writ.

In the time of Christ the great body of the people did not even profess to take their religion exclusively from the Scriptures. The traditions of the elders. At this period, indeed, the Scriptures were, on the contrary, to a great extent superseded, in popular estimation, and in the teaching of the Rabbis, by a vast collection of so-called traditions, gathered doubtless from many sources, but derived in great part, it would appear, from Babylon,¹ and in many ways inconsistent with the doctrine of Scripture, or rather antagonistic to it.

For our knowledge of the Cabala, or traditional law of the Jews, of which we read so often in the Gospels under the name of the Traditions of the Elders, we are chiefly indebted to the Mischna of Rabbi Jehuda, the holy (constituting the most ancient portion of the Talmud), a work believed to have been written by that eminent Jew about the end of the second century of our era.² Of the Mischna many editions and versions, including an incomplete translation into English, have been published. It consists, first of all, of a digest of what is called the unwritten law of Moses, or a series of regulations said (without any historical authority) to have been delivered to Moses on

¹ Mosheim, *De Rebus Christ.*, ii. 7, etc. See Milman, *Hist. Christ.*, i. 61, *sq.*

² See Smith's *Dict. of Bible*, s. v. Pharisees, with authorities there cited.

Mount Sinai at the same time as the written law, and by him handed down orally, through Joshua, the seventy elders, the prophetic order, Ezra, and the rabbis, from generation to generation.¹ To this digest are added a number of rabbinical interpretations of the Mosaic regulations generally, together with the decisions on disputed points, and the maxims or wise sayings, of their most esteemed teachers—men like Hillel and Shammai, who flourished before the birth of Christ, or Gamaliel, the celebrated rabbi at whose feet the Apostle of the Gentiles boasted that he had been brought up, in the learning of the Jews. There is every reason to believe that, though some evidences of recent addition (as the references to the early Christians in the chapter on idolatry) occur, the *Mischna* represents as a whole the traditions of the elders which were currently taught in the days of our Lord.

The place which these traditions held in the estimation of the Jews at this period has been already referred to. That their authority was practically placed above that of Scripture appears sufficiently from allusions to them to be found in the words of our Lord. Lightfoot quotes some of the sayings of the rabbis in confirmation of this fact. They held "the written law scant and narrow in comparison with the traditional." "The words of the Scribes," they said, "are more lovely than the words of the law, and more weighty than the words of the prophets." "The Biblical text is

¹ Lightfoot, v. 204.

like water, and the Mischna like wine." How little such extravagant claims were justified either by the nature of the sources from whence the traditions in question were really drawn, or their own intrinsic value, cannot here be shown at length. As to the latter point, it is not to be denied that in the Mischna some important expositions of, and deductions from, Scripture are to be found, especially in regard to the great doctrine of a future life—a doctrine implied, but not expressly set forth, in the Mosaic law, and first clearly brought to light in the Gospel. The following example of its higher teaching may be given: "Those who are born are doomed to die, the dead to live, and the quick to be judged. . . . Blessed be God; for in His presence there is no unrighteousness, forgetfulness, respect of persons, nor acceptance of a bribe; for everything is His. Know also that everything is done according to the account, and let not thine evil imagination persuade thee that the grave is a place of refuge for thee; for against thy will wast thou formed, and against thy will wast thou born, and against thy will dost thou live, and against thy will wilt thou die; and against thy will must thou hereafter render an account, and receive judgment in the presence of the supreme King of kings, the holy God. Blessed is He." In the greater part of the Mischna, however, what is chiefly to be observed is, as Lightfoot expresses it, "the amazing emptiness and sophistry of the matters han-

dled in it, which do torture, vex, and tire the reader." It abounds in minute and trivial regulations on such unmeaning points of form as the following: "With what sort of wick and oil are the candles of the Sabbath to be lighted, and with what are they not to be lighted?" Then there are decisions by the leading rabbis on questions like these: "Whether the believer having washed his hands (four chapters are devoted to the subject of washing of hands) he should put the napkin on the table or on a cushion;" "whether he should sweep the house and then wash his hands, or wash his hands and then sweep the house." Its sophistical casuistry on matters of moral obligation can only be compared to that of the Jesuits whom Pascal held up to universal scorn and ridicule in his 'Provincial Letters.' In fine, as we know on the highest authority, this law practically "made the law of God of none effect;" doing this, first by giving a false interpretation to many of the divine precepts, as well as by unwarrantable additions to them — *e. g.*, in the case of the regulations regarding "Corban;" and secondly, by assigning, as the Old Testament never did, a paramount value to external forms and ceremonial observances, in comparison with faith in God, spiritual worship, and holy living: of both which facts abundant illustration may be gathered indirectly from the teaching of our Lord, a great part of whose denunciations of prevalent errors among the Jews are aimed at perversions

of the true doctrine of Moses and the prophets, to be found in the current traditions of the elders.¹

Among the opinions obviously derived from such sources as have now been mentioned, and in direct conflict with the doctrine of the Hebrew Scriptures, it is especially necessary to notice those relating to the Messiah Himself. The coming of Christ had been the subject of prophecy from the beginning.² And by the Jews at this period these predictions were to some extent rightly interpreted. On the strength of what "God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began," they believed in the coming of "the Christ;"³ in his being born of the house of David, and in the town of Bethlehem,⁴ and in his appearance at this particular period.⁵ The expectation, indeed, of the Messiah's reign, had disseminated itself from Judea over the whole world.⁶ That even the doctrine of a *suffering* Messiah—obnoxious and even incredible as it was to most of the nation⁷—was clearly enough deduced from their own Scriptures, by some of the Jews of this age, appears to be estab-

¹ Lightfoot, *passim*; Milman's *Hist. of Jews*, ii. 478, *sq.*; Smith's *Dict. of Bible*, s. v. Pharisees; Buxtorf, *Synagoga*, 63, *sq.*

² Luke, xxiv. 27; Acts, ii. 19, *sq.*; I Pet. ii.

³ Luke, xxiii. 35; John, vii. 26, 27, 31, &c.

⁴ Mat. ii. 5; Luke, vii. 42.

⁵ Lightfoot, vii. 304, *sq.*

⁶ See, for a *résumé* of the evidence of this fact, Hengstenberg's essay "On Messianic Expectations among the Heathen," *Christology* (Clark), iv. 272, *sq.*

⁷ I Cor. i. 23.

lished.¹ Upon the whole, however, the prevailing opinions as to the reign of their promised Deliverer, were not only often vague and indefinite,² but, as far as they assumed any distinct form, grossly mistaken. It is long since the resemblance between the Jewish view as to the first advent, and that of the Fifth Monarchy men in the time of the Commonwealth, with other Christian millennarians, as to the second advent of Christ, was pointed out.³ Looking solely to those prophecies which referred to "the glory of Christ," to the neglect of the others which testified of His "sufferings," and interpreting the former in a literal rather than a spiritual sense, they imagined that the Messiah, when He appeared, should come with outward pomp and majesty; that He should personally exercise royal authority on the earth for the space of a thousand years;⁴ and that all nations should be subdued by His arms, and made subject to Him in the same sense that Palestine was at that time subject to Cæsar. The "kingdom of God," as thus understood, was to embrace none but the descendants of Abraham; nor even all Hebrews. The ten tribes were supposed to be excluded along with the whole Gentile world.⁵ It is remarkable that, perhaps for reasons already noticed, the Galileans were also sometimes excluded; for in the time of Messiah's reign, "Galilee," according to some of the

¹ Hengstenberg, *Christ*, ii. 310, *sq.*; iv. 349, *sq.*

² Lightfoot, viii. 358.

³ *Ibid.*, viii. 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vii. 63.

⁵ *Ibid.*, viii. 358.

rabbis, "was to be destroyed, and the men of Galilee to go from city to city, and not to be pitied."¹ In the Gospels we read of one who said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Some light is thrown on these words in the following passage from one of the rabbinical writers: "Many affirm that the hope of Israel is that Messiah shall come, and raise the dead [it was one of their doubtful questions how many of the dead should be raised to share with the living in the Messiah's kingdom]; that they shall be gathered together in the Garden of Eden, and shall eat and drink, and satiate themselves all the days of the world; . . . that there are [provided for them] houses built all of precious stones, beds of silk, and vines flowing with wine and spicy oil; . . . and that all nations shall behold their condition, as it is written, Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry."² According to Lightfoot, the rabbis "speak out plainly" in all their writings the conviction of the Jews that a temporal deliverance and temporal blessings were alone looked for from the Messiah—redemption from sin and spiritual instruction being already abundantly supplied.³ It may be added that before, and apparently even for some time after, Pentecost, the carnal views in question as to "the kingdom of God" were too much sympathised with by the disciples themselves.⁴

¹ Lightfoot, v. 181. ² *Ibid.*, xii. 292. ³ *Works*, vii. 275.

⁴ Mark, x. 35, *sq.*; Luke, xxiv. 21; Acts, i. 6, &c.

The brief account of the religious opinions of the Sects of the Jews in the time of our Lord above given, refers only to their prevalent beliefs. It is well known that among that people at this period, as among all peoples professing any form of religion, in every age, divisions on matters of faith, as well as of religious observance, were to be found. Of some of the sects of the Jews we have little or no information, as of the Herodians, the Gaulonites, the followers of Boethus, with others referred to in Eusebius.¹ Even of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, the principal religious communities in Judea at that day, our knowledge is very far from being exact.

Of the first of them, the Pharisees, "the strictest sect of the Jews," it may almost be enough to say that they represented the extreme views of the traditionary law, their zealous maintenance of the authority of that code being itself their most distinguishing characteristic. They can be traced as a religious and political party in Judea for a century and a half before Christ, and about the time of the Nativity they numbered, according to Josephus,² at least 6000 persons. Lightfoot has taken pains to prove that women no less than men were admitted as members of the sect.³ The same author quotes from the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmuds descriptions of what he regards as seven different classes of Pharisees.⁴

¹ Eccl. Hist., l. iv. c. 23.

³ Ibid., p. 72, *sq.*

² Antiq. XVII. 2, § 4.

⁴ Works, xi. 67, *sq.*

It appears from the New Testament that, whether differing from each other in their professed rules or not, there were great distinctions between the individual adherents of the party in their views and general character. When it is remembered that Gamaliel, Nicodemus, and, above all, Saul of Tarsus, were of the sect of the Pharisees, it is impossible to doubt that that sect included among its members men who were not far from the kingdom of God. Not such was the case with the mass. Josephus, himself a Pharisee, though he does not of course dwell on the dark side of the picture, gives an account of his party which is entirely consistent with that to be found in the New Testament, noting especially their zealous devotion to the traditional law;¹ their professed self-denial and austerity of life;² their pretensions to superior sanctity;³ their claim to a more accurate knowledge of the will of God than others;⁴ and their great and sometimes grossly-abused influence over the people.⁵ He also gives prominence to the fact referred to in Acts, xxiii. 8, as to their belief in the doctrine of the resurrection, though in one passage he appears to indicate that the theory of a transmigration of souls entered into their conceptions on this subject.⁶ Their neglect of the weightier matters of the law in an exclusive

¹ Antiq., XIII. 10, § 5.

² Ibid., XVIII. 1, § 3.

³ B. J., I. 5, § 2.

⁴ Ibid., II. 8, § 14.

⁵ Antiq., XIII. 10, § 5.

⁶ B. J., III. 8, § 42; cf. Mat. ix. 7, 8; Luke, ix. 2.

attention to ceremonial and often unauthorised observances ; their self-righteousness ; their hypocrisy ; and the gross impurity and ungodliness which they for the most part indulged in under the cloak of religion,—are the points chiefly dwelt on in the allusions to this sect in the words of our Lord Himself.

Whether the Sadducees as a separate party were of greater or less antiquity than the Sadducees. Pharisees is not ascertained ; nor (unless it be, as Milman supposes, that the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus be an exception) have we any of their own writings in our possession ; or, apart from a few allusions in the New Testament, any accounts of their views and tenets but those derived from their enemies. As far as our materials go, the Sadducees of the time of Christ appear to have been mainly distinguished by their opposition to the peculiar opinions and practices of the Pharisaic party. It has been asserted by some of the Christian fathers, who probably confounded them with the Samaritans,¹ that they acknowledged the authority of none of the books of the Old Testament except the Pentateuch.² But this statement is not to be implicitly relied on any more than the popular assumption that they represented generally the Jewish rationalists of their own day. Josephus speaks of the inspiration of all the Scriptures as universally held by his fellow-country-

¹ Smith's Dict. of Bible, s. v. Sadducees.

² See Prideaux, Connection, III. 474, with authorities there cited.

men.¹ As, however, the Pharisees maintained, the Sadducees repudiated, the authority of the unwritten law. While the former ascribed (though in some things with limitations as to man's responsibility for his actions) all things to fate or Providence, the latter insisted on the unrestricted freedom of the human will. The Sadducees denied the doctrines of the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul—probably in any sense, but, at all events, in the same sense in which these doctrines were held by the Pharisees. Their influence was greatest among the higher classes; and indeed they do not seem to have attempted to gain adherents among the people. It must not be omitted to be noticed that “the doctrine of the Sadducees” and “the doctrine of the Pharisees” were alike condemned by our Lord,² and that both sects were at one in their opposition to Christ throughout His whole ministry.

The Essenes cannot be said to have belonged exclusively to Judaism. They were the representatives in Judea of tendencies Essenes. which have been common to all lands, to all ages, and to all religions. The monastic life has assumed a variety of forms, but its essential principles are everywhere the same. Mysticism on the one hand, and, on the other hand, as its natural accompaniment, asceticism, were the characteristic distinctions of the Essenes of Palestine, as of the Alexandrian Therapeutæ, the monks and hermits of the early

¹ C. Ap. I. § 8.

² Mat. xvi. 12.

Christian Church, and similar orders among the Hindoos, the Persians, and other peoples.¹ At this time the Essenes are said to have numbered about 4000.² They were chiefly to be found residing on the western shore of the Dead Sea, in lands which they had themselves reclaimed, and brought into a high state of cultivation. Some members of the sect did not separate themselves wholly from the society of other Jews. In every case, however, they shunned large cities, preferring villages and small towns, as more free from open corruption of manners. In most of their communities—for all did not follow in this respect, or in others, the same rules—they prohibited marriage, requiring indeed a total separation between the sexes. They had all things in common, like, for a time, the members of the early Christian Church in Jerusalem. Their time was spent partly in devotional exercise, partly in labouring their fields and gardens, or in other pursuits by which provision was made for their common maintenance and for charity, and partly in such acts of beneficence as attendance on the sick, and practising the art of healing among their neighbours. Josephus has given an interesting account of the daily life of the more recluse of these communities.³ While they honoured Moses, after God, and, according to Josephus, contributed to the maintenance of the

¹ Neander's Church Hist. (Clark), i. 49.

² Philo, Quod Omn. prob., 66, § 12; Jos. Ant., XVIII. 2, § 5.

³ B. J., II. 3, § 5.

Temple worship, the Essenes refrained from public attendance at the great feasts of the Jews, and from offering the sacrifices prescribed in the Mosaic law. Their only public worship appears to have been confined to the services of the synagogues. They were more than ordinarily strict, however, in their observance of the Sabbath, and devoted themselves much to the study of the Scriptures. They agreed with the Pharisees in believing in the immortality of the soul, but differed from them as to the doctrine of the resurrection, holding that the soul when united to the body was denied its true freedom and the perfect happiness for which it was destined. It is possible that some of their peculiar principles remain unknown. At all events, a part of the vow taken by every proselyte was to the effect "that he would neither conceal anything from his own sect, nor discover any of its doctrines to others."¹

(2.) The ritual observances in use among the Palestinian Jews at this time possess for us a peculiar interest, inasmuch as they were for the most part, during the whole of the ministry, conformed to not only by the disciples but by our Lord Himself. Worship.

Little need be said of the more public and solemn acts of worship, of which the Temple of Herod now was, as, since Solomon's House of Prayer superseded the more ancient Tabernacle, a Temple on the same spot had always been, the centre.

¹ Philo, l. c. ; Jos. B. J., II. 8, § 2, *sq.*

Of the Temple of Herod we have two elaborate descriptions in Josephus. Covering with its courts and cloisters a space "twice as large" as that occupied by Solomon's Temple, it exceeded that structure still more in beauty and magnificence; and not only from its elevated position, but from the height of the walls which surrounded the whole enclosure, it united, as was afterwards found, "the commanding strength of a citadel with the splendour of a sacred edifice."¹ Immediately within the walls, which were pierced by eight gates, ran, on three sides, lofty double cloisters, about fifty feet in breadth, supported by Corinthian columns—each of them an entire block of marble—and roofed with cedar. On the fourth or south side, was what was called the king's porch, a triple cloister of similar construction with the others, but of much greater height and width, and, according to Josephus, of surpassing magnificence. An open court, paved with Mosaic work, now known as the Court of the Gentiles, lay between the cloisters and what is called the Court of Israel, which, as intimated by inscriptions in Greek and Latin conspicuously placed at intervals, all foreigners were prohibited from entering on pain of death.² To reach this

¹ Milman, *Hist. of Jews*, ii. 331.

² *Jos. Ant.*, XV. 11, § 5. Among the recent important discoveries in Jerusalem is that of a tablet with one of the original notifications above referred to. It bears the following inscription in Greek: "ΜΗΘΕΝΑ·ΑΛΛΟΓΕΝΗ·ΕΙΣΠΟΡΕΤΕΣΘΑΙ·ΕΝΤΟΣ·ΤΟΥ·ΠΕΡΙ·ΤΟ·ΙΕΡΟΝ·ΤΡΥΦΑΚΤΟΥ·ΚΑΙ·ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΥ·ΟΣΔ'ΑΝ·ΛΗΦΘΗ·ΕΑΥΤΩΙ·ΑΙ·ΤΙΟΣ·ΕΣΤΑΙ·ΔΙΑ·ΤΟ·ΕΞΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΕΙΝ·ΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ." The discoverer

court the worshipper ascended by fourteen steps to a broad terrace, from which, by another ascent of five steps, he passed into the sacred enclosure. Ten gates, conspicuous for their splendid embellishments, gave admittance at different points within its pale. One of them, the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, nearly ninety feet high, and of Corinthian brass of exquisite workmanship, especially excited the admiration of all who saw it. In the centre of the Court of Israel stood the altar, with a space around it for the officiating priests, fenced off by a low wall; to the west was the court of the women; and towards the east rose the Temple proper itself, with its lofty open gateway reached by twelve steps; its porch; its "holy place," in which were found the golden candlestick, the golden table supporting the show-bread, and the altar of incense; and its "holy of holies" separated from the holy place by a veil or curtain, and only accessible to the high priest on the great day of atonement. The dimensions, like the site of the Temple proper, were probably the same in Herod's structure as in that of Solomon. Both in its general effect as seen from a distance—with its walls of marble white as snow, and the rich gilding, which, when the sun shone on it, reflected back so bright a splendour that the beholder was forced to turn away his eyes as from the direct

of this remarkable relic of the Herodian Temple was M. C. Clermont Gauneau. *Palestine Exploration Fund's Quarterly Journal*, Aug. 1871, p. 132.

rays of the sun—and in the richness of its details, the whole building, though at this time still incomplete, after more than forty years' labour, appears to have been not undeserving of the admiration and pride with which, as we find in the gospels, it was regarded by the Jews.¹

In this new "house of prayer" essentially the same forms of worship were then observed as those with which we are familiar in the earliest history of the Jewish Church. The morning and evening sacrifices; the offerings on the Sabbath-days and at the new moons; the sin-offerings for the redemption of the first-born, and similar special offerings prescribed in the law; the solemn ceremonial on the great day of atonement, when once a-year the high priest entered into the holy of holies, and the scape-goat was driven out into "the wilderness" to bear away the iniquities of the children of Israel into a place not inhabited; together with the Feasts of Tabernacles, the Passover, and Pentecost—all these observances, originally prescribed by Moses, with others of more recent introduction, were regularly celebrated without material innovation on their ancient forms. The priesthood remained with the family of Aaron, the greatest care being still taken to preserve the registers of the sacerdotal caste, and the numbers of those who fulfilled the priest's office being probably as great as at any former

¹ Jos. Antiq., XV. 11, § 1, *sq.*; B. J., V. 5, § 1, *sq.*

period. They were partly stationed in Jerusalem itself, where we are told 24,000 priests had at this time their residence; partly in Jericho, with, it is said, a college of 12,000 members of the priesthood;¹ and partly in scattered homes throughout the country, from whence, or from Jericho, they went up to the holy city in rotation to "fulfil their courses." Nor were the Temple services only regularly performed, but on every occasion when the personal presence of the people was obligatory were generally frequented—the greater feasts especially, at which every Jew not prevented by necessary causes was required "to present himself before the Lord," being attended by great multitudes of worshippers from Palestine itself, and from all neighbouring countries where colonies of Jews were to be found.²

The most marked novelty in the forms of worship among the Jews in the time of our Lord, as compared with the Old Testa-^{Synagogues.}ment times, is to be found in the synagogue service. How far the use of local places of worship, apart from the Tabernacle or Temple, entered into the original constitution of the Jewish Church, it is not easy to determine. Some of the Mosaic regulations—for instance, those relating to the sanctification of the Sabbath—could not, one would think, be properly carried out at any period of the history of Israel without some institutions corre-

¹ Lightfoot, x. 94; Jos. Contra Ap., II. 87.

² Jos. B. J., VI. 9, § 3; Greswell, Diss., ii. 272.

sponding to the synagogues.¹ Then the fact that, in periods of religious corruption, it was found necessary to erect places of idolatrous worship in all parts of the land, seems to imply that district sanctuaries were always deemed indispensable, and had been customary. Nor are there wanting indications that it had been originally a part of the duty of the Levites, and afterwards a function of the prophets, to hold regular assemblies for religious services in various districts of the country.²

Although, however, substantially the same purposes may have been accomplished by similar means from the earliest times, the synagogues of the day of our Lord must be regarded as institutions which, in their special character, were at this time of comparatively recent introduction. The seventy years' captivity in Babylon, during all which time the Temple services were in abeyance, and afterwards the settlement of so many Jews in foreign countries, must have given occasion, if not to the creation, at least to the development, of an institution of which we have the earliest express information in connection with the history of those members of the Jewish Church whose lot was cast beyond the confines of Palestine.³ Its subsequent introduction into that country would naturally follow. About the time of Christ, there was hardly a town or considerable village without one or more syna-

¹ Lev. xxiii. 3.

² Vitringa, *Synagoga*, lib. I., pars II., § 6, 7, 8.

³ Acts, xv. 21; Vitringa, *Synag.*, I. 2, § 9, *sq.*; Spencer, *De Leg. Heb.*, i. 4, § 10; Prideaux, *Connection*, II. 534, *sq.*

gogues. In Tiberias we read of thirteen ; and in Jerusalem, according to the rabbis, there were at this period no fewer than 460 or 480 such places of worship.¹

The synagogues cannot be better described than as the parish churches of the Jews. Besides being used, like the Temple, as places of private devotion, they were opened for public worship on the Sabbath and on all holidays. At a later period services were also held on Mondays and Thursdays ; but this practice does not appear to have been as yet in use. It is on the Sabbath only that we find our Lord Himself accustomed to attend the synagogue worship. On that day three services were held—at nine in the morning, at three o'clock, and at night. It is uncertain how far the services were the same at each meeting. Lightfoot holds that in the afternoon the young were assembled for catechetical instruction. The women occupied a place in the sacred building by themselves—a rule afterwards followed in the early Christian Church.² In the smaller towns there was sometimes only one minister. In larger communities, or communities where a sufficient number of qualified persons were to be found, the usual ministers of the synagogue were (1) the “elders,” or “rulers,” of the synagogue, one of whom acted as president, and was known as “the Angel of the Church,” sometimes as the “Episcopos” or overseer ; (2)

¹ Lightfoot, viii. 416 ; x. 148.

² Bingham, *Orig. Eccles.*, VIII. 5, § 6.

the "Legatus" or officiating minister; and (3) the deacons, employed chiefly in collecting and distributing the alms devoted to the support of the poor. The service consisted, first, in the recitation of the public prayers, which were taken from a liturgy, in part probably identical with that still in use in the Jews' synagogues.¹ These prayers were read from a liturgy, and were responded to by an audible "Amen" from the congregation. Secondly, prescribed portions of the Law and of the Prophets were read in the original Hebrew, and afterwards rendered into the vulgar tongue by an interpreter. Thirdly, a sermon was delivered either by the Legatus, or by some one selected or authorised by him to discharge this duty, laymen not being disqualified from fulfilling this part of the service. And the congregation was dismissed by a solemn benediction. Such information as we possess on this subject is the more interesting because, both in its orders of ministry and in its services, the synagogue furnished the model on which the *ecclesia* of the early Christian Church was formed.²

The synagogues, let it be added, were not a source of unmixed spiritual good to the people. If through them the Scriptures were made generally known, so also were they employed as means for disseminating the vain traditions already re-

¹ See a translation of the eighteen prayers supposed to be as old as the time of our Lord, in Prideaux, *Connection*, ii. 538.

Lightfoot, *Works*, xi. 87, *sq.*; Vitringa, *Synagoga*, *passim*; Buxtorf, *Synagoga*, *passim*; Winer, *R. B. W.*, s. v. *Synagoga*.

ferred to. Then many superstitious observances—as, for instance, prayers for the dead—entered into their ordinary services.¹

(3.) Whatever the spiritual advantages enjoyed by the Jews, the universality of a pro-
fession on their part of faith in God, and Religious
Life. the strictness with which they observed ritual observances, whether those commanded by the law or self-imposed, religion was at this time practically at a very low ebb in Judea. A distinction must, it is true, be drawn in this respect between the many and the few. God had never in this nation wanted true worshippers. There had seldom, indeed, been wanting witnesses to the efficacy of His grace in men whose strength of faith and holiness of life were perhaps never surpassed in the history of the Church,—men of whom the world was not worthy.² Nor were such true children of Abraham unknown in the days of our Lord. As even among the ten tribes in the reign of Ahab, when Elijah supposed that he was left alone amongst a people wholly abandoned to idolatry, God had reserved to Himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal; so the apostle Paul assures us it was among the later Jews generally. There was a remnant of grace.³ It was “not as though the word of God had taken none effect.”⁴ Upon the whole, however, the religious life of the people was

¹ Smith's Dict., s.v. Synagogue; and for forms of prayers for the dead, see Buxtorf, *Synag.*, p. 710, 711.

² Heb. xi. 32, *sq.*

³ Rom. xi. 1, *sq.*

⁴ *Ibid.* x. 5.

little, if at all, in advance of that of the worst days of the Jewish Church. "Ye stiff-necked in heart and in ears,"—such was the terrible rebuke of his countrymen by the protomartyr Stephen,—“ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed beforehand of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”¹

In some things they appeared to be better than their fathers, and especially in one matter of supreme importance. It is an extraordinary fact in the history of Israel, that from the Exodus to the Babylonish Captivity, and even beyond the latter date, idolatry was the besetting sin of the people; a people who had been separated from the other nations of the earth mainly for the purpose of preserving them from this sin. It assumed various shapes, of which the most characteristic are thus summarily indicated by Warburton. (1.) Worshipping the true God under an image, such as the golden calves (1 Kings, xii. 28). (2.) Worshipping Him in places forbidden, such as groves (2 Kings, xviii. 22). (3.) By idolatrous rites, as when the worshippers cut themselves with knives (Jer. xii. 5). (4.) Profaning the house of God with idolatrous images (Jer. xxxii. 34); worshipping the true God and idols together;

¹ Div. Leg., 6, v. § 2.

and, lastly, worshipping idols alone (Jer. ii. 13)."¹ Under one or other of these modifications idolatry not only was occasionally practised by individuals, but often widely prevailed, even in the times of Moses, in the times of Joshua, and, above all, in the times of the Judges. It was, however, in the latter part of the reign of Solomon, and from causes in connection with the personal history of that monarch,² that the great apostasy in this form from Jehovah assumed the largest proportions.³ After the separation of Judah and Israel, not only in the latter kingdom—where indeed the established forms of worship, and the only forms of worship tolerated by the government, were from the first essentially idolatrous, and in course of time degenerated into idolatry in its most hideous forms—but at times almost to an equal extent in Judah, and there with circumstances of peculiar aggravation, idol-worship, though not universal even in the darkest periods of the history of either kingdom, became in both the rule rather than the exception. As to Judah in the time of Isaiah, "the land," we are told, "was full of idols."⁴ In Jeremiah's days, "according to the number of their cities were their gods, and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem had they set up altars to burn incense to Baal."⁵ Nor were any of the abominations of the heathen, any of their im-

¹ Acts, vii. 31, *sq.*

² 1 Kings, xi. 1, *sq.*

³ Ewald, *Hist. of Israel*, Eng. trans., ii. 118.

⁴ Isa. ii. 8.

⁵ Jer. xi. 13.

pure or bloody rites, unrepresented in these days in the so-called religious observances of the Chosen People. But if more openly, and in grosser forms, practised during the four hundred years which elapsed from the disruption of the commonwealth to the captivity in Babylon, idolatry had from the first been the besetting sin of Israel.

In this respect the Israel of the time of our Lord presents a striking contrast to the same land in Old Testament times. At what exact period the change took place, and what were the special causes which led to it, are questions into which I shall not enter. From about the time of the Maccabees, at latest, we find evidence of a total revulsion of feeling on the subject of idolatry among the Jewish people. Their previous inveterate tendency to the religious customs of the heathen was exchanged for a not less inveterate antipathy to and scrupulous avoidance of them in every form. A remarkable indication of the intensity of their abhorrence of these customs in the time of Christ is found in the account in Josephus of Pilate's attempt, already referred to, to introduce the Roman standards bearing the effigy of Cæsar into Jerusalem. The people, who had gone in great multitudes to Cæsarea to remonstrate with the governor, as a last resource, threw themselves, we are told, on the ground, and, baring their necks, vowed that they would prefer death to the pollution of their holy city by the

presence of emblems which they regarded as idolatrous.¹

If, however, the Jews at this time “abhorred idols,”² they do not appear otherwise to have surpassed in any marked degree the heathen themselves in practical godliness, as St Paul is careful to remind them, in a passage which, though addressed especially to Jews living in a foreign city, must, from the very scope of his argument, be understood to apply to the nation generally.³ Drunkenness was, as it had always been, a prevailing vice among them ; and not unfrequently, even some of their religious feasts, as the feast Purim, were the occasions of orgies such as those that disgraced the heathen festivals.⁴ Even men like the Pharisees, who made loud pretensions to a purity of life above that of the rest of their countrymen, were too often satisfied if they attended closely to its ceremonial observances, however much they might neglect its moral obligations, and in secret lived grossly immoral lives. “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are

Prevailing ungodliness.

¹ Antiq., XVIII. 3, § 1.

² Rom. ii. 22.

³ See Rom. ii. and iii.

⁴ Buxtorf, Synagoga, 553, sq.

within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

The great proof of the degraded condition of religion among the Jews in this age is, of course, found in their treatment of the Saviour. To their rejection of His claims He Himself indeed expressly appealed as a proof that they had no true faith in God.¹ He was the Messiah promised to their fathers; He fulfilled the predictions of their prophets, and accomplished those things which their ceremonial law typified. In Him centred the whole system of their professed religious beliefs. Why then did they reject and crucify Him? It is no sufficient answer to this question to recall the undoubted fact that they had learned to misinterpret the prophecies in regard to the Messiah, and had formed expectations which, however mistaken, were deeply rooted in their minds, and which the position and claims of Jesus, so far as these were understood, must have bitterly disappointed. That position and these claims were not at this time understood. Not speculative errors, but errors of the heart and life, were the true causes of the fact that Christ came to His own, and His own received Him not. "Light came into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, *because their deeds were evil.*" Their treatment of the Saviour was the measure, not of

¹ John, viii. 42, 47.

their ignorance or prejudices, but of the general corruption and degradation into which they had fallen; the measure of the distance which in all things separated them from God. There is therefore a deeper significance than is always recognised in the words He Himself addressed to them when He said, "If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God. . . . He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God."¹

Such, in rough outline, are some of the principal points which characterised the Palestine of the days of our Lord. In the next chapter it is proposed to attempt some account of the personal ministry itself.

¹ John, vii. 42, *sq.*

CHAPTER III.

THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF OUR LORD.

THE history of what is called the public or personal ministry of our Lord, forms of Introduction. course an important element in the history of the Church in the time of Christ. The discourses addressed to them by their Master, and the other influences brought to bear upon them through that ministry, if they did not constitute the only religious privileges which the first disciples at this period enjoyed, constituted at least the principal and most characteristic of these privileges. It was, as we have seen, the singular distinction of the first disciples to be the immediate objects of ministrations on the part of Christ Himself, analogous to those in ordinary circumstances committed to ministers of religion taken from among men. In the midst of those labours and sufferings by which He became the Saviour of all men, and offered a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, the Son of God for a time took upon Himself the office of a prophet, and discharged for those whom the Father had given Him some of

its humblest as well as its highest functions. That the ministry of Christ was upon the whole of an extraordinary and unprecedented character, and that it had in view the spiritual welfare of others than the first disciples, or indeed than any persons then in the world, are facts which do not militate against the truth of the statement now made. What the ministry was under which the Church was thus at this period more especially placed, and in what circumstances and with what aims it was carried on, will form the subject of the present chapter.

§ I. *Historical Sketch of the Personal Ministry.*

The history of the ministry of Christ commences, according to St Peter,¹ as confirmed by the narratives of all the evangelists, with His baptism in the Jordan at a time when He had completed, or all but completed,² the thirtieth year of his age.³ With the life of our Lord up to this period we have here no concern. Of the thirty years which elapsed from the Nativity to the appearance of Jesus among the crowds attracted by the teaching of the Baptist, we indeed hardly know anything, except that they were passed by Him in the greatest obscurity. Very soon after His birth—an event not unaccompanied by miraculous premonitions of His future

¹ Acts, i. 22.

² Greswell, Diss., i. 319, *sq.*

³ Luke, iii. 23.

destiny — He was carried by His parents into Egypt, to escape a design against His life on the part of King Herod, who, at a moment when he was irritated to madness by the discovery of the disaffection of one of his own sons, was not likely to show much scruple in crushing a possible claimant, however obscure, to the title of “King of the Jews;” and when, after Herod’s death in the same year,¹ Mary and Joseph, with the young child, returned to Palestine, it continued to be necessary that precautions should be taken against similar hazards. The holy family, accordingly, retired to Nazareth, a Galilean village so obscure and inconsiderable that it is never mentioned in the Old Testament or in Josephus. Nathaniel, a native of Cana, which was only four or five miles distant,² spoke of it with contempt: “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”³ And here our Lord spent all the first thirty years of His earthly existence, spending them not only in a remote and narrow sphere, but also, as must have appeared to the few who had an opportunity of observing their course, in no other than the everyday experiences and pursuits of an obscure village life. The babe who was first seen lying wrapped in swaddling-clothes in the manger of Bethlehem,⁴ and whom, at

¹ Wieseler, *Chronologische Synopse d. vier Evangelien*, 50, 57.

² Reland, *Palestina*, ii. 280. Robinson, *Researches*, ii. 346, 57., identifies the ancient Cana with a modern village, Kana-el-jelil, nine miles from Nazareth.

³ John, i. 46.

⁴ Luke, ii. 12.

the presentation in the Temple, Simeon took up in his arms,¹ as He Himself afterwards did the little children brought to Him in Peræa for His blessing,² here grew up like any other child, increasing in wisdom and stature,³ as became One who, except that He was without sin, it behoved to be in all points made like unto His brethren.⁴ Nothing could be more inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture than the view adopted by the writers of the Gospels of the Infancy, which led them to claim for the child Jesus, as He played in the streets of Nazareth, or sat among His class-fellows in the village school, manifestations of the ripe wisdom and knowledge of mature life.⁵ Such wisdom as became His years was certainly always found in Him in that perfection⁶ which we may be assured characterised every stage of His natural development.⁷ In spite of the innumerable fables of the apocryphal writings just referred to, He wrought no miracles during all these years. The miracle at Cana in Galilee, after the baptism, is expressly said to have been "the beginning" of these manifestations of His glory.⁸ The tradition preserved by Justin Martyr,⁹ that when of a suitable age, Jesus followed the trade of Joseph, and "worked as a carpenter, . . . making ploughs and yokes"

¹ Luke, ii. 28. ² Mat. xix. 1, 13, *sq.* ³ Luke, ii. 40, 52.

⁴ Heb. ii. 17. See Ullman, *Sinlessness of Jesus* (Clark), p. 110.

⁵ Gospel of Thomas, c. 6 and 7; Arabic Gospel of Infancy, *pass.*

⁶ Luke, ii. 40, 47.

⁷ Ullman, *loc. cit.*

⁸ John, iii. 11.

⁹ Trypho., c. 88.

for the neighbouring husbandmen, is not improbable in itself, and receives corroboration from a passage in one of the Gospels.¹ Thus our blessed Lord—not, it is true, without a secret consciousness of His mysterious relations to His heavenly Father, and of the great work appointed Him to do,² but “without observation”—passed the first thirty years of His life on earth, known indeed only by the inhabitants of Nazareth, where He was brought up, and continued all this time to reside,³ and by them only known as an undistinguished member of the family of one of their fellow-townsmen. When He came afterwards to teach in their synagogue, “they were astonished,” we are told, “and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?”⁴

This is not the place to inquire how far a fact in the history of our Lord so remarkable as that which has now been noticed, admits of explanation. It seems at first sight unaccountable that so much of the life of Him who was the Light of the World should have been suffered to pass without notice at the time, and to leave behind it hardly any trace. But there are many considerations which tend to obviate any difficulties in connection with our faith, arising out of the fact in question.

¹ Mark, vi. 3. ² Luke, ii. 49. ³ Mark, i. 9. ⁴ Mat. xiii. 54, ff.

One thing is certain. Neither the postponement of His entrance upon His public ministry, nor even the manner in which He continued to seclude Himself during this period, can be supposed necessarily to infer that, as regards the great purposes for which He became incarnate, our Lord, for the first thirty years of His existence on earth, lived in vain—that during all this time, His work, as the Saviour of mankind, was in abeyance. For such a conclusion, however incredible in itself, there might have appeared to be some apparent ground in the obscurity of the first thirty years of the life of our Lord, had it been the doctrine of Scripture that to fulfil a public ministry, or to manifest Himself in any way to the world, was the sole purpose for which the Son of God became flesh and dwelt among men. But a public ministry was, according to Scripture, not the only, nor even the principal, work which the Father had appointed to Him who, even more than the Prophet of the Church, is revealed to us as its Redeemer. He had work to do for the world, as well as before the world ; and in that work He was doubtless engaged, as there is no reason we should think He might not be engaged, from first to last, during every period of His abode on earth. One view of the history of these thirty years, which is sometimes adopted by theologians, is, that “in these years much of Christ’s work as ‘the Second Adam’ was in fact done. . . . The growing up through infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, from grace to grace,

holiness to holiness, in subjection, self-denial, and love, without one polluting touch of sin,—this it was which, consummated by the three years of active ministry, by the Passion and the Cross, constituted the obedience of One Man by which many were made righteous.”¹ Without, however, attempting to speculate on points on which we have no express information in Scripture, we may rest assured, on His own authority, that even at this time He was “about His Father’s business.”²

The circumstances which attended our Lord’s entrance on His public ministry are narrated by all the evangelists. John the Baptist (the relation of whose ministry to that of Jesus will be afterwards referred to) was at Bethabara, or, according to another reading, Bethany, “beyond Jordan”—of course not the Bethany of Lazarus and his sisters³—preaching the doctrine of repentance as a preparation for the approach of “the kingdom of God,” and administering his typical baptism to great multitudes who flocked to him from all quarters of Judea. And among others, “it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised of John.”⁴ That it was at this moment the ministry of our Lord was formally inaugurated appears indisputable. What meaning we are to attach to the words of St Peter, in which he speaks of the ministry as “beginning

¹ Alford, Gr. Test., i. 464.

² Luke, ii. 49.

³ See Lücke, Com., *in loc.*; Reland, Palæst., ii. 636.

⁴ Mark, i. 9.

from the baptism of John,"¹ has been questioned, some commentators understanding the words to refer generally to the period of John's labours as "the Baptist," others specifically to the time when Jesus was baptised of him.² In either case the latter event must be held as included in the term. The special connection of the baptism administered by the hands of the Forerunner on this occasion, with the result, is also a question on which some difference of opinion exists. But there can be no doubt that the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Saviour, which accompanied the baptismal act, was as truly the inauguration of the public ministry of our Lord, as the corresponding miracle of Pentecost that of the Christian Church. It was at this moment that He was solemnly set apart to His prophetic office, and, as the Prophet which should come into the world, received the prophetic gift in like manner, though not in like measure—for "God gave Him not the Spirit by measure"³—with all others whom God has sent to fulfil the same office: a "mystery of godliness," which in view of the divine nature of our Lord, that "fulness of the Godhead" which from the first "dwelt in Him bodily,"⁴ and of which, in taking upon Him the human nature, He had only "emptied Himself" in appearance,⁵ is wholly inscrutable to us, but as to its actual occurrence is not the less clearly implied in

¹ Acts, i. 22.

² See Greswell, i. 294, *sq.*

³ John, iii. 34, cf. Rom. xii. 3, *sq.*

⁴ Col. ii. 9.

⁵ See Waterland, Sermon V., Works, ii. 99, *sq.*

all Scripture. From thenceforward, with only a brief interval spent in solitude and fasting in the wilderness of Judea, where "He was forty days tempted of the devil,"¹ He began to fulfil those words of Isaiah which He afterwards applied directly to Himself in the synagogue of Nazareth: "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."²

In the evangelical history of the ministry of Christ, the sequence of events cannot in all cases be ascertained; at least, notwithstanding the researches and critical acumen which have been devoted to this branch of Biblical inquiry, and notwithstanding the importance of many of the results, as well as the encouragement which successes already achieved hold out of the ultimate removal of remaining difficulties, the true position of many of the incidents in the ministry as recorded by the different evangelists must still be regarded as undetermined. But the broader outlines of the history are sufficiently clear.

The first entrance of our Lord on His actual ministry occurred on His return from the wilderness. Having again suddenly presented Himself in the midst of the crowds who frequented the baptism of John, and

First ministrations at Bethabara.

¹ Luke, iv. 1.

² Luke, iv. 16, sq.

having been publicly acknowledged by the Forerunner as the promised Messiah, we find Jesus, during a sojourn of no more than three days at Bethabara, already beginning to gather around Him a body of personal followers, and to engage—though as yet only, as far as appears, by private converse with these men themselves—in His work as a teacher.¹ The number of those earliest converts was very small. They included, however, some of the men who continued with Him throughout His whole ministry, and afterwards formed the chosen body of the apostles.² One of them is unnamed, but for that reason may be assumed to have been the evangelist to whose Gospel we are indebted for the account of the incident in question, and who on other occasions is accustomed to use similar indefinite terms when speaking of himself.³ The others were Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel. That these disciples, if not also others, were at this early period already numbered among the disciples, and *from that moment* continued with few interruptions to "company" with Jesus to the end, appears both from Peter's words on the occasion of the election of Matthias, already referred to,⁴ and from the fact that we find "disciples" from thenceforward in attendance on our Lord.⁵

The ministry, thus begun with little observation

¹ John, i.

² Acts, i. 22.

³ John, xx. 2, 4; xxi. 20, 24.

⁴ Acts, i. 21, 22.

⁵ John, i. 43; ii. 2, 12, 17, 22; iii. 8, *sq.*

in Peræa, was now, after a hurried visit to Galilee, to be transferred for a time first to Jerusalem itself, and then to another part of the land of Judea, where it assumed a more public character. The day following the call of the five disciples, our Lord, accompanied by some, and probably by all of them, left Bethabara, or Bethany beyond Jordan, for the northern province, where, at a marriage-feast in Cana, to which He and His disciples on their arrival were invited, and where He found His mother and His brethren among the wedding-guests, He wrought His first miracle. From Cana, still accompanied by the disciples, and also by Mary and her family, He proceeded to Capernaum, to await, as Greswell concludes, the departure of the usual caravans for Jerusalem on the occasion of the celebration of the Passover, which was then at hand. His stay at Capernaum is said to have lasted "not many days."¹ No account is given of the proceedings of our Lord at this time in a city which was afterwards to be the scene of so many of His public labours.

We next find Jesus and His disciples in Jerusalem, in attendance on that great festival which brought thither, year by year, as we have before seen, immense multitudes of Jews, not only from all Palestine, but from all parts of the world. Since His twelfth year He had doubtless been accustomed to "present Himself before the Lord" on such occasions regularly, but only as one of the

¹ See Wieseler, *Synop. Chron.*, p. 254.

crowd which thronged the streets and the courts of the Temple, and without hitherto attracting general attention any more than the humblest of the worshippers at the feast. On the present occasion the case was far otherwise. We read of "the miracles which He did" at this Passover, and of "many who believed in His name." Above all, we are told of a step taken by Him during this visit to Jerusalem, which at once symbolised the great work on which He had entered, and constituted a formal assertion of His right to be received as the Messiah.

For the convenience of the multitudes who attended the Passover, the majority of whom, coming from a distance, required to provide themselves after their arrival with the gifts and sacrifices which, as prescribed by the law, it was their duty to offer, it had become the practice of the purveyors of the animals used in sacrifice to erect their booths in the precincts, and even within the walls, of the Temple. In like manner, to furnish the foreign Jews with the Hebrew shekel, in exchange for the currency of their own countries, for the holy tax, the money-changers established themselves in the same sacred enclosure. It is strange that such a desecration of the sanctuary should have been permitted by the Sanhedrim; and it shows the hollowness of their professed regard for the purity of divine worship, that, not improbably from corrupt motives, the abuse was in fact tolerated by them. On this His first appearance in the Temple as the anointed Prophet of Israel, our Lord assumed the

authority which belonged to such a character, by publicly protesting against so gross a violation of the principles of the divine law. Finding "in the Temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting; . . . when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and He 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 a house of merchandise."¹ The significance of the act was not misunderstood. His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And "the Jews [the Pharisees] said unto Him, What sign showest Thou that Thou doest these things?" That is, what miraculous evidence dost Thou furnish of that prophetic character in which alone it would be justifiable in Thee to assume such authority?²

It was on this occasion also that the memorable interview took place with Nicodemus. Of that which passed at this interview we shall afterwards have occasion to speak.

From Jerusalem, probably immediately after the days occupied by the Passover had closed, our Lord retired to a place which appears to have been in the wilderness of Judea,³ not far distant from Salim, in the neighbourhood of which John was

¹ John, ii. 14, *sq.*

² John, ii. 17, 18.

³ Wieseler, Chron. Syn., 249, *sq.*

then baptising. He was still attended by His disciples. He remained in this part of the land of Judea for a period which has been variously estimated at from about twenty-six days¹ to a period of not less than between eight and nine months;² and in the labours in which He engaged met with so much acceptance among the people that it was reported He made more disciples than John.

Of the ministry in the wilderness of Judea at this period, as of the earlier Judean ministries generally, we have no information except in the fourth Gospel; and of the former even John furnishes us with hardly any details. From the fact that some of the disciples are here described as administering to those who joined their body the rite of baptism, apparently in accommodation to the practice and in accordance with the forms of John the Baptist, it seems probable that our Lord had not yet considered them ripe for a full disclosure of the distinctions between His own ministry and that of the Baptist. The early Judean ministry may be assumed to have been as a rule tentative and preparatory. From first to last our Lord's personal labours were carried out on the principle of teaching men His doctrine "as they were able to bear it."

The publicity given to the reports just mentioned as to the number of the converts made by our Lord at this time was now the occasion of an important change in the sphere of His labours. These

¹ Greswell, *Diss.*, ii. 202.

² Wieseler, *Chron. Syn.*, 254, *sq.*

reports had reached the Pharisees. To protect Himself against interference on the part of the Sanhedrim, in which the Pharisaic party was then dominant, our Lord left Judea for Galilee; and passing through Samaria by way of Sychar, where the conversation with the woman of Samaria, and its remarkable results, detained Him for three days, He entered upon that Galilean ministry to which He almost exclusively devoted Himself for the next two years of His life, and of which we have more complete details than, except in the case of the Passion week, of any other period of His public labours.

He fixed His ordinary residence in Capernaum.

Takes up His residence in Capernaum. He seems to have been legally regarded as an inhabitant, if He did not become a householder in the town, and in that capacity to have paid to the local collector the taxes chargeable on all Jews for the maintenance of the Temple worship.¹ Capernaum was thenceforward "His own city."² Here He was throughout this whole period "at home,"³ as far as any place could be said to form a home for One whom alike the work to which He had devoted Himself and the persecutions it exposed Him to made so much of a wanderer. He Himself said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the

¹ Neander; Greswell's Diss., ii. 251; Lightfoot, Works, xi. 239; Winer, R. W. B., s. v. Sekel. Wieseler supposes the *δίδραχμον* to have been a tax payable not to the Temple, but to Rome, Chron. Syn., 264, sq.

² Mat. ix. 1.

³ Ἐν οἴκῳ, Mat. ii. 1.

air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.”¹ Beyond the fact that it must have been on the western shore of the Lake of Tiberias, its site is unascertained, though the preponderance of evidence appears to be in favour of Tel Hum, about three miles from the point at which the Jordan enters the lake.² In any case the neighbourhood was obviously well adapted for His principal headquarters, so to speak, in such a series of labours as those on which our Lord now entered. This part of the shores of the Sea of Galilee was extremely populous. Stanley has described it as “to the Roman Palestine almost what the manufacturing districts are to England.”³ With a teeming population, crowded in a multitude of cities and villages lying within easy distance of each other, it combined advantages not to be found elsewhere in Palestine; not even in Jerusalem, which, from its position as the capital of the country and the centre of its religious worship, might perhaps have seemed to us more eligible for the distinction. It was comparatively exempt from the religious prejudices and party spirit which at this time prevailed in the capital. By its remote situation it was to a great extent secured against the active hostility of the Sanhedrim. The facilities of transit from place to place afforded by the lake, with its fleets of fishing and

¹ Mat. viii. 20.

² Robinson, *Researches*, iii. 344, *sq.*; *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 342, *sq.*

³ *S. and P.*, 3d ed. 375.

other vessels ; the ready access to the territories of Philip on the opposite shores, in the event, which often occurred, of threatened danger in Galilee ; the near neighbourhood of scenes equally fitted for retirement, and for the accommodation of the crowds which came to hear the doctrine of the great Teacher ; and its central position for extended circuits of the whole northern province,—further recommended such a situation as that occupied by Capernaum. Its principal drawback might have been supposed to be found in the large numbers of Greeks and Syrians among the inhabitants of so many of the towns which surrounded the Sea of Galilee, with the prevalence of the various types of moral corruption characteristic of the heathen. These circumstances did not, however, constitute any bar to its selection for the chief sphere of the labours of One who, though sent primarily to the Jews, came as the Saviour not of one nation only, but, as regarded at least His ulterior purposes, of all men, and came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance.¹

As it is of this period of the ministry that our information is most complete, some account of the labours in which our Lord was then engaged may be not unfitly introduced.

I. The localities in which the ministry was carried on during the two years now referred to may first be noticed. Capernaum itself, and its immediate neigh-

Scenes of Galilean ministry—
Capernaum.

¹ Greswell, ii. 248 ; Milman's Hist. of Christianity, i. 177.

bourhood — the towns and villages along the western shore of the lake, all of them accessible by a few hours' sail, with the extensive plateaus surrounding its basin, uncultivated pasture-grounds, almost without any resident population, but having "much grass," and the level sandy beach, or, at Gennesareth, the undulating corn-fields, below, were, throughout this period, the most frequent scenes of the incidents recorded by the evangelists. It is unnecessary to attempt to enumerate all the details in the history of the Galilean ministry which are associated with this district. Of the miracles, the healing of the nobleman's son in Capernaum (though effected when Jesus Himself was absent in Cana); the healing of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, of Peter's wife's mother, and many other miracles of healing on the same day; the miraculous draught of fishes; the stilling of the storm; the raising of Jairus's daughter; the healing the paralytic whose bed was let down through the roof of the house in which Jesus was teaching; the healing of the withered hand in the synagogue of Capernaum, and the series of miracles which followed; the healing the centurion's servant; the feeding of the five thousand; the walking on the sea, and many others—all belong to Capernaum and its neighbourhood. To the same locality must be assigned the Sermon on the Mount; the series of parables spoken by the seaside, at a point so close to Capernaum that Jesus is described as having left His home

immediately before and returned to it immediately afterwards ; with the other parables, and exposition of those before spoken, which were addressed to the disciples alone in the house itself ; and the discourse¹ in which Christ made Himself known as the Bread of Life. It was in the district of which Capernaum was the centre that our Lord found, as far as appears, the whole of the twelve disciples—unless Judas Iscariot be an exception²—one of them being a tax-gatherer in the town itself ; some fishermen, either of Capernaum or other towns on the same part of the shores of the Galilean lake. Then it was in the same neighbourhood that these men first received their commission, and that the exhortation was addressed to them by which their duties were prescribed, and they were warned of the trials which they might expect to encounter in their Master's service.

Our Lord, however, did not by any means confine His ministry at this time to Capernaum and the Lake of Galilee. In the first place, more than Journeys to Jerusalem. one journey was taken to Jerusalem, for the purpose of attending those Jewish festivals which required personal attendance at the Temple ; and on these occasions the public labours of our Lord were for a time transferred to the holy city. One of these occasions is referred to at some length in John, v. 1. That the feast of the Jews there mentioned was a Passover, appears on grounds

¹ John, vi. 26, *sq.*

² Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, s. v. Judas Iscariot.

to be afterwards noticed. An interval of eighteen months followed, during which our Lord remained without interruption in Galilee, being evidently precluded from going up to any of the stated festivals by the risk of a premature interruption to His work from the hostility of the Pharisees. It appears probable that the last Feast of Tabernacles and that of Dedication, both of which we know He attended, preceded His final departure from Galilee.

There were, however, also many lengthened journeys at this time taken by Jesus besides those to Jerusalem, journeys which, in like manner, transferred His ministry for considerable periods from the shores of the Galilean lake. Some of these, apparently not less than three of them, assumed the form of regular circuits of Galilee. Circuits of Galilee. Galilee, embracing, if not (for this is hardly possible) every one, the greater number of the towns and villages. We have an account of the first stage of one of these progresses in Luke, vii. 11-50, but no details are given us of their course throughout. In the case now referred to, the evangelist carries us a single day's journey to Nain, and after describing events occurring in that town, and apparently occupying several days, adds—"And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and speaking the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." The only further information he supplies as to this circuit relates to the companions by whom our Lord was accompanied during its progress. "The twelve," he says,

“were with Him; and certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, . . . and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others which ministered to Him of their substance.”¹ Matthew mentions two such circuits. The first apparently preceding that just referred to, is thus described : “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”² The other³ is noticed in almost identical terms. Mr Greswell, from a calculation of the number of considerable towns which, according to Josephus, were at this time found in Galilee—namely, upwards of 200—and the distances from place to place, estimates that each circuit must have occupied not less than three, and probably as much as four, months;”⁴ but this estimate may be regarded as excessive, and as proceeding upon a too literal interpretation of the reference of the evangelists to “every city and village,” or “all the cities and villages” of Galilee. In this way, all Galilee was oftener than once personally visited by our Lord.

Visits to particular districts. Apart from the circuits just referred to, there were also journeys to, and temporary residences in, particular districts, in which the same kind of labours were

¹ Luke, viii. 1, *sq.*

² Mat. iv. 23.

³ Mat. ix. 35.

⁴ Diss., ii. 277.

carried on. Thus, on one occasion we find our Lord transferring His ministry for a time to the extreme northern limits of Galilee, and even beyond its confines in that direction. The facts are the more deserving of our attention, because in this case there was a partial anticipation by Christ Himself of labours which were afterwards to be specially committed to the apostles. He Himself was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The time had not fully come for preaching the Gospel to Jew and Greek alike. But the whole period was one of transition—a period when things past and future were intermingled, as darkness and light in the twilight; and even He who was eminently a “minister of the circumcision” is found occasionally ministering among the Gentiles. He had often before preached to such aliens from the commonwealth of Israel as joined His usual audiences in Galilee: in this case He carried His doctrine into their own territories. The third Passover of the time of the ministry had just been celebrated—a Passover during which Jesus remained in Galilee, not going up to the feast, because in Jewry His life would have been in imminent danger, and His time was not yet come. Even, however, in Capernaum the same hazard at this moment, as frequently at other times, met Him. Certain emissaries of the Sanhedrim, Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, made their appearance in that town, and began to seek matter of accusation against our Lord. Such an incident, taken in connection with the well-

known designs of the leading members of the supreme court of the Jews as regarded our Lord, was ominous of immediate danger, and our Lord, though not without first meeting and denouncing His enemies, withdrew Himself from a scene in which, in the mean time, He could not prosecute His work without peril of falling prematurely into their hands. He proceeded in the first instance to the north-western frontier, which He crossed, passing into heathen Phœnicia, and taking up His abode in the neighbourhood of the city of Tyre.¹ Tyre, it must be remembered, was a heathen city, with a population larger than Jerusalem itself. From thence, after healing the daughter of a Syro-Phœnician woman of these coasts, our Lord, according to a well-supported and generally-accepted reading,² proceeded northwards through Phœnicia to the equally-celebrated city of Sidon, which contested with Tyre the right to be considered the metropolis of the country.³ From Sidon, which

¹ *Εἰς τὰ μεθόρια Τύρου*, Mark, vii. 24. The *καὶ Σιδῶνος* which occurs in some MSS. is omitted in DL Δ lat—a, b, ff. 2, i, n, Orig. 2; and in many of the recent editions of the Greek Testament. See Alford, *in loc.*, who, speaking of the corresponding passage in Mat. xv., says: "It is not quite clear whether our Lord actually passed the frontier into the land of the heathen, or merely was on the frontier. The usage of *εἰς τὰ μέρη* in Matthew favours the former supposition. See ch. ii. 22; xvi. 13; also for *ἕρμα*, ch. ii. 16; iv. 13; viii. 34."

² "The reading in question is *ἦλθεν διὰ Σιδῶνος* (Mark, vii. 31), which . . . has been adopted by Lachmann, Tischendorf, Fritzsche, Meyer, Alford, and Tregellis, and appears certainly to deserve the preference which these critics and commentators have given to it."—Ellicott, *Hist. Lect.*, 219, note.

³ Strabo, *Geog.* xvi., 2, § 22.

was twenty miles north from Tyre, and about fifty miles from Capernaum, after a stay of uncertain duration, our Lord crossed the country, and, passing through Decapolis, returned to the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee. In this semi-heathen region He remained teaching and working miracles for some time. A fresh warning of danger met our Lord here. Probably it was not unconnected with a day's visit to Magdala on the opposite side of the lake, where He was again assailed by certain of the Scribes and Pharisees. He accordingly retraced His steps northward as far as Cæsarea Philippi. This town, otherwise named Panium, or Panias, from a grotto dedicated to the god Pan in the immediate neighbourhood,¹ was four miles east from Dan (with which it is sometimes erroneously identified²), the extreme limit of Palestine to the north, and a town which, as before stated, included a large heathen population among its inhabitants. It was in this neighbourhood, in which He must have lingered for not less, and probably for much more, than six days³ before returning to Capernaum, and in all probability on Mount Hermon⁴ that the Transfiguration took place; and other

¹ In the perpendicular rock, directly over the cavern, several niches are to be seen, apparently intended to receive statues, with the remains of inscriptions, most of which are now illegible. In one of them, however, copied by Burckhardt, the title *ἱερεὺς θεοῦ πανός*, a priest of Pan, is distinctly legible.—Robinson, *Researches*, iii. 347.

² Reland, *Palæstina*, ii. 918, *sq.*; Winer, *RWB*, s. v., Cæsarea; Robinson, iii. 351, *sq.*

³ Luke, ix. 28.

⁴ Lightfoot, *Works*, xi. 405, *sq.*

events which occupy a prominent position in the Gospels belong to the same locality. I have referred to this journey especially, because it affords us an instance of the prosecution by Jesus of His prophetic labours in the midst, and in part even within the territories, of the heathen; but there were other journeys of the same general character, though embracing shorter periods, and confined to districts less distant from Capernaum. Among these were two visits to Nazareth, the one at the very commencement of the ministry in Galilee,¹ the other² some time afterwards, though in both cases with similar results.³

II. A few words as to the *means* through which our Lord carried on His ministry at this period.

Whether at Capernaum and its neighbourhood, or in His circuits of Galilee, or in places in that province specially visited, or in Jerusalem on the occasion of the feasts, these means were everywhere very much the same.

(I.) One great means was the same as that which by the express will of God has been more especially employed by His servants both before and since the manifestation of our Lord in the flesh—namely, oral discourse. He went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom.⁴ “For therefore”—*i.e.*, to this end—

¹ Luke, iv. 1. ² Mark, vi. 1, *sq.*; cf. Mat. iii. 13, and xiii. 54, *sq.*

³ See Wieseler, Chron. Syn., 285. ⁴ Mat. iv. 23.

He said, "came I forth;" or, according to Luke's account, "therefore am I sent."¹ It was not always in the form of public discourses, or sermons, so to speak, that our Lord thus preached the Gospel. Much of the oral teaching of our Lord was conveyed in the course of private and familiar conversation. He never lost any opportunity of working the work of Him that sent Him: and His most informal utterances, words spoken at table, or on the road, to those who walked beside Him in His journeys from place to place, or to passers-by who stopped Him in the streets, live in all men's memories to this day, as expressions of the loftiest and most momentous truths which the human mind can receive. Many things were also purposely reserved for the ears of the inner circle of the disciples, and especially were reserved for the Twelve, when He was with them alone—to them it being given to know mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which as yet were spoken to others only in parables.² Oral teaching, however, was, whether in the form of sustained discourses—preached in the synagogues, which afforded our Lord facilities for engaging in this part of His work of which He did not fail largely to avail Himself, or wherever the

¹ To translate the words in Mark i. 38, *Σὺς τὸντο ἐξῆλθον*, "therefore have I left Capernaum at this time," or "undertaken this journey," as Greswell (Diss. ii. 268) and Meyer (*in loc.*) do, or to suppose that any other coming forth is meant but the coming forth from the Father, appears to be inadmissible, especially in the view of the corresponding passage in Luke; cf. John, viii. 42.

² Mat. xiii. 11.

people gathered together to hear His doctrine—or in other forms, one great means by which He fulfilled His ministry.

(2.) It was not only by oral discourse, whether in public or more privately, whether in the form of sustained addresses to a great audience or less formal sayings to individuals, that our Lord ministered among men. The miracles of the Gospels must be included among the means by which the great Teacher fulfilled His prophetic office. Next to His teaching by oral discourse, miracles of healing, and other mighty works, engrossed a principal part of our Lord's time at this, as at every other, period of His ministry—occupied, indeed, so much of His time, that if they were not to be regarded as themselves a mode of teaching, it would be difficult to reconcile the share of attention devoted to such works with the general scope of the ministry. Most of them were miracles of healing, or works by which one way or other the temporal welfare and happiness of men were promoted. Are we to suppose that Christ in those days devoted Himself partly to the work of ministering to men's spiritual, and in part, but independently of the other class of labours, to ministering to their temporal, wants and necessities? He did both, but not independently of each other, or without relation to a common object, both being alike means of carrying on His work, as the Light of the world. Nor was it only as evidences of His authority; nor even—for this Christ's miracles also

were—evidences that He was Himself, as He professed to be, the Son of God, and thus revelations of His own power and majesty,—that an intimate relation subsisted between the words of Jesus and His miracles. Both in their own character and in the whole circumstances and manner in which they were done, the miracles, like all the rest of the works accomplished by Christ on earth, are revelations of the nature of God. It is not necessary to inquire here how far these wonderful works were, as a rule, meant to be symbolical. That the blighting of the barren fig-tree was, not less truly than the corresponding parable, intended to convey spiritual or figurative truth, can hardly be doubted. Were all the miracles in like manner parables in action—the giving sight to the physically blind representing the function of Christ as the Saviour in opening the eyes of the understanding; the raising of Lazarus, or the widow's son, or Jairus's daughter, His function in raising men dead in sin to newness of life? Whether this be so, I shall not here consider. Take them in their most literal and obvious meaning, they are revelations of the nature of God not less than any of those words by which our Saviour showed men the Father. For instance, if our Lord raised the widow's son only because, seeing the mother's anguish, He was filled with compassion for her, or if He fed the five thousand only because He knew that they had long fasted, and could not in the desert place supply themselves with food—if there

was no latent or occult design in the miracle in either case, no purpose of taking the opportunity to manifest His own power, or to convey figuratively a moral or spiritual lesson, even thus regarded—as they must in any event be regarded—as works of mercy and compassion on the part of Him who was one with the Father, so that those who saw Him saw the Father,—these miracles were themselves full of instruction as to the nature of God. That “God is love,” that “He is rich in mercy,” that He is not above caring for us, that we may depend on His sympathy and help in all our troubles, of whatever kind, are important truths continually lost sight of, and truths which were never more vividly or intelligibly made known to us than in these and similar miracles.

(3.) Among the means by which Christ fulfilled His ministry was, it must be noticed, His whole life. St John says of the Master with whom he and others were permitted for a time to associate, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”¹ These words cannot refer *alone*,² like those in which St Peter says, “We were eyewitnesses of His majesty,” to the Transfiguration;³ nor is there any reason to restrict their application to the miracles generally by which He manifested forth His glory.⁴ The reference is doubtless to the

¹ John, i. 14.

³ 2 Peter, i. 16.

² See Alford, N. T., *in loc.*

⁴ John, ii. 11.

whole life of Christ, and the meaning the same as in the corresponding passage in John's first Epistle,¹ "The life was manifested, and we saw it." The works of Christ were chiefly miracles; miracles were His everyday labours, "the natural form of working for Him who was dwelt in by all the fulness of God."² But in whatever He did, even in those acts of His life in which no supernatural element manifested itself—in the whole sum of that life in which were continually seen not only power and majesty, but perfect holiness, infinite compassion and tenderness, a wisdom that was never at fault, entire submission to the will of God, and a love which passeth knowledge, our Lord manifested forth His glory to the world.

III. The general character of our Lord's labours at this period will perhaps best be exhibited by one or two illustrations of the manner in which His time was actually spent.

Our first illustration will be taken from the history of the very commencement of the ministry in Galilee. It is the history of a single day, and that day the Jewish Sabbath. According to Greswell, the day in question was the 5th of June in the year 27 of our era. Wieseler, in accordance with his chronological scheme, selects a later date; but the point is of little importance here. Our Lord had already been a few weeks in Galilee, on His return

A Sabbath
at Capernaum.

¹ 1 John, i. 2.

² Trench, *Miracles*, p. 8.

from the early Judean ministry. He appears first to have visited His former home, where—not without incurring great personal danger—He had taught in the synagogue in which for so many years He had been accustomed to worship.¹ In Cana, whither He first retired after His escape from Nazareth, He had pronounced the words by which the son of a nobleman of Capernaum who came to Him for His aid was miraculously restored to health; and probably on the day before that with which we are here concerned He had arrived at the city where this recent and other earlier miracles² had prepared for Him a special welcome. It appears to have been on His arrival that, going down to the sea-shore, He again called to His side four of those disciples who had originally been summoned to become His followers at Bethabara nearly a year before, but had at this time returned to their ordinary occupation as fishermen. We know something of the synagogue of Capernaum. On the morning of the Sabbath now referred to we find our Lord, as His custom was everywhere, in attendance on the synagogue worship. According to Vitringa,³ the usual hour of morning worship was the same as in the Temple service. The account of this day's proceedings begin, then, at nine o'clock in the morning. From what we know otherwise of the forms of worship in use in the synagogues of the Jews, we can supply

¹ Luke, iv. 16, *sq.*

² Luke, iv. 23.

³ De Syn. Vet., prol. iv. § 3.

details into which the evangelist, writing primarily for readers familiar with these forms, does not enter. The usual prayers had been offered up by the officiating minister, and the portions of Scripture appointed for the day had been read, first in the original, and afterwards in the mother tongue. A sermon or exposition of Scripture generally followed; and in conformity with a usage already referred to, which admitted of this part of the duty being undertaken by others than the stated office-bearers of the synagogue, our Lord now took the place of the preacher. The discourse He delivered is not reported. We know nothing of it except in the impression it produced on the audience. "They were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one that had authority," and "His word was with power."¹ Then followed one of those "mighty works" to which the people of Capernaum were already no strangers, but with which they were afterwards to become so familiar. In the synagogue that morning there was present "a man with an unclean spirit"—a sufferer from a mysterious affliction—not perhaps unknown in all times, but which, as spiritual evils no less than physical maladies have often done,² appears to have been permitted to partake of the character of an epidemic at this extraordinary period. The cries of

¹ Mark, i. 22; Luke, iv. 32.

² See Hecher's Epidemics of the Middle Ages, p. 87, *sq.*; Calmeil, De La Folie, *passim*; and on the whole subject, Trench, Miracles, 151, *sq.*

the demoniac interrupted the service. Then "Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him;" the effect being that "they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this?—[that is, what new doctrine is it which is thus attested, as were the revelations of the ancient prophets, by miracles?] for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him."¹ From the synagogue, Jesus, accompanied by the four disciples now again in attendance, passed to the house of Simon Peter, one of their number. Here, again, was wrought a miracle of healing. Peter's wife's mother was lying in the house sick, "taken with a great fever." It is a proof of the fact already assumed, as to our Lord's arrival at Capernaum on this occasion having just taken place, that He had not before been informed of the condition of the relative of a follower so intimately associated with Him. They now "tell Him of her. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her!" The visit to Peter's house was probably at the hour of the mid-day meal.² That the woman suddenly restored to health arose and "ministered to" (or waited upon) Jesus and the disciples, is especially noticed by all the synoptics. Of this day's proceedings we have no further ac-

¹ Mark, i. 23, *sq.*

² Greswell, *Diss.*, ii. 26.

count till six o'clock in the evening.¹ But when the sun had set, and the legal Sabbath ended, a strange spectacle presented itself in Capernaum. All the city was gathered together at the door of the house where Jesus was. "And there were brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils." And as far as the lateness of the hour permitted,² He cast out the spirits with His word, and "healed all that were sick." Thus ended the works of a day, which all writers on the life of Christ have noticed, as affording us, in the words of Ewald, "a specimen of His daily activity during the whole of this period."³

The next illustration is from the history of the second year of the Galilean ministry. Our Lord had been at the Passover in Jerusalem,⁴ and had just returned to Capernaum. At the feast He had given great offence to the Pharisees. A miracle of healing wrought on the Sabbath-day in defiance of their traditions, had been followed up by the assertion of His claims to be received as the Son of God. After the account of the cure of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, John adds, "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath-day;" and "the Jews [the Pharisees⁵]

¹ Wieseler, Chron. Synop., 290.

² Cf. Mark, i. 34 ; with Meyer's note, Comment. *in loc.*

³ Geschichte d. Volkes Israel, iv. 290.

⁴ John, v. 1.

⁵ Cf. Meyer, on John, xi. 19.

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.”¹ On His return to His own home, the early hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees of Capernaum, who doubtless had also been at the feast, and were cognisant of all that had occurred there, began to assume a more threatening aspect than it had hitherto done. Fresh causes of offence were not wanting. Our Lord’s vindication of His disciples for a transgression of the traditionary law by plucking the ears of corn to satisfy their hunger, during a walk on the Sabbath-eve after the return, and, the next morning, the healing of a man with a withered hand in the synagogue, yet further exasperated His enemies. A conspiracy was even formed among them to put our Lord to death. After the miracle they “were filled with madness,”² and on leaving the synagogue they “held a council against Him,” “communing one with another” “how they might destroy Him.”³ When Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from Capernaum.⁴ It is with the events of the day immediately following His departure that we are at present concerned. The exact spot which was the scene of the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount is not mentioned by any of the evangelists, but the traditionary “Mount of Beatitudes”—unlike many of the other supposed holy places of Palestine whose claims rest alone on

¹ John, v. 16, 18.

² Luke, vi. 11.

³ Mat. xii. 14; Luke, vi. 11.

⁴ Mat. xii. 15.

local tradition—appears, from its position and topographical character generally, to correspond in a remarkable degree with such indications of the locality as are afforded us in the sacred text.¹ The Horns of Hattin form a long ridge, at its highest point about 60 feet in altitude, in the midst of the undulating table-land—itsself 1000 feet above the level of the lake—which overlooks the Sea of Galilee on the west. The place is not far from Tiberias, and must have been easily accessible from Capernaum by water. According to Stanley, “the situation is central both to the peasants of the Galilean hills and the fishermen of the Galilean lake.”² Our Lord had reached the spot in the evening, accompanied by the disciples. The night was spent by Him alone on the mountain in prayer. When it was day He summoned to Him these faithful followers; and it was upon this occasion that He selected from their number the body so well known in the after-history of the ministry and of the Church as the Twelve Apostles. It is a fact well worthy of special observation, that the Twelve were not thus formally called to their office without having already passed through a period of probation.³ In the mean time a great multitude of people, who must have obtained information at Capernaum of the place of His retreat, had col-

¹ Stanley, S. and P., 368.

² S. and P., 368.

³ Greswell, Diss., ii. 276, who supposes a whole year elapsed between the formal call of the first four disciples at the Sea of Galilee and the ordination of the Twelve Apostles.

lected on the plain out of which the Horns of Hattin rise. The account given us of the places from which they were drawn affords us a striking indication of the extent of country over which even those of our Lord's labours which were fulfilled in the neighbourhood of the Galilean lake must have always exerted a direct influence. Not only all Galilee, but Jerusalem, the country districts of Judea, Decapolis, and other regions beyond the Jordan, and even Tyre and Sidon,¹ found representatives in the mixed multitude which had followed Jesus on this occasion to the plain of Hattin. It was to such an audience that our Lord addressed the Sermon on the Mount—the only one of our Lord's discourses of the same class which has been fully reported in the Gospels; though doubtless not more than an example of a mode in which our Lord was often accustomed to fulfil His office when He went about through all Galilee "teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God."

It is here assumed that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered as reported. The unity of the discourse is sometimes questioned; and the hypothesis that, if not a compendium of the doctrine of our Lord, or a summary of the general scope of His teaching at this period, the series of words of Jesus to be found in Mat. v. 3—vii. 27, includes, with the substance of one well-known sermon, other sayings delivered about the same time, in a differ-

¹ Mat. iv. 25; Luke, vi. 17.

ent connection, has had many supporters. The grounds of this hypothesis may be given in the words of Olshausen. "The Sermon on the Mount," he says, "in the form in which it is given us by Matthew, cannot possibly have formed a whole when delivered by Jesus. . . . A comparison of Luke is decisive in favour of this opinion. We do indeed find in that Gospel¹ a discourse of Jesus, evidently very nearly related to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, and at the beginning and end apparently identical with it, but it is much shorter than that in Matthew. . . . But [those passages of the Sermon on the Mount which are peculiar to Matthew] are placed for the most part in quite a different connection in Luke, and that connection, too, so accurately fixed, that we are compelled to regard them as preserved by Luke in their original connection. In addition to this, there evidently prevails in Luke's Gospel an accuracy of historical combination which is wanting in that of Matthew. If, therefore, we choose to maintain the unity of the Sermon on the Mount, we are driven to the hypothesis, that those parts of it which stand in Luke in a different and distinctly specified connection² were spoken twice. . . . There is no alternative but to adopt the opinion, that the unity of the Sermon on the Mount has not descended to us from the Saviour Himself, but

¹ vi. 17, *ff.*

² *E.g.*, the Lord's Prayer, Luke, xi. 1, *ff.*, compared with Mat. vi. 7, *ff.*

from Matthew.”¹ The hypothesis of Neander is somewhat different. Proceeding on the assumption of a Hebrew original for Matthew’s Gospel, he supposes that to the Sermon on the Mount, as reported in the Hebrew Matthew, the Greek editors — of whose existence, it must be remembered, we have no evidence — added from Luke other sayings of Christ “allied to those in the organic connection of the discourse, but spoken on other occasions.”² Others, however, with Calvin, than whom no more able expositor of Scripture can be named, maintain a view more consistent with the natural and obvious meaning of the words in which Matthew introduces and closes the discourse of our Lord in question, holding that though some of the same sayings may have been used by Him on other occasions and in a different connection, the Sermon in Matthew was uttered by our Lord as it is there given: a view adopted, in more recent times, by scholars like Alford, Stier, and Elliott.³ That Christ should have repeated more than once, in different circumstances or to different audiences, substantially the same words, is indeed in itself probable; and as Stier has pointed out, even “within the individual evangelists such recurrence is incontestable.”⁴

Accepting the Sermon on the Mount as, in any event, in substance, an example of one mode in

¹ Commentary on the Gospels (Clark), i. 185, *sq.*

² Life of Christ (Bohn), 241.

³ Hist. Lect., 180.

⁴ Words of Jesus (Clark), i. 93.

which our Lord was accustomed to teach the people in His more public discourses, a single sentence or two may not be out of place as to its style and subject-matter. Of its dogmatic import I shall here say nothing, reserving some notice of the doctrine of Christ generally for another chapter. Perhaps the first thing in it which strikes us is the fact how truly it was a discourse *ad homines* : a discourse adapted to the condition, circumstances, and requirements of the audience before whom it was spoken ; a discourse in which the truth was conveyed in forms specially appropriate to these men. The topics to which it refers are all topics possessing a direct interest for men of the Jewish race and faith, as the great body of the congregation assembled around our Lord must have been, and for Jews of that particular age ; the sins and erroneous opinions which it denounces are those of that particular nation and period ; the truths it insists upon are such as were then and there most commonly lost sight of ; and the language and modes of illustration had the same applicability to the hearers. That much of our Lord's teaching, here as elsewhere, was *before His age*, is certain : even the disciples could not, at the time, enter fully into its meaning. Even, however, in the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount, we see an accommodation to their incapacity. Another distinctive feature of this so-called Sermon must also be noticed. With the forms of a discourse which might be delivered by any humble pastor of a con-

gregation to the flock to whom he strives "rightly to divide the word of truth," apportioning to every one the instruction most suitable to him, it is in substance a new revelation of the divine will. Not that everything in the Sermon on the Mount is truth never before heard in the world. Christ "brought out of His treasury things new and old." There is here a republication of much doctrine which had been known long ago, though too often forgotten, and too little attended to. It has been alleged that some of the sayings of our Lord in this discourse may be traced to proverbial expressions already current among the Jews—*e.g.*, the saying, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." It is needless to dispute a statement which, whether it be well founded or not, is equally without importance. Essentially the Sermon on the Mount is not, like other sermons, a reproduction of familiar truth, but a new revelation from God. The multitudes rightly judged when they said that our Lord here "spoke as one having [Himself] authority." In the very forms of His expression He assumed the character of a prophet—nay, of more than a prophet. And the formula, "I say unto you," is justified by the sayings which it introduced; for these are sayings which the world of that day, as of all times, owed, and owes, exclusively to Him. Of the style of the Sermon on the Mount it is difficult to speak. The mere words, of course, do not themselves explain the power of Christ as

a Teacher over those who themselves heard with their own ears Him who spake as never man spake. What Æschines said of the eloquence of Demosthenes must have been not less applicable to that of Jesus. When an oration of his great rival, recited in his hearing, was followed by loud plaudits, Æschines said to his companions, "If the repetition of this speech of Demosthenes moves you so much, what would you have felt if you had heard him speak it himself?" As regards our Lord's discourses, a very great privilege has been denied us. "We have" not "heard him ourselves."¹ The tones of His voice, the expression of His countenance, the gesture—all sympathising with the thoughts and the feelings of the Speaker—are for ever lost to us. But the words remain; and by them—though read, not heard—we are in some degree at least enabled to understand how even such men as failed to grasp the full meaning of our Lord's teaching were so strangely moved by it. No description can do justice to the beauty, perspicacity, simplicity, and majesty of the language of this discourse. There is nothing like it. We can only say, "Never man spake like this Man."

After all these sayings were spoken "in the audience of the people," we are told that our Lord immediately left the mountain,² and before proceeding further returned to spend the night at Capernaum.

¹ John, iv. 42.

² Luke, vii. 1.

One other illustration of the Galilean ministry. Visit to Nain. The incidents now to be referred to immediately followed the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount. It has been already mentioned that our Lord on this occasion left Capernaum to escape the danger arising from a conspiracy on the part of the Pharisees of that town, and necessarily with a view to a protracted absence. From the Horns of Hattin, if this were indeed the true "Mount of Beatitudes," our Lord, however, as just said, found occasion to return—it seems to have been only for a night—to the very place where His danger was the greatest. On His arrival at Capernaum a striking incident occurred. He was met by the elders of the synagogue, with a request which came through them the more fitly that it was made at the instance of the man by whose munificence the synagogue of Capernaum had recently been rebuilt. Galilee had for some time been garrisoned in part by Roman and other foreign soldiers ;¹ and this man, as a centurion, was probably in charge of the troops stationed in Capernaum. Though an alien by birth, he had become a proselyte to the faith of Israel. He besought that Jesus would come and heal his servant, who lay sick of the palsy, "grievously tormented." The terms of a second message to Him as He approached the house gained from our Lord not only the fulfilment of this request,

¹ Jos., B. J., I. 15, § 6 ; Winer (RWB), s. v. Kriegsheer.

but the commendation which, when merited, He never withheld from any one merely on the ground of outward distinctions, whether of blood or religious profession. Our Lord even said that "He had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." His stay at Capernaum was, as has been said, only for a single night. The next day, accompanied by His disciples and much people, He again left His home ; and left it, as it would seem, for several weeks, not returning until He had completed His second circuit of Galilee. We can only here follow His steps to His first resting-place. This was the town of Nain, a town about twenty-five miles distant.¹ We have no account of the journey itself. Such journeys were, we know, often the occasions of our Lord's most familiar and unreserved intercourse with His immediate followers, and were frequently interrupted by applications for healing or instruction—never made in vain—from the dwellers in the villages through which they led, or from persons casually met on the road. But just before our Lord and His companions arrived at their destination, one of the most touching and instructive of all the miracles recorded in the Gospels took place. By the ordinary rate of travelling, Jesus, if He left Capernaum in the morning, would reach Nain about sunset, the hour when it was the custom of the Jews to bury their dead. As He approached the city gate, there

¹ Greswell, Diss. ii. 299.

issued forth one of those sad processions which are common to all times and places, on its way to the place of graves beyond the city walls. The event is common, but the circumstances were in this case peculiarly painful, and such as could not fail to move the heart, as they secured the interposition, of the Saviour. "When He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and they that bear him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother." It is added that "there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people. And this rumour of Him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about."

It appears that our Lord remained several days in Nain. It was here that the messengers of John the Baptist reached Him, with the strange question, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?"—a question remarkable on the part of one who had at the first been inspired to bear so decided a testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus, but probably to be accounted for by the depressing effect of an imprisonment which must now have

been continued for more than a year. The answer of our Lord is remarkable as embracing an account from His own lips of the general tenor of His ministry at this period, not in Nain only but everywhere. "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached."¹

During this sojourn at Nain, an incident which is recorded by Luke affords an illustration of the manner in which our Lord was accustomed to carry on His work as a teacher in the intercourse of private life. One of the inhabitants of the town, a member of the sect of the Pharisees, had invited Jesus to supper, "and He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat." While He was still at table, one of those unhappy outcasts who seem to have abounded in "Galilee of the Gentiles," and many of whom "the friend of publicans and sinners" appears to have reclaimed from a life of infamy, entered the apartment. According to the usages of the Jews, such an intrusion was not of itself likely to excite surprise; nor was the mark of honour she proceeded to render to our Lord uncustomary:² even in some of its details we find it afterward repeated by Mary the sister of Lazarus at Bethany.³ But to proceed with the narrative in the words of the evangelist: "Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that

¹ Luke, vii. 22.

² Lightfoot, xii. 361.

³ John, xii. 3.

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. 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. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, 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. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but 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 hath 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. And He said unto

her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."¹

From the time of the close of the ministry in Galilee, the ministrations of our Lord were much more interrupted by the growing hostility of the Pharisees. The scene of these ministrations was now again for a time to be transferred to Judea before the end, already approaching rapidly, should have arrived. There are very great difficulties in determining the sequence of some of the events at this period. In the beginning of October, in the year 29 A.D., our Lord went up from Galilee to Jerusalem, to the feast of Tabernacles. A period of eighteen months had intervened since He last attended any of the Jewish festivals, these eighteen months having been spent wholly in the northern province. "Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him,"² and His time had not yet come. But He went up now to the feast of Tabernacles. This was six months before the crucifixion. Again we find Him in Jerusalem at the feast of Dedication, in December of the same year, the only other visit He paid to the holy city being in April in the year 30 A.D., for the last Passover—the Passover

¹ Luke, vii. 1-50.

² John, vii. 1.

at which He suffered. The great difficulty is to determine what place in the history of this period is to be assigned to the incidents recorded in Luke, ix. 51—xix. 28. In this large portion of St Luke's Gospel we have what appear to be details connected with one or more journeys to Jerusalem about this time. But it is not by any means easy to decide whether it relates exclusively to the last journey to the Passover, as the introductory words of the evangelist seem to imply,¹ or also includes one or more previous journeys.² So far, however, the connection is clear. Our Lord, who had gone up to the feast of Tabernacles, "not openly, but as it were in secret,"³ no sooner began to teach and work miracles in the holy city, according to His custom, than attempts were made against His life by the party of the Pharisees. These were renewed at the feast of Dedication. At the last-named feast He was compelled to escape hastily from Jerusalem. He retired for a time to Peræa, in the neighbourhood of the Jordan, where John at first baptised, and for a time carried on His ministry in that region, in which it may be said to have been first begun. He then returned for a few days to Bethany, a step taken at the imminent hazard of His life, for the purpose of raising from the dead His friend Lazarus. The miracle only further exas-

¹ Luke, ix. 51.

² See Lightfoot, Works, iii. 109; Greswell, Diss., ii. 457; Wieseler, Chron. Syn., 316, *sq.*

³ John, vii. 10.

perated the Pharisees, who called a council, at which His death was formally resolved upon. He again sought for a time safety in flight. The place of His retreat on this occasion is described as "a city called Ephraim," "near to the wilderness." Ephraim was situated on the borders of Samaria, and about eight Roman miles from Jerusalem.¹ It was from this place that the last journey must have been in any event commenced.

Before proceeding further, let us revert for a moment to the ministrations of our Lord at the feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication. The seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters of John's Gospel are occupied almost exclusively with reports of His proceedings in Jerusalem on the occasion of these feasts, and give us a vivid picture of the character of the labours in which He was accustomed to engage during His occasional visits to the capital. There is not much to distinguish His work there from that which we have found to have been its ordinary course in Galilee. More of His time was necessarily occupied in vindicating His own claims against His opponents, less to the regular preaching of the Gospel. It must not be lost sight of, however, that He taught the same doctrine in the midst of the most learned men of the nation, and the great leaders of public opinion, as well as the strangers from all parts of the world, who formed His audiences in Jerusalem on the occasions of the great feasts of the Jews, as among

¹ Wieseler, Chron. Syn., 318, note.

the peasants and fishermen of Galilee ; and that He there brought His claims to the same test of miracles.

When He left Ephraim, whither He had retired after the raising of Lazarus, it seems evident that our Lord, before entering on His last journey to Jerusalem, returned once more—a most significant fact—to Galilee, taking the route through Samaria.¹ He was now, as always, accompanied by the Twelve. How long He remained in Galilee is uncertain. To this journey, however—which appears to have been little more than a hurried transit through the province²—or to the early part of the return journey, belong many discourses preserved in Luke, xvii. and xviii. ; for instance, that in which He compared the days of the Son of Man to the days of Noah and of Lot ; the parable of the importunate widow ; the parable of the Pharisee and the publican ; the words, “ Suffer the 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 shall in no wise enter therein ;” and the instructions addressed to the young ruler who asked, “ Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ?”³ When He finally departed from the scenes of so many of His most peaceful and least uninterrupted labours, where, too, “ most of His mighty

¹ Wieseler, Chron. Syn., 322.

² Luke, xvii. 11.

³ Luke, xvii. 20 ; xviii. 30. Cf. Mat. xix. 1, *sq.* ; Mark, x. 1, *sq.*

works were done," He no longer did so in secret, as on the occasion of His visit nearly six months before to the feast of Tabernacles. His time had come. There was no need for further precautions, as He plainly forewarned the disciples. "He took unto Him the Twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again."¹ The whole journey was in keeping with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem with which it closed. He took the route through Peræa.² It seems evident that He had joined—whether at an earlier stage of His journey or not, at all events before entering Jericho—one of the great companies then on their way to the Passover. Among His immediate associates, besides the Twelve, were those Galilean women who are afterwards mentioned as present at the crucifixion. These included "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome (who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him);" also "many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem."³ Salome is supposed to have been the mother of James and John, and the same who

¹ Luke, xviii. 31, *sq.*² Mat. xix. 1; Mark, x. 11.³ Mark, xv. 40.

with her sons came in the course of this journey to Jesus with the extraordinary request that to these disciples might be assigned the places of highest honour in the kingdom which they and others fondly supposed should immediately appear.¹ The company had grown to a great multitude before it reached Jericho, ever doubtless gathering new accessions from the pilgrim bands who were in like manner hastening to the feast.² At Jericho our Lord paused for a time, not only to restore two blind men to sight, one of them before entering, and the other on leaving the town ;³ but especially to visit and bring salvation to the house of Zaccheus, a rich publican in the city. He also, at this stage of His progress, spoke the parable of the Pounds. It was spoken with special relation to His approaching death.⁴ Jericho was eighteen miles from Jerusalem, the road for the most part being a steep ascent through a wild and mountainous country. Up this road, the scene of the parable of the good Samaritan, the cavalcade proceeded, with Jesus in advance ;⁵ and it reached Bethany on the eve of the Sabbath preceding the Passover.⁶ It is probable that, like our Lord Himself,⁷ many of the companions of His journey remained here over the Sabbath.⁸ The supper in the house of Simon the leper, at which Lazarus and Martha and Mary were present, and where the

¹ Mat. xx. 20 ; Luke, xix. 11.

³ Wieseler, Chron. Syn., 332.

⁵ Mark, x. 32 ; Luke, xix. 28.

⁷ Wieseler, Chron. Syn., 392.

² Luke, xviii. 35, *sq.* ; xix. 3.

⁴ Luke, xix. 11.

⁶ John, xii. 1.

⁸ Mat. xxi. 9.

last-named disciple anointed Him with the spike-nard, seems to have taken place on the evening of that day. On the following day, the morning of the first day of the week, He entered Jerusalem. The acclamations of the multitudes who went before and followed Him, and the homage which they paid to Him, not without His own acquiescence,¹ did not deceive our Lord for a moment as to the final result of His journey. "When He was come near He beheld 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."²

The Passion Week, as it has been called, is not the least memorable period of the earthly life of our Lord, even in relation to His personal ministry. The approach of the day when His great work as the Redeemer of mankind should be consummated by the sacrifice on the cross did not interrupt His labours as the Prophet of the Church which He was then to purchase with His own blood. Part of these last days was spent in public labours not dissimilar from those which had characterised the earlier ministries of Jesus in the holy city. Two days, Wednesday and Thursday, were devoted to the inner circle of the disciples, and especially to the Twelve, with whom, even on the other days, not only during the quiet evenings at Bethany—for at this time He lodged

¹ Luke, xix. 29, *sq.*, 40.

² Luke, xix. 41.

there, and not in the city¹—and the half-hour's walk from Jerusalem, but in the midst of the crowds which then thronged Jerusalem,² He found opportunities of intimate converse. An account of some of His last words to these chosen followers, spoken in the upper chamber where He ate the Passover with them, or on the way to the garden memorable for His agony and for His betrayal, occupies, with the prayer by which He committed them to His Father, no less than five out of the twenty-one chapters of the fourth Gospel. To these last words we shall have occasion to return in another connection. As regarded the disciples, however, the ministry cannot be said to have even then closed, nor till the ascension of our Lord.³ “Unto the apostles whom He had chosen, . . . He showed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”⁴

Before closing this rapid historical sketch, a few words must be added as to the duration of the ministry of our Lord. On this point entire unanimity does not exist among the most competent inquirers into the chronology of the Gospels. The only difference of opinion lies, however, between a period of about two and a half and a period of about

¹ Cf. Mat. xxi. 17, *sq.*; xxvi. 18; Mark, xi. 12, 19, 20; Luke, xxi. 37.

² Mat. xxiv. xxv.

³ Acts, i. 22.

⁴ Acts, i. 2, 3.

three and a half years ; and the question as to which of these alternatives is the true one turns mainly, though not exclusively, on the interpretation of a single passage in the Gospel of John. It must be premised that (to adopt Winer's mode of stating the question) in that Gospel we have references to five of the Jewish feasts which were personally attended by our Lord in the time of the ministry : the first, a Passover, which took place soon (probably about six months) after the Baptism ;¹ the second, a feast only described as a "feast of the Jews ;"² the third, a feast of Tabernacles ;³ the fourth, a feast of Dedication ;⁴ and the fifth, the Passover at which Jesus was crucified.⁵ Besides these, another Passover is also mentioned as occurring within the same period, a Passover during which our Lord remained in Galilee.⁶ It follows that the public labours of our Lord must have occupied, at the lowest computation, between two and three years ; and that if the "feast of the Jews"—not otherwise described—of John, v. 1, was also a Passover, the whole period extended to about three years and a half.⁷ The question has been greatly narrowed by the results of modern research. It seems to be now generally admitted that the feast referred to must either have been a Passover or the feast Purim—a feast of which it may at least be said that neither in the authority

¹ John, ii. 13.

² Ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, John, v. 1.

³ John, vii. 2.

⁴ John, x. 22.

⁵ John, xii. and xiii.

⁶ John, vi. 4.

⁷ See Winer, *RWB*, I. 569.

by which it was held, nor in its own nature, are there to be found reasons for supposing that when so many others of the Jewish festivals were necessarily passed over, it would be specially selected for observance by our Lord. It is here throughout assumed that the "feast" of John, v. 1, *was* a Pass-over, and that the ministry extended over a period of between three and four years. This conclusion is not without incidental support from various historical data; from a consideration of the length of time required for the accomplishment of the recorded labours of our Lord; and from the terms of the parable of the barren fig-tree, which is generally allowed to refer to the duration of the ministry, and to have a chronological value. Opinion was not less divided among the early Christian fathers than it is in our own times on the general question. It was even more divided. According to Ellicott, however, "the general feeling of antiquity was that our Lord's entire ministry lasted for a period, speaking roughly, of about three years."¹ Hengstenberg claims the support of Eusebius, Theodoret, and others of the fathers, for the opinion that "the death of Christ was separated from His baptism by an interval of *exactly* three years and a half."²

¹ Hist. Lect., p. 51, note.

² Hengstenberg, *Christology*, iv. 240, *sq.* Cf. Greswell, *passim*; Wieseler, 205, *sq.*; Smith's *Dict. of Bible*, I. 1051; Winer, *RWB*, *ut supra*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF OUR LORD—

(Continued.)§ II. *Character and Aims of the Ministry.*

IN the last chapter an attempt has been made to present an outline of the historical facts of the ministry of our Lord. It is now proposed to inquire into the special *character* and *aims* of that marvellous dispensation of grace.

The word “ministry,” it need hardly be said, is a wide word—a wide word even when used exclusively in its technical acceptance. Employed in the narrowest sense as referring to the labours of men who minister to their brethren in “holy things,” it admits of various applications. “There are diversities of ministries.”¹ Nay, there are diversities among ministries which can alike claim the express appointment or sanction of Almighty God.² The institution of the ministry is recognised both in the Old Testament and in the New.

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 5.² Eph. iv. 11, *sq.*

Under both certainly the ideal of the kingdom of God is that of a universal priesthood (using the word priesthood in its largest sense); "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation."¹ But under both, the functions inherent in or potential to the Church generally, are found to be, by the will of God, delegated to orders of men who are specially set apart for the work in question: not, however, to any one order, and not in any one form, or to men with, in all respects, invariably the same duties. Thus even (to take a single period) in the apostolic age alone, we find that, "for the work of the ministry," "God gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."²

The first question to be here considered is, Whether the ministry of Christ differed wholly in its character from any ministry ever before or since committed to mere men; a question to which there can be but one answer. That our Lord, both in His person and in His work, even that part of His work of which we here speak, was infinitely raised above all His servants, is not more clearly revealed than that the ministry in which He engaged was not different essentially from ministries which have been committed in other times to mere men.³

¹ Exod. xix. 5; 1 Peter, ii. 19. See Professor Lightfoot's *Philippians*, 179, *sq.*

² Eph. iv. 11, *sq.*

³ Heb. i. 1; ii. 3; Deut. xviii. 15; Acts, iii. 22; John, xvii. 18; xx. 21.

The next question admits of an answer not less decided. If it be asked to which of the ministries recognised in Scripture that of our Lord, upon the whole, corresponded, or rather by which of them it was typified, which of them found in it its highest and most perfect realisation, the answer is, that, as regards His personal or public ministrations in those years which He specially devoted to this work, Christ fulfilled the office of a prophet, and that His ministry belonged to what Hosea calls "the ministry of the prophets."¹

On this point it is believed that much confusion and inaccuracy of thought frequently prevails. At the same time it must be stated that the view of the general character of the public labours of our Lord, during His manifestation in the flesh, which is here adopted, is that which, as a rule, has always been held by the Church.

Before bringing forward the evidence of the fact that the ministry of Christ was essentially prophetic, it may not be out of place to give, as briefly as possible, some account of what is to be understood by the ministry of the prophets, or what were the distinctive characteristics of those servants of Christ—men of like passions with their brethren—who in various ages and in different circumstances have fulfilled the prophetic office.

¹ Hos. xii. 10.

We have a wide field of observation in regard to the nature of prophecy as a whole. According to St Peter, the office in question was known in the very earliest times, or "since the world began;"¹ and Enoch and Noah before the Flood, as well as Abraham and the patriarchs, between that event and the Exodus, must be specially included in the number of the prophets. The period of the first establishment of the Mosaic dispensation was distinguished by an extraordinary affluence of the prophetic spirit. Moses himself was the greatest of the prophets of Old Testament times;² and the same spirit, though not in equal measure,³ was shared by many of those who, under Moses, were instrumental in laying the foundations of the Theocracy.⁴ During the four hundred and fifty years which followed the death of Moses we do not find much trace of prophetic activity. When at the close of that period Samuel arose, prophecy appears to have been for some time in abeyance.⁵ In the person of Samuel, however, it assumed a new phase and a more perfect development: so that Samuel is sometimes placed at the head of the prophets of Old Testament times.⁶ According to Augustine, he claims this pre-eminence as the beginning of that unbroken succession of prophets which ran

¹ Acts, iii. 21. ² Deut. xxxiv. 10. ³ Exod. xii. 6, *sq.*

⁴ Num. xi. 25, &c.

⁵ 1 Sam. iii. 1.

⁶ Ps. xcix. 6; Acts, iii. 24; Heb. xi. 32.

parallel with the monarchy from first to last.¹ Before his death, he was surrounded by a large number of ministers of God belonging to the same order; and had established a certain organisation for the prophetic body, including schools of the prophets, or collegiate institutions, in which there appear to have been combined a common residence for all those fulfilling that office, and a place of instruction or training for candidates ("the sons of the prophets") for the same ministry.² Among the prophets of the time of Samuel were not only men who devoted themselves specially to ministerial labours, but others, like David, "the prophet king," whose functions as prophets, if not subordinate to, were associated with, functions which claimed the chief part of their time and attention. It was not, however, until the disruption of the Hebrew monarchy after Solomon, that prophecy under the Old Testament attained importance as an element in the ordinary means of religious instruction provided for the chosen people. From that date till the return from the captivity, a succession of prophets occupied the chief place in the religious history of the people. Some of them, like Elijah and Elisha, have left behind them few records of their prophetic utterances. To this period, however, also belong the great teachers both of Israel and Judah, whose prophecies form so large a part of the Old Testa-

¹ *Civ. Dei.*, xvii. 1.

² Payne Smith's *Bampton Lect.*, 134, *sq.*; Stanley's *Lect. Jewish Church*, 2 ser., lect. xix.

ment canon, like Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Malachi. In Malachi the series closed. An interval of about 400 years again elapsed, during which "there was no open vision."¹ Prophecy once more, however, revived with the coming of Christ, not only in an extraordinary form in Himself, but before He entered on His ministry, in His appointed forerunner, John the Baptist; and after His ascension, in the apostles, and many others of those who partook of the miraculous gifts first bestowed on the apostolic Church at Pentecost. During the whole apostolic age, indeed—while abundant evidence is afforded that a state of things so extraordinary was not intended to be permanent—there was fulfilled "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."²

I. One predominant characteristic of the prophetic office demands our first attention, not because it is that by which it was most remarkably distinguished from all other ministries of religion—for in truth to some extent it is shared by all ministries of

First characteristic of prophecy.

¹ Lightfoot, ii. 360.

² Acts, ii. 16, *sq.*

religion—but because it is that to which all its other qualities and properties were subordinate. The prophets from first to last were pre-eminently Preachers; men who were by way of eminence Teachers of religion; or Ministers of the Word of God.

All ministries have been more or less ministries of the Word: a fact not always sufficiently attended to, and one demanding our special notice; and one bearing testimony to the paramount value of an ordinance which is sometimes subordinated in men's estimation and in practice to other means of grace, and even wholly superseded by these, but which, according to the doctrine of the New Testament, is the ordinance whereby it has above all pleased God to save souls.¹ As far as the nature of the duties undertaken by them is known to us, the ministry of the Word was discharged by the household priests of patriarchal times.² The priests under Moses were more especially called upon to serve at the altar, and offer the gifts and sacrifices prescribed in the ceremonial law, but they were also ministers of the Word, and are indeed expressly called "teaching priests."³ It was a part of their duty to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them;⁴ and although this rule appears ere long to have fallen in a great measure into desuetude

¹ John, xvii. 17; 1 Cor. i. 21; 1 Peter, i. 22-25.

² Gen. xviii. 19; 2 Peter, ii. 5.

³ 2 Chron. xv. 3.

⁴ Lev. x. 11.

(for in this respect, as in others, the priests at many periods grossly neglected their most important duties), it continued down to the days of Malachi to be regarded as always obligatory. That prophet denounces the prevalent neglect of it in his day as a departure not only from the divine ordinance, but also from the original practice, and says expressly, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they (the people) should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the *messenger* of the Lord of hosts." Nor was it only to the sons of Aaron that the duty of thus ministering in the Word was committed, but to the whole tribe of Levi.² The Levites, indeed, appear to have been employed not only in teaching the law to the worshippers who came up to the tabernacle or temple, but also (at least occasionally) in fulfilling the same duty throughout every part of the land—thus forming a body of, as it were, evangelists for all Israel. They "taught all Israel."³ In the reign of Jehoshaphat, during a period of religious revival in the southern kingdom, we find a number of them, sent under the direction of the princes, and in company with the priests, to teach in the cities of Judah, "and (it is added) they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."⁴ The same duty,

¹ Mal. ii. 7.² Deut. xxxiii. 10.³ 2 Chron. xxxv. 3.⁴ 2 Chron. xvii. 7; see also Vitringa, *De Vet. Synagoga*, l. i. pars 2, c. 8.

which thus was imposed even on the priests and Levites, formed a prominent part of the work discharged by the ministers of the synagogue,¹ and afterwards in the apostolic age by the ministers of the Christian Ecclesia, which was in great part formed both as to its orders of ministers and its services on the model of the synagogue.² To preach the Word, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine,³ is, we need hardly be reminded, a function pre-eminently committed to the Christian ministry in all after-times.

To minister in the Word of God, however, was not only one office, but the characteristic office of the prophets. They had no priestly functions committed to them. Some of them belonged by birth to the priesthood, and conjoined the priest's office with that of prophets. But many were of tribes which were incapacitated from serving at the altar; and it was no part of the duty of any of them, in virtue of the prophetic gifts or calling, to undertake purely sacerdotal functions. Neither were they pastors of congregations, like the ministers of the synagogue or the presbyters of after-times, with a special charge of souls and powers of Church discipline and government. In some cases exceptional duties of a pastoral character appear to have been fulfilled by individual prophets, as by Elisha at Mount Carmel,⁴ and Ezekiel on the banks of the river Chebar.⁵ But as a rule they

¹ Vitringa, l. iii. pars 1, c. 5 and 6.

² *Ibid.*, c. 8.

³ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

⁴ 2 Kings, iv. 23.

⁵ Ezek. xxxiii. 30, *sq.*

were not pastors of congregations. It was their special and distinctive office to minister in the Word : a fact referred to by St Paul when he says of himself in a passage sometimes misapplied, " Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel." ¹

And they were ministers of the Word, or preachers of the truth, in the most enlarged sense of the term. It has sometimes been supposed, or rather it has long been commonly imagined, that it was the special, and indeed exclusive, function of the prophets to foretell future events. At what period this popular error arose need not here be inquired, nor what were the causes which led to it. Familiar evidence of its prevalence in our own country may be found in the best standard English lexicons. In Dr Samuel Johnson's Dictionary, for example, " prophecy " is no otherwise explained than as " a declaration of something future ; prediction ; " and " prophet " as " one who foretells future events ; a predictor ; a foreteller. " Nor has the misapprehension been without at least apparent countenance in the writings of eminent Biblical scholars. Thus Vitringa, in one of his works, defines prophecy as " a prediction of some contingent circumstance or event in the future. " ² That prediction entered

¹ 1 Cor. i. 17.

² Typus Proph. Doc. Pub., quoted by Fairbairn on Prophecy, p. 18. It must be added that Vitringa elsewhere frequently refers to the more comprehensive meaning of the word.

largely into the teaching of the prophets, and, as regards those of them who lived before Christ, that predictions of the Saviour's sufferings and the glory which should follow, were intermingled with all that they spake—must, it is true, be allowed, or rather must be constantly maintained. Nor must it be forgotten that, even in Scripture, passages may be found in which—a part being taken for the whole—the word prophecy is used as synonymous with prediction.¹ But that the teaching of the prophets was not restricted to the prediction of events future—that these men not only foretold events which were to come to pass in after-times—the most superficial acquaintance with their history and writings will satisfy us. They proclaimed the will of God in regard to all matters which appertained to the spiritual good of men, and, primarily, of the men of their own times. A great part of the extant writings of the prophets will be found to be didactic rather than predictive—warnings against sin in general, or against the sins of their own times, calls to repentance, proclamations of God's mercy and faithfulness, instructions in duty (usually adapted specially to the circumstances of those amongst whom they laboured), words of consolation and encouragement for “the mourners in Zion.” Even their threatenings of future judgments, and their promises of coming blessings, with those others of their utterances which are strictly predictive, were spoken with a practical

¹ Deut. xviii. 1, 10 ; Jer. xxviii. 9 ; Acts, ii. 30.

aim—that is, to turn sinners from their sins, and to confirm and establish in the righteous a true faith in God and obedience to Him. It is of “the Scriptures of the prophets,” no less than of the other Old Testament Scriptures, that St Paul speaks when he describes them as “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works.”¹

II. The prophets, however, were not only ministers, but also *inspired* ministers of the Word. Inspiration belongs essentially to prophecy. The prophets were preachers; but all preachers are not prophets. It is the task of ordinary ministers of the Word to preach to others by the aid of natural gifts and powers that which by natural means they have themselves been taught. They have in the Scriptures a revelation already published to the world, in which all truth necessary for the instruction, edification, and comfort of men may be found. It is their part to learn what the will of the Lord is by the study of Scripture, and then faithfully, and to the best of their ability, to publish abroad among those committed to their charge that will of the Lord. They have no means of adding to the revelations of divine truth already in the possession of mankind. They cannot originate new truths, nor have they even any supernatural means of arriving at the sound interpretation of truths already contained in the

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

letter of Scripture—that is, no means but such as are, or may be, not less accessible to their hearers than to themselves. Nor, again, have they any gift of speaking what they have themselves been taught, but such as is common to them with all teachers of every description—for instance, teachers of human science. All pretences to supernatural illumination, or supernatural gifts of utterance on the part of the ordinary ministers of the Word, are without warrant, are pretences made, not necessarily in dishonesty, but at least under a delusion.

With the prophetic order the case was far otherwise. “God . . . spake . . . by the prophets.”¹ “Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”²

If we believe that “no man can by searching find out God;” that “no man knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God;” or, in other words, that religious truth is unattainable without a divine revelation, it is obvious that at some time or other, and by some means or other, it must have been necessary that God should have spoken to men. According to the Scriptures, He has so spoken; and, with one exception, He has so spoken through the instrumentality of messengers chosen from mankind for the purpose:—spoken, too, not once, but at sundry times, gradually communicating to the world a knowledge of His will, as the world required it, or was able to bear it—spoken, further, in divers manners, sometimes more directly or

¹ Heb. i. 1.

² 2 Pet. i. 21.

“face to face,” as to Moses, sometimes in dreams and visions, sometimes by intermittent and occasional revelations, sometimes by the continual indwelling of the Holy Spirit.¹ And it is one special distinction of those persons known by the name of “the prophets,” a characteristic of their ministries distinguishing them from all other ministries of the Word, that it has been immediately through them alone that God has thus spoken to the world, or that all direct revelations of the will and purposes of God have in the first instance been communicated to mankind.

We find such a claim made by themselves or on their behalf from first to last. I have referred to the general statements by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews and St Peter. Let us turn for a moment to individual prophets: To Moses “the Lord said, . . . Go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”² Or take Samuel: “And Samuel grew, and the word of the Lord was with him; . . . and all Israel . . . knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord . . . revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord, and the word of Samuel came to all Israel.”³ Or David: “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue.”⁴ Or Elijah: “The word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite.”⁵ Or Jeremiah:

¹ Num. xii. 6, *sq.*; 1 Sam. x. 11; John, xiv. 17.

² Exod. iv. 12.

³ 1 Sam. iii. 1; iv. 1.

⁴ 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

⁵ 1 Kings, xxi. 17.

“The Lord said unto me, . . . Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. . . . Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and He said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.”¹ Or Ezekiel: “The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, . . . and the Lord said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel. . . . I do send thee unto them, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, and they, whether they hear, or whether they will forbear, . . . yet shall know that a prophet hath been among them.”² Or the Twelve: “Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but your Father which speaketh in you.”³ Or St Paul: “Now we have received . . . the Spirit, which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God, which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”⁴

In prophetic teaching there is, accordingly, not only a ministry, but an *inspired* ministry of the Word. This fact does not materially affect the form of the teaching; but it affects its quality. The prophets for the most part addressed their hearers very much in the same way that uninspired preachers of the Gospel do,—in ordinary

¹ Jer. i. 7, *sq.*

² Ezek. i. 3; ii. 1, *sq.*

³ Mat. x. 19.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 12, *sq.*

language, with special reference to local, temporary, or even personal circumstances. Their doctrine, however, though the same in form, was very different in its essential properties from ordinary teaching. It was a revelation both to themselves and to all the world. And put together, as we find them in the books of the Old and New Testament, "the Scriptures of the prophets" do, in fact, constitute the only revelation of the will of God, which, except in the words of Jesus, the world possesses.

III. It was another special distinction of prophecy that those who fulfilled this function in every case received their commission directly from Almighty God. They did not preach without being sent ; but they were sent not by the Church, nor in conformity with any general regulations, but by the immediate act of God. Thus, in the times of the Mosaic law, when the work of ministering in things pertaining to God was reserved to the tribe of Levi, we find the prophets drawn indiscriminately from the tribes of Israel. That any formal act of ordination to the office or other ecclesiastical sanction was essential is doubtful. Except in the case of Elisha's investiture—if it were an investiture in the technical sense—by Elijah, and the command addressed to that prophet to "anoint Elisha,"¹ no trace of the existence of any form of consecration is to be found. Not that the prophets assumed their office

¹ 1 Kings, xix. 16, 19.

without any authority. Their authority, however, was derived immediately from God. They could say with Moses, "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob sent me ;"¹ or with Jeremiah, "the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Before I formed thee . . . I sanctified thee and ordained thee a prophet ;"² or with Paul, "I am an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father."³ After the organisation of the prophetic body by Samuel, even such authority as was implied in a connection with that body was not indispensable. Thus Amos : "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son [that is, I did not belong to the order of the prophets, neither had I been educated in the schools of the prophets],⁴ but I was an herdsman and a gatherer of sycomore fruit ; and the Lord said unto me Go, prophesy unto my people Israel."⁵

IV. One other distinction of prophecy must be noticed—namely, its connection with the power of working miracles.

Fourth characteristic of prophecy.

In the prophets, as we have found, we have a succession of ministers of religion, appearing at different periods, in the midst of various ecclesiastical organisations, in none of which did they hold any official position, ministers without orders of any kind in the ecclesiastical sense of the term ; nay, often by ecclesiastical law disqualified from receiv-

¹ Exod. iii. 15.

² Jer. i. 5.

³ Gal. i. 1.

⁴ Pusey's Minor Prophets, *in loc.*

⁵ Amos, vii. 14.

ing holy orders, who yet not only took upon them some of the functions of the ministry, but professed to do so under a commission derived immediately from God, and claimed to have their doctrines—doctrines for the most part new to the world—received as revelations from the Almighty. “What sign showest thou that thou doest such things?” is a demand which in the case of such men was inevitable, and a demand which was anticipated by the prophets themselves from the first.¹ Nor was the demand unreasonable, but the reverse; and it was a demand provided for from first to last—the provision made for it, too, being that which was best adapted to the circumstances of the case.

Those whose office it was to deliver a supernatural revelation under a supernatural authority, required a supernatural seal to their ministry; and from first to last such a seal was granted them. What attestation could be more appropriate to a “teacher come from God” than “miracles which no man could do unless God were with him?”² It is not found that all prophets without exception wrought miracles in the accepted meaning of the word. The fulfilment of their predictions was one, and in some cases apparently the only, evidence of their authority vouchsafed to them.³ But this itself was a miraculous attestation. “Mighty works,” however, of very much the same character⁴

¹ Exod. iv. 1.

² John, iii. 2.

³ Deut. xviii. 22; 1 Kings, xxvi. 28; cf. John, x. 41.

⁴ See on the distinctions between Christ's miracles and those of the Old Testament, Trench, *Miracles*, p. 33, *sq.*

as those of the Gospels, also, on special occasions, accompanied prophecy, from the time of Moses to that of those apostles of Christ, to whom "God," we are told, "bare witness, with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."¹

Such are the characteristic features of the ministry of the prophets. It can hardly be necessary to point out in detail how truly they correspond with those of the ministry of our Lord. Let it be always kept in mind that no derogation from the glory of Christ, or from the infinite superiority, as of His person, so of His work upon the whole, and even of His ministry itself, is implied in the admission of the fact that for a time He took upon Him an office which had previously been fulfilled, and was afterwards undertaken, by mere men, men of like passions with their brethren to whom they were sent. Such a fact dignifies and exalts the prophet's work, but does not detract from the glory of Christ, who, if a prophet, was infinitely more than a prophet, and who even as such occupies, by virtue of His inherent greatness, and by virtue of the greatness of the work He accomplished, a position which cannot be shared by any mere men. The humblest village pastor who at this day preaches the Word of reconciliation, may boast that the function which, with whatever weakness and conscious imperfection, he is honoured to discharge,

Distinction
between
Christ and
ordinary
prophets.

¹ Exod. vii. 9, &c. ; 1 Kings, xvii. 1, *sq.* ; 2 Kings, ii. 8 ; iv. 32 ; v. 9 ; Heb. ii. 4.

was for a time not disdained by the Saviour Himself. In thus magnifying his office, however, he never dreams of bringing down to a level with himself Him whom, as a minister of Christ, it is his duty to set forth before his people as the Son of God, and the only Mediator between God and man. Nor because He fulfilled for a time the prophetic office was Christ no more than on a level even with the greatest of the prophets. They were faithful as servants in the house of God, but Christ as a Son over His own house.¹ They were men compassed about with infirmities: He was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person.² They spoke according to the measure of the heavenly gift imparted unto them, but with an inspiration more or less limited to the special purposes contemplated in their mission; ³ "in Him the Spirit of the Father resided in unrestricted fulness; nay, He Himself knew the Father as could be done only by one who possessed the same nature, and had freest access to His bosom: so that the words He spoke, the doctrine He taught, and the works He performed, were not more His own than the Father's."⁴ Above all, the salvation they proclaimed was by Him not only proclaimed but purchased; His prophetic labours, in themselves of paramount dignity and importance, being subordinate to a higher work, in

¹ Heb. iii. 5.

² Heb. i. 3.

³ Rom. xii. 3; Eph. iv. 7; 2 Pet. iii. 15, &c.

⁴ Fairbairn on Prophecy, p. 11.

which He stood not only above but apart from them, a work in which neither they nor any man did or could participate—namely, the work that belonged to Him as the Saviour of the world, the Redeemer of mankind. It is true that, from a very early period of the history of the Church, there have not been wanting professed exponents of Christianity who have represented the Saviour, not only as a prophet, but as no more than a prophet—as but one, if the greatest, of the inspired teachers of the will of God. This was indeed the capital error into which the contemporaries—including some of the disciples—of Christ Himself fell during the subsistence of the personal ministry. His prophetic character was very generally acknowledged, as it could not fail to be acknowledged, by those men—men familiar with the history of prophecy—who heard His doctrine, and were witnesses of His miracles. He was to them “Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee;”¹ “a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people;”² but he was no more. “Whom say men that I the Son of Man am?” our Lord on one occasion asked the Twelve. The answer was: “Some say that Thou art John the Baptist [that is, John, whom all the people took for a prophet, risen from the dead];³ some Elias, some Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”⁴ It was only by the chosen few

¹ Mat. xxi. 11.

² Luke, xxiv. 19; cf. Luke, vii. 16; John, iii. 8; iv. 19; vi. 14; vii. 40; ix. 17.

³ Cf. Mat. xiv. 2.

⁴ Mat. xxi. 13; cf. Luke, ix. 8.

that He was recognised not as a prophet only, but as "the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹ And such narrow views of the person and office of Christ, as prevailed in His own day, have always found place in the Church. They have, however, no more necessary connection with the belief in the prophetic character of the ministry of our Lord, than the denial of His divine nature with the belief that "the Word was [truly] made flesh, and dwelt among men," "was made in the likeness of men," and "found in fashion as a man," being "in all points tempted like as we are."²

That the ministry of Christ was a prophetic Evidence of prophetic character of Christ's ministry. ministry; that whatever more He might be—and He was infinitely more—He was, as regarded His public ministry, a prophet, appears chiefly from the following facts: (i.) It had been predicted of Christ from a very early period that He should fulfil the prophetic office. The words of Moses, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up of your brethren like unto me,"³ is expressly applied by St Peter to our Lord in the speech delivered after Pentecost, at Solomon's Porch.⁴ That this prediction, while primarily contemplating, and only fully accomplished in, Christ, also, as appears from the context,⁵ included a secondary reference to the whole succession of the prophets after Moses, renders its testi-

¹ Mat. xvi. 15.

² John, i. 14; Philip. ii. 7; Heb. iv. 15.

³ Deut. xviii. 15.

⁴ Acts, iii. 22, *sq.*

⁵ See Hengstenberg, *Christology*, i. 95, *sq.*

mony to the prophetic character of the personal ministry the more decisive. (2.) Our Lord Himself claimed, and had attributed to Him, the same character and functions as those which appertained to the prophets generally. Thus we have found that they were eminently ministers of the Word. So Christ came teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom,¹ declaring that He had been sent to this very end.² Again, we have found, "God spake by the prophets." So did He "by His son."³ "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee [to]; and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak," was the commission given to the former;⁴ what they spoke they spoke in the name of God;⁵ and by His Spirit.⁶ Thus too our Lord: "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak;" "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me. . . . I have given them Thy word;" "He that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him;" "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me."⁷ Again, we have found that the prophets received their commission immediately from God. So likewise was it with Him who said, "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but the Father sent me;"⁸ and to the apostles,

¹ Mat. iv. 23. ² Luke, iv. 18, 19, 43; Mark, i. 38. ³ Heb. i. 1.

⁴ Jer. i. 7. ⁵ Exod. v. 2, &c. ⁶ 1 Pet. i. 10; 2 Pet. i. 21

⁷ John, xii. 49; xvii. 8.

⁸ John, viii. 42.

“As my Father sent me, so send I you.”¹ And once more we have found the authority of the prophets was attested by miracles. So it was with Christ: “The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me;” “The works which the Father has given me to do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.”² (3.) It may be added that our Lord sometimes even applies to Himself the name of a prophet, as when He said, at Nazareth, “A prophet is not without honour save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house;”³ and again, on His way to one of the feasts, when certain of the Pharisees advised Him to hasten out of Galilee, because Herod sought to kill Him, “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”⁴

When it is said that Christ fulfilled, as regarded His personal ministry, the office of a prophet, it must be added that, according to the teaching of Scripture, no ministerial functions but those belonging to prophecy were undertaken by Him. In relation to the views which are so often held as to the inseparable connection of the priestly character with the office of the Christian ministry, it may especially be noticed that no such character is in Scripture ascribed to the ministry which was fulfilled by our Lord Himself. It is true Christ is often spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews as a priest.⁵ The reference, however,

¹ John, xx. 21.

² John, x. 25; v. 36.

³ Mark, vi. 4.

⁴ Luke, xiii. 33.

⁵ Heb. ii. 17; iii. 1; iv. 14, 15; v. 10; vii. 3, 11, 15, 20, 24, 26; ix. 11; x. 21.

in all such passages, is to the mediatorial work of Christ, not to His personal ministry. He is a priest in so far as he offered Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and having passed into the heavens, "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man," "He ever liveth to make intercession for us;" thus accomplishing that which the typical services of the priesthood prefigured. As far as regarded His personal ministry, our Lord had no sacerdotal character.¹ During all His ministry we never find Him fulfilling any priestly functions. On the contrary, for the only priesthood, in the literal sense of the term, which could then claim divine sanction, He was legally disqualified. He was not of the tribe of Levi. He "pertained to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."²

What has now been said of the character of the ministry will the better prepare us to inquire into its *Aims*.

Aims of the
ministry.

It has been already stated, in general terms, that the personal disciples, together with others among whom our Lord actually carried on His prophetic labours in the days of His flesh, were the immediate objects of the personal ministry — those to whom His teaching was more immediately addressed, and whose spiritual instruction, edification, and comfort were more immediately contem-

¹ Heb. viii. 4.

² Heb. vii. 13.

plated. What is meant by such a statement, with what limitations it must be accepted as a true account of the aims of the marvellous and unprecedented dispensation in question, are points of very serious moment ; but as to the fact itself, there will be seen to be no difficulty.

In its ultimate purpose the ministry of Christ was not for any one age, but for all time ; not for the Church in the days of our Lord, but for the universal Church.

1. Thus one great design with which our Lord, once for all, eighteen hundred years ago, took upon Him in person the prophetic office, and fulfilled its functions, for a time, among those men whose singular privilege it was to be, as they are here assumed to have been, the more immediate objects of His ministrations, was one in which all mankind are equally interested—namely, the foundation of the Christian Church : that Church which is, and was destined to be throughout all time, at once the inheritor and the dispenser of all the blessings which were purchased by Christ ; and that Church which was not only formally instituted, but immovably established on the earth, and also received its doctrine and discipline, as finally delivered by Christ Himself, through the instrumentality of those men.

This ultimate design of the personal ministry appears in the history of that dispensation from first to last. Even when, at the very commencement of His public labours, our Lord addressed to

the earliest of His disciples—those five men whom He summoned to His side at Bethabara, on His return from the Temptation—the words, “Follow me;” no less than when, a year later, He said to some of the same persons, “Follow me, *and I will make you fishers of men;*” or at a still more advanced period, “*As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you;*” we find expressed the same purpose, that, namely, of gathering around Him, attaching to Himself, and instructing, as they were able to bear instruction, in the knowledge of the truth, men who should not only receive but transmit—not only enjoy themselves, but be the instruments in dispensing to others—the blessings of redemption.

We see this purpose especially exemplified in the history of the personal relations of our Lord to the twelve apostles. We see it, however, in the whole history. It would be an error to suppose that the ministrations by which Christ conferred spiritual privileges on others besides the inner circle of the Twelve, were altogether without influence on the establishment and after-progress of the Christian Church generally. We need hardly be reminded that it was not only through the instrumentality of the twelve apostles, or, indeed, of any who were received into the number of the ministers of the Word, that in the apostolic age the Christian Church was, in point of fact, either first constituted or disseminated itself over the earth. Not, so to speak, the clergy only, but also the

laity—not Peter or James or John, or afterwards Paul and Apollos and Barnabas—but the humblest of the converts of the apostles, one way or other worked together for the furtherance of the Gospel. Hence Paul calls two lay members of the apostolic church, Aquila and his wife Priscilla, “my helpers in Christ Jesus,” saying at the same time they had claims to the gratitude of “all the Churches of the Gentiles.”¹ So doubtless it was with many earlier disciples. In the building up of the Christian Church, as of Solomon’s Temple, there was need for skilled artificers and overseers over the work, but there was also need for hewers of wood and bearers of burdens.² Even the humblest of the personal followers whom our Lord drew to His side in the days of His manifestation to Israel, and Himself enriched with the treasures of His grace, were doubtless not only receivers but dispensers of the heavenly gift. We cannot follow the history of private disciples, like Mary Magdalene, or the family at Bethany, or Joseph of Arimathea, after the Ascension. Much less can we trace all the results of the privileges conferred on these persons: If we could, we should doubtless find that not they only, but the whole Church of Christ, has been blessed by means of every one of the words of Jesus which reached the hearts and consciences, and of every work of Christ which excited or confirmed the faith of the most obscure and inconsi-

¹ Rom. xvi. 3, 4; Acts, xviii. 2, 18, 26.

² 2 Chron. ii. 1, *sq.*

derable of them ; that there is no one of them of whom the Church can say, "We had no need of thee, and have derived no advantage from thee." Nor are we without evidence that such a result specially entered into the purpose of Christ in His labours even on behalf of such persons. For instance, we see traces of this fact in the words of our Lord to the Gadarene, who desired, but was denied, the distinction of becoming associated with Him in His public ministry. "Go home to thy friends and tell *them* how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."¹ And the sequel of the story of this man's relations to Christ is doubtless no more than an illustration of the manner in which every convert to the faith of Christ during His own ministrations on earth, became, and was meant to become, an instrument in promoting the conversion of the world. "He departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him : and all men did marvel."² We see traces of the same fact in the mission of the seventy disciples.³ The seventy had no official position. They were not ordained ministers of the Gospel. Their employment was obviously temporary. But to these private and ordinary members of the body of His disciples, were by our Lord expressly assigned on one occasion labours having the same general object in view as those of the apostles themselves.

¹ Mark, v. 19.² Mark, v. 20.³ Luke, x. 1, *sq.*

It is in the history of the disciples just named, however—namely, the twelve apostles—that we, above all, find evidence of the great purpose of the ministry of Christ, to which special reference is now made. The Twelve were from first to last, in comparison even with the rest of the disciples, the peculiar objects of the care of the Good Shepherd; they were His “little flock,” those whom the Father had given Him, those whom “He had kept so that none of them was lost, but the son of perdition.”¹ Some of them, as we have found, were the very earliest of His disciples; all of them were, during the greater part of the ministry, His constant associates; and they continued with Him to the last. They were witnesses of all things which he did. To them were reserved many of His most complete and explicit expositions of His doctrine; it being given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God at a time when these were spoken to others in parables.² That these men, with others whom they afterwards associated with themselves, became the founders and first ministers of the Christian Church, and God’s instruments in disseminating the knowledge of the truth over the world,³ is a fact which might have been expected to result from the pre-eminence of their privileges. It is, at all events, a fact of which we have abundant evidence. But the work which they actually fulfilled was that for which they were especially set apart from the first. “I have chosen

¹ John, xvii. 6, *sq.*

² Mark, iv. 11.

³ Mark, xvi. 20.

you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”¹ Nor was this purpose concealed from themselves. The first distinct intimation of it is found in the words already quoted, as addressed to four of their number at the Sea of Galilee, at the commencement of the Galilean ministry, “Follow me, and *I will make you fishers of men.*”² Again, about a year later, we find, on the occasion of the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount, when the whole number was completed, our Lord “ordaining them that they should be with Him, and *that He might send them forth to preach*, and to have power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils.”³ At a still later period they are actually “sent forth to preach” and work miracles among those to whom our Lord’s ministry was itself addressed; namely, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,”—the design evidently being not only to make them the instruments of spiritual good at the moment, but to train them for the more important labours in which they were afterwards to be engaged, and to which many of the directions to be found in the charge addressed to the Twelve on this occasion expressly look forward.⁴ Again, afterwards, in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, the purpose of Christ is even more distinctly announced to the Twelve. Peter, on behalf of his brethren, had, in answer to the question, “Whom say ye that I am?”

¹ John, xv. 16.

² Mat. iv. 19.

³ Mat. iii. 14; Luke, vi. 12.

⁴ Mark, iii. 13; Mat. x. 5, *sq.*

made the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," whereupon Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, 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 loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."¹ And (not to attempt to quote all the words of Jesus to a similar effect) there are, finally, the last instructions of our Lord to these men before the Ascension, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *Go ye therefore, and teach [or make disciples of] all nations*, baptising 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 always, even unto the end of the world."²

2. Another ultimate design of the personal ministry of Christ, was the manifestation of His own glory and the glory of the Father *to all the world*.³ In all which He did and taught in the days of His flesh, He ministered to them who should afterwards minister to the world. When He left the world, He left behind Him labourers who entered

Continued
manifestation
of Christ to
the Church.

¹ Mat. xvi. 15, *sq.*

² Mat. xxviii. 18, *sq.*

³ John, i. 4, 9.

into His labours, and labourers whom He Himself had trained for the task appointed them. But was this all? Was it contemplated that even the personal manifestation of the Son of God, the very "words of the Lord Jesus," and "the works of Christ," the lessons of His own lips and of His own life, should ever cease to be available for the enlightenment of mankind?

We know that in point of fact this has not been so. Christ's voice is still heard. The wonderful works which He did are still from day to day being re-enacted in the world. He still ministers among men, not only through the Church which owes its existence to Him, but in His own person, and will continue so to do as long as the writings of the four evangelists form part of the canon of Holy Scripture. It was one of the objections of the Jews to the truth of the claims of our Lord to be the Messiah, that by His own admission His personal abode on earth was to be temporary. According to their Rabbis, the promises of an everlasting kingdom for Christ meant a personal reign of the Messiah on earth till the end of time. They differed among themselves on the question how long the world was to last after the coming of Christ—some of them fixing the period at forty years, others at seventy years, others at three generations,¹ the greater number, as we have before seen, at a thousand years; but in any case they believed that the personal reign of the Mes-

¹ Lightfoot, Works, xii. 371.

siah was to be continued without interruption to the end of the world. We accordingly find that when Christ spoke of His death as at hand, "the people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ *abideth for ever*, and how sayest Thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up?"¹ In the sense in which the Jews understood the promise, Christ does *not* abide for ever. It was expedient for the Church itself that He should go away; and He has in fact been taken out of our sight. His personal ministry, in the literal sense of the words, was only at most for about three years. While the history of His life, however, the inspired record of all that He began both to do and to teach, which is contained in the four Gospels, remains to the world, our Lord never ceases, even in His own person, and by direct communication between Himself and the Church, to minister among men.

Of the value to the Church in every age of the writings of the evangelists, regarded in this light—*i.e.*, viewed as means through which the ministry carried on by Christ in person for a brief space eighteen hundred years ago is, as far as was possible or essential, perpetuated, and extended as to men of all times, so to men of every nation under heaven—I need say nothing here. Later believers cannot, it is true, even with the Gospel in their hands, claim a perfect equality with the first disciples or other actual contemporaries of our Lord in their

¹ John, xii. 34.

relations to the personal ministry. This much, however, may at least be said ; namely, that in the life and doctrine of Christ Himself, as in the Gospels, both are always accessible to them ; all the faithful have in every age found not only that the great Teacher continues to speak to them as He spoke to those who knew Him after the flesh, but speaks even to them as no other man ever speaks ; that, in short, it is from the words and works of Christ as there recorded that they derive their deepest insight into the truth, the strongest grounds of their faith, their richest consolations, their most needed practical guidance and direction. Who does not find this ? If, indeed, we too, in some sense, could not, like the first disciples, thus sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His word ; if we could not, at least with the eyes of our understanding, look upon the Man of Sorrows, and be witnesses of His glory ; if we could not follow His footsteps, as the Gospels enable us to follow them, from village to village, from His own house in Capernaum, where “there are so many gathered together that there is no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door,”¹ to the beach below, with its multitudes standing on the shore as Jesus speaks many things to them in parables from a boat on the lake ; or, again, embarking with Him and His disciples, or, joining the crowds that flock in the same direction by different routes, proceed to the opposite coast, and take our seats on the “much

¹ Mark, ii. 2.

grass" of the desert place, where, as the day advances, He feeds the five thousand, having compassion on them because they have nothing to eat ;¹ if we could not go with Him to Bethany after the death of Lazarus, and see "the things which Jesus did" there, seeing not only the dead at His command come forth from the tomb, "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and His face bound about with a napkin," but also the meeting with the sisters of Lazarus as He approaches the town, when "Mary fell down at His feet, saying, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," and when Jesus, seeing "her weeping, and the Jews also which came with her weeping, groaned in His spirit, and was troubled," and not being one who "cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities," Himself "wept ;"² if we could not stand on the plain of Hattin with the multitudes from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan, who listened, astonished at His doctrine, to the Sermon on the Mount,³ and enter with the Twelve into the upper room where He kept the last Passover, and hear the inexpressibly touching words in which He prepares them for their coming trials, and promises not to leave them comfortless,⁴—if these privileges had been denied to us, we should still, it is true, in Moses and the prophets—the only revelations of God which many men, of whom the world was not

¹ Mat. xv. 32.

² John, xi. 1, *sq.*

³ Mat. iv. 25, *sq.*

⁴ John, xiv.-xvi.

worthy, received—and much more in the Epistles of Paul and other apostles, have the means of becoming “wise unto salvation,” but we should be deprived of that means to which all men acknowledge that they are more indebted for any faith and hope and comfort they have attained than to all other sources of saving knowledge.

And it must be remembered that if, through the report of all that He began both to do and to teach in the days of His manifestation to Israel, men who themselves have not known Christ after the flesh are even in the most remote ages enabled to sit at the feet of Jesus, to listen to His doctrine, as it proceeds from His own lips, and to behold His glory and majesty, being by universal acknowledgment enabled so to do to their infinite advantage—this privilege has been secured for them by the express design of Christ Himself. It is to no fortuitous or accidental causes that the faithful in every age are indebted for those books in which, to use Milton’s phrase on a humbler theme, is “embalmed and treasured up for a life beyond life,” the life of Christ on earth. Before He left the world, our Lord Himself commanded the apostles—those men whom He had chosen for the purpose of carrying out the aims of His personal ministry—not only to preach the same Gospel which He had preached, but also to be “witnesses *unto Him* . . . unto the uttermost parts of the earth.”¹ In what sense this command of our Lord

¹ Acts, i. 8.

is to be understood, appears from the previous promise of the aid of the Spirit "to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them." Nor, as is shown by His words as to the anointing at Bethany, did He contemplate the perpetuation only of His teaching, but also of the facts generally of the personal ministry: "Verily I say unto you, that wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told as a memorial of her.*"¹ Guided by the Holy Spirit, as Christ had promised they should be, the apostles, accordingly, regarded themselves as "witnesses of *all things which Jesus did both in the land of Judea and in Jerusalem;*"² they began immediately after the day of Pentecost to "speak *the things which they had seen and heard;*"³ wherever they went they continued whilst they lived to "declare" to those among whom they laboured "that *which they had heard, which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and their hands had handled of the Word of life,*" when "the Life was manifested, and they saw it;"⁴ and they took care that the Church might after their decease "have these things always in remembrance."⁵ How far the ordinary preaching of the apostles, during the apostolic age,⁶ assumed a historical

¹ Mat. xxvi. 13. Alford (*in loc.*) sees in this announcement "a distinct prophetic recognition by our Lord of the [future] existence of written records, in which the deed should be related."

² Acts, x. 39.

³ Acts, iv. 20.

⁴ 1 John, i. 1, *sq.*

⁵ 2 Peter, i. 15.

⁶ Cf. 1 Cor. i. 2.

form, and consisted of their recollections of the labours and sufferings of their Master, such recollections as were afterwards embodied in the written "Gospels," we do not know. One of these Gospels—namely, that of St Mark—is, according to an early and probable tradition, an "interpretation" of the ordinary teaching of St Peter.¹ Another is avowedly founded on discourses which the inspired writer had been accustomed to hear from the lips of those who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word."² The two other evangelical narratives in the canon of the New Testament were, one by the testimony of the book itself, and both on the authority of all antiquity, written by the apostles whose names they bear. In any case, it is from the apostles, as fulfilling a commission expressly given them by Christ Himself, that we have received those Gospels, in which, if everything is not written "that Jesus did," enough is written in order that, "believing, we might have life through His name."³

While, however, the ministry of our Lord had, both directly and indirectly, ultimate aims extending infinitely beyond the narrow circle of those who knew Him after the flesh, the latter, it must be repeated, were more immediately, and in some respects more especially, contemplated in that dispensation, or were, in a sense peculiar to them-

Immediate
aims of the
personal
ministry.

¹ Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 15; iii. 39.

² Luke, i. 2.

³ John, xx. 31.

selves, the objects of the prophetic labours of Jesus Christ.

It may seem a too familiar expression to employ, but perhaps is the most significant and appropriate, if we say that, in its more direct and immediate aims, the ministry of Christ was a ministry *for the times*—that is, it was, in some sense, more especially intended for, and adapted to, Peter, John, Philip, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, and other persons who were in the world, and within the reach of His voice when Christ was manifested in the flesh, than later believers.

Some light will be thrown on this important question if we recollect that all the other ministries by which God has revealed Himself to the universal Church have more or less had special relations to the times in which they were fulfilled, and to the particular persons to whom they were primarily addressed.

How was it with the ministries of the Old Testament prophets? God spake by the prophets.¹ It cannot be said that the labours of any of these inspired teachers of the word, in times before Christ, were intended exclusively for the instruction and edification of men of the times in which they respectively flourished, and exercised in person the functions intrusted to them by the will of God. As far as their prophecies have been preserved, these

Analogies
in the case of
other minis-
tries :

and, first, in
the ministry
of the pro-
phets.

¹ Heb. i. 1.

inspired utterances not only continued during all the after-ages which preceded the introduction of Christianity, but continue to this day to be among the means by which men are made "wise unto salvation."¹ Nor is this only the fact. Such a result entered directly into the purpose of God. Four hundred years after the latest of the prophets had ceased from his labours, and about thirty years after the institution of the Christian Church—in the midst of the apostolic age, at a time when the Gospel was being preached everywhere, with a fulness and distinctness before unknown—we find Paul with reference to the Old Testament prophecies saying, " whatsoever things were written aforetime were written *for our learning.*"² But the ministries of the prophets were in many ways ministries for the times of the prophets. These men were sent specially to particular persons, or communities of persons, then alive: to the "people of Israel;"³ to "the men of Judah;"⁴ to the "inhabitants of Samaria;"⁵ to "the inhabitants of Jerusalem,"⁶ of their own times. The sins they denounced were sins of the times, and the exhortations to duty, or the warnings, threatenings, promises, and consolations which they delivered, had all some special application to the times. So it was with the forms in which doctrine was conveyed, forms always adapted to the habits

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15.² Rom. xv. 4; cf. 1 Cor. ix. 10, x. 11.³ Amos, vii. 15.⁴ Jer. iv. 15.⁵ Amos, iv. 1, etc.⁶ Is. v. 3; Jer. xxxv. 13, etc.

of thought, to the manners, customs, local and national circumstances, previous knowledge, and capacity of understanding the truth, which were peculiar to the persons of that particular age and country, in which each of them fulfilled his ministry. All this appears even in those of their prophesyings which have been handed down to after-times and are still in the possession of the Church; those "scriptures of the prophets" by which they "being dead yet speak"¹ to the Church. Nor must we forget that a great part of their teaching has not been preserved at all, and must therefore have been intended not only specially, but exclusively, for their contemporaries. In the case of some prophets not one word of all the messages which they were commanded to deliver survives; and as to others, it is evident that, at most, they have left behind them no more than fragments, or perhaps, more probably, summaries of their doctrine. Take Hosea, whose prophetic ministry was carried on, it would appear, continuously for the extraordinary period of about seventy years; two or three short chapters "alone remain of a labour beyond the life of man."²

¹ Heb. xi. 4.

² Pusey, *Minor Prophets*, p. 2. Of the *minor* prophets generally—so called, not in relation to the extent or importance of their labours, but to the space occupied by them in the Old Testament canon—the same author thus writes: "God, who willed that of all the earlier prophets who prophesied from the time of Samuel to Elisha no prophecy should remain, except the few words in the books of Kings, willed also that little in comparison should be preserved of what these later prophets spake in His name. Their writings alto-

How was it, again, with the apostles of Christ? God spake by the apostles; and yet ^{Ministry of the} these inspired ministers of the word—^{apostles.} set forth, in like manner with the prophets, for the instruction of all the world in the knowledge of the truth—were also in an eminent sense teachers of men of their own age, as every page of their history and every line of their writings bears witness. That the results of their teaching extended far beyond the places in which, or the individual persons to whom, they in their own day preached Christ, and that that teaching itself, as far as it has been preserved, is, notwithstanding all its local, personal, and temporal colouring, intended for the instruction of the universal Church, need hardly be said. But neither is it necessary to say, what every reader of Scripture knows, that the apostles, like the prophets, in one sense ministered *ad homines et pro temporibus*. Thus, much of the teaching of the apostles, as of the prophets, is no longer in existence. There are allusions in some of the extant writings of St Paul¹ which have been supposed to suggest the probability, at least, that he may have written more epistles than we now possess. Whether, however, there have or have not been lost epistles, there are certainly lost discourses of the apostles. Paul, for example, carried on a ministry in Ephesus “by the space of three
gether are not equal in compass to those of the one prophet Isaiah.”
—*Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹ 1 Cor. v. 9; Col. iv. 16.

years," "keeping back nothing that was profitable to" the Ephesian Church, teaching them all this time "publicly, and from house to house," "ceasing not to warn every man night and day with tears," "not shunning to declare to them all the counsel of God."¹ The results of that three years' ministry in Ephesus of this inspired apostle of Jesus Christ doubtless did not die with himself, or with the flock over which he had then taken the oversight. But of the discourses themselves which Paul delivered at this time in Ephesus, whether for the three months in which he had the use of the Jewish synagogue, or the two years when he disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus, we have no report whatever handed down to us.² Then as to the extant discourses and writings of the apostles. Let us only turn for a moment to Paul's epistles. By these epistles—as Chrysostom wrote 1400 years ago, and as may still be said—"not only Paul's own converts, but all the faithful even unto this day, yea, and all the saints who are yet to be born, until Christ's coming again, both have been and shall be blessed."³ But that these epistles are the epistles of an apostle whose ministry was in some sense specially meant for his own times, appears from their whole form and character. Let us, for instance, observe the references to be found in them to controversies—like that between the Judaising Christians and the party represented by

¹ Acts, xx. 17, *sq.*

² Acts, xix. 8, *sq.*

³ Quoted in Conn. and Howson, vol. i. p. xvii.

Paul himself—which, however important at the moment, are now obsolete. Or let us attend to the large space allotted in them to points of such purely temporary interest as those relating to the manner in which the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit should be regulated, extraordinary gifts which were peculiar to the apostolic age. Not, however, to dwell upon a topic as to which there can be no difference of opinion, it may only be recalled to mind that Paul himself directly alludes to his practice of adapting his teaching to the circumstances, the necessities, and the aptitude for instruction of those amongst whom he laboured. “Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, . . . that I might gain them that are without law. . . . I am made all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.”¹ “I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”² “Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that *this is good for the present distress.*”³

¹ I Cor. ix. 20, *sq.*

² I Cor. iii. 1, *sq.*

³ I Cor. vii. 25.

That the personal ministry of our Lord was carried on upon the same principles as that of the prophets and the apostles,—the former being his forerunners, the latter men who entered into His labours, whom He sent into the world as the Father had sent Him into the world—that, in short, in some sense, it, too, was a ministry for the men among whom and the times in which it was actually fulfilled, appears in many ways. Let it suffice here to appeal to the direct testimony of our Lord Himself on this point. I shall not dwell on such words of Jesus as the following, though all of these and many others are to the purpose: “*As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world;*”¹ “The days will come, when ye” (the disciples) “shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and *ye shall not see it;*”² “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me. *Whilst I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name;*” “The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with *this generation*, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”³ There is one of the sayings of Christ that is of itself decisive. When our Lord, before healing the daughter of the Syrophœnician woman in the coasts of Tyre, said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,”⁴ there can be

Evidence of special relations to the first disciples in ministry of Christ.

¹ John, ix. 5.

³ Mat. xii. 41.

² Luke, xvii. 22.

⁴ Mat. xv. 24.

no doubt as to His meaning. These words imply, first of all, that His personal ministry contemplated Jews, and, in some special sense, Jews only. It was for men of the seed of Abraham in a way in which it was not intended for all the world. But these words imply further, that the personal ministry was for Jews of that particular age in which our Lord appeared on earth. In a thousand forms He Himself taught that the peculiar privileges of the Jewish race, which in His personal labours He thus recognised, were to cease with His own life. When He was lifted up on the Cross, the Saviour was to begin to draw all men unto Him.¹ After His death the Gospel was to be no longer exclusively for Israel. The apostles were commanded from thenceforward to preach the Gospel—not as He had done, and as while He was yet with them they had been required to do, to none but the Jews, but also to “every creature under heaven.” To use such words as those now quoted—words in which He declared that He was not sent but to that people which, while He lived, were, but which, after His death, were to cease to be, the peculiar people of God—was therefore to assert, in the most emphatic terms, that in a special sense His ministry was meant for His own age—for that age in which it was actually fulfilled—meant for that age as for no other.

The more clearly we apprehend this truth, the more intelligible to us will be many things in the

¹ John, xii. 32.

Gospel history which otherwise cannot fail to appear dark and perplexing. Thus (1), in the form of Christ's teaching we have the same adaptations *ad homines* and *pro temporibus* as in the teaching of the prophets and the apostles. There is the same fragmentary character, too, in the inspired accounts of His ministry as of theirs; many discourses that are unreported (*e.g.*, His first sermons in the synagogues of Nazareth and Capernaum,¹ or those delivered in the synagogues throughout all the cities and villages of Galilee during His circuits of that province²), many things which He did that "are not written."³ These are facts which would be wholly inexplicable but for our knowledge of the special relations in which, in some respects, the ministry of Christ stood to the times of that ministry. With this knowledge they are readily accounted for. (2) Again, if Christ's prophetic labours were in any respect more immediately intended for the Church in His own day, we have an adequate explanation of another distinction between the first and all later disciples. The former saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears those things which all other men know only by report. Many of them had been healed by His miraculous powers. Some of them were the personal associates and friends of the man Christ Jesus, had sat with Him at table, and eaten and

¹ Luke, iv. 1, *sq.*; Mat. iv. 13; Mark, i. 21; Luke, iv. 33.

² Mat. v. 23, *etc.*

³ John, xxi. 25.

drunk in His presence, had interchanged words with Him, had received Him into their houses. All of them had been called to discipleship by Himself. Two are particularly mentioned who heard from His own lips the assurance of their interest in the great salvation which He purchased by His blood—"Thy sins are forgiven thee;"¹ "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."² Three of them, as before noticed, had been actual witnesses of the Transfiguration and of the Agony in the Garden. Others, as has also been said, stood below the Cross when He was crucified. To all, or the greater number, He had showed Himself alive after the Resurrection, and to one it was permitted to recognise the risen Saviour by putting his finger into the print of the nails, and thrusting his hand into the wound in His side. Why were such privileges granted to some men if not to all men? To this question an answer can be returned if we believe that in any sense the personal ministry was especially designed for the personal disciples; but not otherwise. (3) Again, we have here a reason for many of the remarkable omissions which are to be found in the teaching of our Lord. I do not refer at present to such omissions as those which are common to the New Testament generally—the omission, for instance, of any creed for the use of the universal Church, of a liturgy or order of public worship, or of ecclesiastical canons. For such omissions we must seek and may find

¹ Mat. ix. 2.² Luke, vii. 50.

reasons in the nature of the Christian revelation as a whole.¹ I refer here to other omissions—to the omission in the teaching of our Lord of doctrine which it was the purpose of Christ to communicate to the Church, and which was afterwards communicated through the ministry of the apostles. Why is there anything in the epistles of those men who entered into His labours which is not found in the discourses of Jesus? If we believe that He ministered more immediately to men of His own times, at a moment when as yet even His most select followers were not able to bear the whole truth, the mystery is explained.²

The fact that the ministry of our Lord had special relations to those times, and to the men of those times among whom it was fulfilled, is important every way. Let it only be here further noticed how much value this fact gives to all the information we can obtain as to these times and these men. An attempt has been made in the preceding chapter to present a rough outline of the Palestine of the days of Christ. The further we pursue our inquiries into topics such as those which are there cursorily noticed we shall be the better prepared to understand the history, and to profit by the lessons, which are set before us in the four Gospels. In the case of such a teacher as St Paul, “if we would rightly estimate his work,” or, it may be

¹ See Whately's 'Peculiarities of the Christian Religion,' 312, *sq.*

² John, xvi. 12, *sq.*; 25, *sq.*

added, understand his doctrine, "we must," it has been truly said, "form to ourselves a living likeness of the *things* and of the *men* among which he moved. . . . We must study Christianity rising in the midst of Judaism ; we must realise the position of its early Churches, with their mixed society, to which Jews, proselytes, and heathens had each contributed a characteristic element ; we must qualify ourselves to be umpires (if we may so speak) in their violent internal divisions ; we must listen to the strife of their schismatic parties, when one said, ' I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos ; ' we must study the true character of those early heresies which even denied the resurrection, and advocated impurity and lawlessness ; . . . we must trace the extent to which Greek philosophy, Judaising formalism, and Eastern superstition, blended their tainting influence with the pure fermentation of that new leaven which was at last to leaven the whole mass of civilised society ; . . . we must know the state of the different populations which he visited ; the character of the Greek and Roman civilisation at the epoch ; the points of intersection between the political history of the world and the scriptural narratives ; the social organisation and gradation of ranks, for which he enjoins respect ; the position of women, to which he specially refers in many of his letters ; the relations between parents and children, slaves and masters, which he not vainly sought to imbue with the loving spirit of the Gospel ; the quality and influence, under the early Empire, of the

Greek and Roman religions, whose effete corruptions he denounces with such indignant scorn; the public amusements of the people, whence he draws topics of warning and illustration; the operation of the Roman law, under which he was so frequently arraigned; the courts in which he was tried, and the magistrates by whose sentences he suffered.”¹

So it is, *mutatis mutandis*, with the ministry of the Lord Himself. Though not many, there are some of the words of Christ which might even be misunderstood if viewed apart from the circumstances in which they were spoken; and some of His works are, when considered by themselves, liable in like manner to misapprehension. Above all, the history of what He both did and taught will in such a case fail to convey to us that fulness of instruction which is otherwise to be found in it. Happily the Gospel is so written as in a great measure itself to supply for the diligent student the means of determining its original application, and guidance as to its true interpretation. But no such means, from whatever sources they may be derived, must be neglected.

¹ Connybeare and Howson's St Paul, i. 12.

CHAPTER V.

THE DISCIPLES.

BY "the Disciples" of our Lord are known in the Gospels sometimes the apostles exclusively, sometimes all persons, without exception, who believed, or who professed to believe, in Him as the Messiah.

Of the use of the term in the former and more limited sense many examples might be given. In some cases the apostles, when spoken of by that name, are distinguished as "the *twelve* disciples."¹ But the same inner circle of the followers of Jesus are evidently intended when no such qualifying phrase is employed. Thus, in the account of the last Paschal Supper, "the disciples" who assembled with Jesus in the "large upper room furnished," that He might once more eat the Passover with them before He suffered—"the disciples," to whom Jesus also on this occasion gave the bread He had blessed and broken, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you ;" and afterwards the

¹ Mat. x. 1, xi. 1, xx. 17.

cup, saying, "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins"—"the disciples," to whom, if, as cannot reasonably be doubted, these words were spoken on the same occasion, all the special warnings, instructions, and promises to be found in John, xiii.-xvi., were addressed, are alternatively described as "the Twelve."¹ Many other passages in which the word is used in this restricted meaning occur.²

Of the application of the same term to others than the Twelve the following are examples:—"Joseph of Arimathea" is called a "disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews."³ In the history of the early Judean ministry, again, when we read that Jesus made more disciples than John, the reference of course cannot be to the Twelve.⁴ Again, we find that on one occasion many of his "disciples" were so offended at His doctrine that "from that time they went back, and walked no more with Him;" and that others than the apostles are here referred to, if indeed it could have admitted of any doubt, is proved by what follows; for when this defection occurred, Jesus, we are told, said "*unto the Twelve*, will ye *also* go away?" And "Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall *we* go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and *we* believe

¹ Mat. xxvi. 20; Mark, xiv. 17; Luke, xxii. 14.

² See Mat. ix. 19, xiv. 26, xix. 13; Mark, iv. 34, viii. 14, ix. 18; John, vi. 3, xiii. 5, xviii. 1, etc.

³ John, xix. 38.

⁴ John, iv. 1.

and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”¹ When Luke, again, speaks of “the *whole multitude* of the disciples” beginning, on the occasion of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to “rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty wonders which they had seen,”² the name must be understood as referring to others besides the Twelve.

It is difficult to determine what at this period constituted discipleship. Probably nothing more was required but a profes- What constituted discipleship. sion of faith in Christ as the Messiah.

It will be found that, as far as our information goes, no distinctive act of formal initiation into the number of believers in Christ was as yet in use, and that there were no special religious observances among the disciples to distinguish them from other Jews. As appears from the case of Joseph of Arimathea, even a public avowal of discipleship, though, as a rule, required by Christ Himself,³ was not regarded as in every instance indispensable. Nor are we to suppose that none were permitted to bear the name, or assume the character, of “disciples,” but those who, whatever their outward profession, were recognised by Christ Himself as entitled to this distinction. Our Lord laid down some general rules by which men could themselves determine whether they were “disciples indeed” or not;⁴ but otherwise He kept no man back from disciple-

¹ John, vi. 66.

² Luke, xix. 37.

³ Mat. x. 32.

⁴ Mat. xvi. 24 ; John, viii. 31.

ship. He, indeed, who "knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him,"¹ not only admitted into the number of His ordinary followers, but included in the select circle of the apostles, the traitor Judas Iscariot, a man whose treachery to his Master at the last was no more than in entire consistency with his general character throughout.² Then, as always, the tares were mixed with the wheat, and the kingdom of God might be likened unto a net cast into the sea, which gathered of every kind, good and bad.³

From some general expressions to be found in the Gospels, it might be, and probably often is, supposed that the personal disciples of our Lord were known by a constant personal attendance on Him. But it was not so. Personal attendance was certainly sometimes required and given. When our Lord called to Him certain of the disciples, He commanded them, we are told, to "follow Him;" and though these words of course admit of a figurative as well as literal interpretation, the sense in which they were intended to be understood, at least by some of those to whom they were addressed, appears from the event. The twelve apostles, for instance, when thus called, became followers of Christ not only in the meaning of that term in which men follow Christ while continuing in the homes and callings in which they lived before they knew the Lord;⁴

¹ John, vi. 64.

² See John, xii. 6 ; xvii. 12.

³ Mt. xiii. 47.

⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 20.

but they “*left all* and followed Him :” the fisherman forsook his boat and his nets ; the publican left the receipt of custom ; the husband his wife ; the father his children ; others left parents, brothers, sisters ; others lands and houses, to become from thenceforward the constant associates of our Lord, His attendants in His almost ceaseless journeyings from place to place, and His fellow-labourers in the work of His ministry.¹ Nor did this occur only in the case of the apostles. That our Lord’s personal followers included others besides the Twelve, appears from the circumstances attending the election of a successor to the apostleship vacated by the treachery and death of Judas, as recorded in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. We there find that Justus and Matthias, between whom the choice ultimately lay, were selected from among a larger number of persons who, in the words of Simon Peter on that occasion, had “*compained with the Twelve all the time that our Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from them.*”² There was thus a certain class of disciples who might always be recognised by their personal attendance on our Lord. There were also others who, without attending Him habitually, formed on special occasions members of the same select body : like the many women, oftener than once mentioned, who “*ministered to Him*” during His

¹ Mat. xix. 22.

² Acts, i. 21, *sq.*

circuits of Galilee, or who, in the last journey to Jerusalem, "followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him." Among these were Mary Magdalene; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; Susanna; Mary, the mother of James and Joses; and the mother of Zebedee's children.¹ Such personal following, however, was not indispensable to discipleship. Besides this inner circle of intimate associates, there are well known to have been others, who, though not found in personal attendance on Him, were during His ministry regarded as truly disciples of Jesus. From what is expressly stated of their habits of life,² it is evident, indeed, that some of the most attached of the disciples of that period—as, for instance, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus, whose ordinary residence was at Bethany, where Jesus frequently visited them—did not regularly, and, it is probable, did not on any occasion, accompany Jesus in His progresses like the apostles. Nor is it conceivable that the whole of the less distinguished disciples could have adopted such a course—for instance, the whole of the "five hundred brethren" to whom our Lord appeared at one time after His resurrection, as reported by St Paul in 1 Cor. xv. Nay, we know that to follow Jesus, in the literal sense now referred to, was not only not (as an invariable rule) required, but was in some cases discouraged as inconvenient and impracticable,³ or even prohibited.

¹ Mark, viii. 2, *sq.*; Mat. xxvii. 55.

² John, xi. 1, xii. 9.

³ Mat. viii. 20.

Thus, a man of the country of the Gadarenes, on whom a great miracle had been wrought, and whose heart appears to have been at the same time drawn with irresistible force to his Deliverer, "besought Jesus," we are told, "that he might be *with Him*. Howbeit," it is added, "Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."¹

In the same way it has been maintained that the first condition of discipleship was to sell one's possessions, and give the money thus raised to the poor. This hypothesis is supposed² to find support not only in our Lord's answer to the young ruler who asked, "What good thing he might do to inherit eternal life?" but in such words of Jesus as the following—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth the field; again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he hath, and bought it."³ "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not, where no thief approacheth neither moth corrupteth."⁴ It is hardly necessary to say that

¹ Luke, viii. 38.

² Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, p. 172.

³ Mat. xiii. 44, *sq.*

⁴ Luke, xii. 33, 34.

the hypothesis in question finds no authority in such texts as these, or in the Scriptures generally. That very great sacrifices, as regarded their worldly possessions, were made by, and were required from, many of the personal disciples of Christ, is certain; and it is equally certain that our Lord teaches all men that every sacrifice, even though it amount to the loss not only of worldly wealth, but of life itself, must, if necessary, be willingly submitted to for His sake.¹ But nothing of the nature of voluntary poverty, nothing of the nature of an abandonment of money, houses, lands, or other possessions, for the kingdom of heaven's sake in the sense here supposed, was, as with the Essenes or Therapeutæ of that day, and many sects in all ages, constituted by our Lord a *condition* of discipleship. An appeal might be made to the general principles laid down in all the teaching of Christ as to the relation of His followers to the world—"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."² What may be called a community of goods prevailed among the Twelve—for Judas kept the common purse³—but was in their case evidently as exceptional as, under the circumstances in which they were placed, it was unavoidable. The answer of our Lord to the question of the young ruler, "One thing thou lackest; go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me,"⁴ was doubtless rightly understood by that inquirer in the literal

¹ Mat. x. 37, *sq.*

³ John, xii. 6, xiii. 29.

² John, xvii. 15.

⁴ Mat. xix. 16, *sq.*, &c.

sense of the words, as requiring him literally to denude himself of the "great possessions" which had fallen to his lot; but no one can read the context without perceiving that the precept thus addressed to the young ruler was, in the words of Bengel, "a special one accommodated to the idiosyncrasy of the individual" (Gnomon, *in loc.*); and that, even as applied to him, it was given rather as a test of character¹ than a rule of conduct. In the sequel, too, we are told that so little did the disciples understand such a condition of discipleship as universal, that when, after the young ruler's departure, our Lord said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," the disciples were "astonished without measure, saying, Who then can be saved?" Even in the Church at Jerusalem, in the days which followed the Pentecost, when, for a time, "the multitude of them that believed," being "of one heart and of one soul," "had all things common," "as many as were possessors of land or houses selling them, and laying the price at the apostles' feet for distribution to every man according to his need," the practice thus followed, possibly in some cases from a mistaken sense of duty, but at all events under very special circumstances, was not regarded as by any means universally obligatory.² So Simon Peter expressly reminded Ananias, when he rebuked the daring hypocrisy of which that unhappy man and his wife were guilty—"While the land remained, was it

¹ Stier, Words of Jesus, iii. 32.

² See Neander, Planting (Bohn), i. 24, *sq.*

not thine own? and after it was sold was it not in thine own power?"¹ But, above all, during the personal ministry, it is evident even from the fact that such disciples as Mary Magdalene and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, were in the habit of ministering to Christ "*out of their substance,*" and from our Lord's commendation of the liberality of Zaccheus, who offered to give "*the half* of his goods to the poor,"² that no such rule as that of "poverty" was imposed as an indispensable condition to discipleship. Then, Simon Peter continued to possess a house at Capernaum. And Lazarus and his sisters had not forsaken theirs at Bethany; nor had, up to the time of the last Passover, deprived themselves of the means of hospitably receiving there our Lord Himself and the apostles; and even—not without the approval of the Saviour—gratifying their own feelings of regard for Him by costly, and, as appeared to the disciples, extravagant modes of doing Him honour. "Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany. . . . There they made Him a supper. . . . 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. Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot [according to Matthew, all the disciples concurred with him], . . . Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? . . . Then said Jesus, Let her alone:

¹ Acts, v. 4.

² Luke, xix. 8.

. . . for the poor always ye have with you ; but me ye have not always.”¹

Upon the whole, then, it will, I think, be found that discipleship was at this time constituted simply by a profession, more or less openly made, of faith in Christ as the Messiah. As to the number of the disciples, we have no express information. Nothing of the nature of a numerical computation is attainable now, nor, probably, from the nature of the case, was ever possible. In two passages of Scripture we have certainly accounts of meetings of the early disciples, in which there are approximative calculations of the number of persons present—the one describing an assemblage held in Jerusalem, probably at the instance of Peter, immediately after the ascension, at which about one hundred and twenty attended ;² the other, already referred to, a concourse which is usually identified with that summoned by our Lord to take place in Galilee, consisting of about five hundred brethren, to whom the Saviour made one of His appearances after His resurrection.³ Neither enumeration, however, professes to throw any light on the actual number of the disciples upon the whole.

Our estimate must be a very general one. The result is not such as might, on first thoughts, have been anticipated. The number was greater than it is the habit of some writers, especially in Ger-

¹ John, xii. 1, *sq.*

² Acts, i. 15.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 6.

many, to admit—writers who even suppose the “five hundred brethren” of St Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians to be an exaggeration. But if we take into account the general tenor of all the statements to be found in the New Testament on the subject, we shall, I think, be brought to the conclusion that the disciples during the whole ministry of Christ might probably be reckoned by hundreds, as compared with the thousands¹ who, *in Judea alone*, were after Pentecost added to the Church under the ministry of the apostles.

I shall not enter here into the special reasons for this, at first sight, extraordinary distinction. Of course no explanation is necessary for the purpose of vindicating the pre-eminence of Christ’s ministry over every other ministry. It is sometimes noticed with reference to this matter that the mission of Christ was not so much to apply as to purchase redemption—not so much to make disciples as to live and die for all who, either by Himself or by His servants before or after Him, had been or should be led to believe in His name²—a work in which, it must be remembered, He not only surpassed the greatest of the prophets and the chiefest of the apostles, but stood alone, by the willing admission of these men themselves. “Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised into the name of Paul?” are the questions which

¹ Acts, ii. 41, iv. 4, v. 14, vi. 7, xxi. 20.

² Hind’s *Early Christianity*, part II. c. 1; Whately’s *Essays on some of the Difficulties of the Writings of St Paul*, p. 70.

Paul addressed to some members of the Church at Corinth, who appear to have put in competition the claims of the great Master with those of himself and other servants of Christ.¹ The brief period, too, over which the ministry of Christ extended in comparison with the ministry of the apostles has been already referred to, and must always be taken into account. Then it must be remembered that the marvellous success of the labours of the latter was due to Christ Himself—due to His continued presence with them, due to the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit which He procured for them, and above all due to His own labours in the times of the personal ministry itself. In the first place, He had prepared them for that work which they accomplished, and which proved so successful. It was indeed one chief aim of His ministry, as we have found, to prepare these men for their work ; He ministered to them who should afterwards minister to the world. In the second place, He had done much to prepare those amongst whom they laboured for the acceptance of their doctrine. He had sowed those fields which they reaped. They had entered into His labours. Who shall say how many of those who afterwards believed under the preaching of the apostles may not first have had their attention drawn to the Saviour by His own words and His own works, when He was yet on earth, though the seed then sown did not bear fruit till many days afterwards ? Of the suc-

¹ 1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

cess of that ministry, therefore, we shall not form any adequate estimate by reckoning up merely the numbers of those who, while it lasted, were brought to the acknowledgment of the truth. He Himself said that His death must precede the full results, in this respect as in other respects, of His own work—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me;"¹ "It is expedient for you that I go away;" "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father."³

But, whatever the reasons, the fact itself is evident enough. As far as concerns the number of His converts, the ministry of Christ is always spoken of in the New Testament, and even by Himself, as singularly unproductive; certainly is always spoken of in terms very different from the exulting language used in describing the progress of the early Church under the ministry of the apostles.⁴ Vast multitudes, it is true, attended Him when He went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom and doing good; listened with unconcealed admiration to His teaching, as that of one who, at least as to the manner (whatever they thought of the matter) of His speech, spake as never man spake; and were filled with astonishment at His miracles. In the account of the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum, we find the house in which He was teaching at the time so crowded that the roof had

¹ John, xii. 32.² John, xvi. 7.³ John, xiv. 12.⁴ Acts, v. 14, xi. 21, xii. 24.

to be partially uncovered to obtain access for the sick man to the presence of the great Healer.¹ Oftener than once He is said to have been so much incommoded by the crowds which followed Him, that He and the Twelve could not so much as find leisure to sit down to their meals.² The details as to one of these incidents are very striking. The Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh at hand.³ The time, therefore, was one when the coming and going through Capernaum was unusually great.⁴ The apostles had returned from their first probationary circuit;⁵ and they "gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately." Even here He had no respite. "The people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him."⁶ At another time He is described as, on account of the numbers of His followers, teaching from a boat on the Sea of Galilee, while the multitude stood on the beach.⁷ At Jericho, Zaccheus, because of the "press," was unable to gratify his curiosity except by running on before, and climbing

¹ Mat. ii. 1-4. ² Mark, iii. 20, vi. 31.

⁴ Blunt's Scripture Coincidences, p. 282.

⁶ Mark, vi. 31, *sq.*

³ John, vi. 4.

⁵ Luke, ix. 9.

⁷ Mat. xiii. 12.

a tree on the side of the road by which our Lord was expected to pass.¹ The actual numbers are sometimes given. In one instance it appears incidentally that His audience consisted of upwards of 4000, in another of above 5000 persons.² But the number of those who, in and out of season, followed our Lord, and that of the persons who, impressed by what they saw and heard, became His disciples, were far from corresponding. "Many were called, but few chosen."³ Even of the places in which His labours were most abundant, and where His mightiest works had been wrought, our Lord Himself said that in the day of judgment it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them.⁴ "The men of Nineveh," He said, "shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."⁵ He spoke of them as fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart," He added, "is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."⁶

The question who those men were who con-

¹ Luke, xix. 3, 4.

² Mat. xiv. 21, xv. 38.

³ Mat. xx. 6.

⁴ Mat. xi. 20-24.

⁵ Mat. xii. 41.

⁶ Mat. xiii. 14, 15.

stituted the members of the embryo Christian Church in the time of our Lord's own ^{Their nation-}ministry, is that to which our attention ^{ality.} is limited in the present chapter. We have spoken of that which constituted discipleship, and of the probable number of the disciples. The next point to be considered is their nationality—a point on which it will not be necessary to say many words. As has been often repeated, Christ was “not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” And almost without exception the disciples were of the seed of Abraham. Others than Jews heard our Lord's doctrine, and saw, nay, were healed or otherwise benefited by, His miracles; and others than Jews must be regarded as at this time already disciples of Christ. If the Gadarene demoniac, who, when dispossessed, prayed that He might be with Christ, was, as is probable,¹ of heathen blood, in him we must recognise one instance. Another was found in the Syrophœnician woman, expressly described as a Greek or heathen, to whom Christ Himself said, “O woman, great is thy faith;” others in the woman of Samaria, and many of her fellow-townspeople at Sychar, who are said to have believed on Him as “the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”² Then there were heathen proselytes to the Jewish religion—men not of the blood, but of the faith of Israel, like the centurion of Capernaum, and the Greeks who had come to the Passover, and desired to see Jesus—a step on their part which our

¹ Lightfoot, x. 24.

² John, iv. 39, *sq.*

Lord Himself recognised as an earnest of the extension of His kingdom among the Gentiles.¹ Luke was of heathen extraction, for he is not reckoned by St Paul among "them of the circumcision,"² and, according to Eusebius,³ was born at Antioch, the capital of Syria. But it is, even from his own words,⁴ doubtful if he became a disciple before the death of Christ. Tertullian assumes that his conversion was due to St Paul.⁵ But that the disciples were, with such rare exceptions, of that people to whom the Personal Ministry was, as a rule, restricted, appears to be on every ground almost certain. Most of them were probably Galileans.⁶ There had also, however, from the first been many disciples in Judea.⁷

Whether among the personal disciples of our Lord were to be found any of the Jews of the Dispersion, is a point as to which we have no certain information. We know that the foreign Jews must have had abundant opportunities of benefiting by the ministrations of Christ. He often taught in Jerusalem on the occasion of those feasts, which brought up vast numbers of these men from every part of the world to the holy city. When Peter, on the great day of Pentecost, preached the Gospel to a multitude, including, if not chiefly consisting of, Jews of the Dispersion, we find him,

¹ Mat. viii. 5.

² Col. iv. 11, 14.

³ Eccl. Hist., iii. 4.

⁴ Luke, i. 1, *sq.*

⁵ Adv. Marcion, iv. 2. See Smith's Dictionary of Bible, s. v. ; and Cave's Hist. of Apostles, p. 594, *sq.*

⁶ Acts, ii. 7.

⁷ John, iii. 22, *sq.*, vii. 1, *sq.*

accordingly, reminding this mixed crowd of native and foreign Israelites—for he uses expressly a mode of address which comprehended both classes¹—that “Jesus of Nazareth had been approved of God among them by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of them, *as they themselves also knew.*”² Unless, however, it be in the Church of Corinth, we have, among the many foreign Churches which were afterwards established by the apostles, no distinct traces of the existence of any believers who had owed their conversion to Christ Himself, or whose faith could be dated so far back as the time of the personal ministry. The exception in the case of the Church at Corinth is also at most a doubtful one. In the Second Epistle of St Paul to that Church, in the words, “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now know we Him no more,”³ there appears to be an allusion to disciples in Corinth who laid stress on their having seen Christ in Palestine; and it is not impossible that among the parties into which the same Church is said by St Paul, in his First Epistle, to be divided, those who said, “We are of Christ,” in opposition to others who claimed to be “of Paul,” or “of Apollos,” or “of Cephas,” may have been persons who could boast of a like distinction.⁴

¹ See Alford, New Testament, *in loc.*

² Acts, ii. 22.

³ 2 Cor. v. 16.

⁴ Prof. Lightfoot, Galatians, p. 35-41; Stanley, Corinthians, p. 420, &c.

With regard to the classes of society from which the disciples of our Lord were drawn, or the rank and condition of life to which they severally belonged, we have not much direct information. But the common opinion appears to be the true one—namely, that though other grades were not altogether unrepresented in their number, most of the disciples were, like their Master, persons of “no reputation.” Among these disciples, as in the early Corinthian Church, where “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called,”¹ it is well known that exceptions to the general rule did occur. Joseph of Arimathea, a place supposed to be situated not far from Lydda,² on the road between Jerusalem and the sea-coast at Joppa, was “himself Jesus’s disciple,” and is described as a rich man and an honourable counsellor, or a member of the Sanhedrim, the great council of the Jews.³ Joanna, the wife of Chuza, “Herod’s steward,” whatever may have been the precise position of her husband in the household of the tetrarch,⁴ appears to have been a disciple who had wealth at her command; she “ministered to our Lord of her substance.”⁵ Whether another

¹ 1 Cor. i. 26.

² Robinson, Researches, ii. 239, *sq.*

³ Mat. xxvii. 57; Mark, xv. 42; Luke, xxiii. 50; John, xix. 38.

⁴ The word *ἐπίτροπος* is generally used to signify a guardian of orphan children, but means literally a person to whom anything is given in charge. See Smith’s Greek and Roman Ant., s. v. “*Epi-tropos.*”

⁵ Luke, viii. 3.

person intimately connected with the tetrarch of Galilee, whom we find afterwards as a prophet or teacher of the Church in Antioch, was one of the first disciples of Christ, is not ascertained. In any case he must in all probability have known Christ after the flesh; I refer to Manaen, who "had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch."¹ If he did believe under the ministry of Christ Himself, we have in Manaen the case of a disciple who had enjoyed singular advantages, both in respect of a liberal education and opportunities of acquaintance with the world. Then there were the nobleman of Capernaum;² Nicodemus, a master in Israel, and one of the Sanhedrim; Zaccheus, the rich publican of Jericho; and the family of Bethany, whose position as persons of some fortune has been already noticed. At the period of the personal ministry, however, it appears to have been to the poor for the most part that the Gospel was preached, and from the poor that it met with most acceptance.³ We cannot be much in error if we take the Twelve as examples of the average social status of the disciples generally; and the Twelve consisted almost exclusively of men in a very humble rank. Andrew and Peter, as well as James and John their partners, who, though owners of the boats which afforded them the means of their subsistence, and having

¹ Acts, xiii. 1. See Blunt's *Scriptural Coincidences*, p. 271; Olshausen, *in loc.*; and Smith's *Dict.*, s.v. "Manaen," with authorities there referred to.

² John, iv. 46, *sq.*

³ Luke, vii. 22, xvii. 24.

servants under them, and though men who could boast that they had made considerable sacrifices in following Christ, were not raised above the necessity of engaging in the humblest labours of their trade. Some of them were employed in mending their own nets when called to follow our Lord. The rest of the Twelve appear to have belonged in like manner to a class little, if at all, removed above that in which the Saviour Himself appeared on earth. Matthew is called a publican—a title usually given to farmers of the public taxes, who were persons of distinguished position—but was evidently no more than one of the subordinate officers of the Publicanus or Publicani of the district.

It is not, however, to be concluded, let it here be added, that because as a rule of humble rank, the personal followers of our Lord were necessarily men without education or intelligence. In the account of their appearance before the Sanhedrim, Peter and John are described as “unlearned and ignorant men,”¹ but the meaning of the term here translated “unlearned” is only that they were not proficient in that kind of knowledge of which the Rabbis professed to have a monopoly; they were not learned in the Rabbinical sense of the term;² and, in like manner, by “ignorant men” must be merely understood in accordance with Jewish usage, “laymen,” or men without professional

¹ ἄνθρωποι ἀγράμματοι καὶ ἰδιῶται, Acts iv. 13.

² Olshausen, *in loc.*

status, "men in no public employment."¹ Even the humblest of the disciples, however, while having no pretence to Rabbinical lore, or indeed to anything which could be described as learning, belonged, it must be remembered, to a country in which education was at this time common to all ranks and conditions of the people; where if any town was not provided with a common school for elementary instruction in reading and writing, and in the Scriptures, "the men of the place stood excommunicated till such a school was erected," and where from the age of five to thirteen years it was usual for all boys to attend these seminaries, girls receiving a similar training from their parents at home.² The whole body of the people had also the advantage of regular instruction in religious knowledge in the synagogues, where, as we have already seen, the Scriptures were read and expounded every Sabbath-day in regular order. In the case of the Twelve there is abundant evidence that those disciples shared the common misapprehensions and prejudices which prevailed among other Jews of all ranks, especially in matters of religion; but of their general intelligence there is not less abundant evidence. In short, we have no reason to believe they were in this respect behind the average of persons of the same rank in those countries in which, in our own times, the education of the people is most carefully attended to.

¹ Lightfoot, viii. 73.

² Lightfoot, v. 42.

There appears to have been the same diversity among the disciples in their character, ^{Previous character of the disciples.} regarded from a moral or spiritual point of view, as in their social position. Although Christ was said to be "the friend of publicans and sinners," it must not be concluded that it was from persons of notoriously bad character that the personal followers of our Lord were chiefly drawn. One of the arguments of Celsus against Christianity was based on this wholly groundless assumption. He speaks of the apostles themselves as "ten or eleven of the very wickedest of tax-gatherers and sailors."¹ Origen replies to this accusation that, even if it had been well founded, it is no reproach to Christianity that He who came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance, "desiring to manifest to the human race the power which He possesses to heal souls, should have selected notorious and wicked men, and should have raised them to such a degree of moral excellence that they became a pattern of the purest virtue to all who were converted by their instrumentality to the Gospel of Christ."² We have no reason, however, to think that exceptional corruption of manners had ever been a prevailing characteristic of the previous history of the personal disciples. When our Lord said to the Pharisees, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you;"³ or when, in the

¹ Origen, Works, Clark, i. 466.

² *Ib.*, 468.

³ Mat. xxi. 31.

parable of the Pharisee and the publican, He represented the man, who, standing afar off in the Temple and not lifting his eyes unto heaven, but smiting upon his breast, said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," as going down to his house justified rather than his self-righteous fellow-worshipper, who thanked God that he was not as other men were,—He did not claim any special aptitude to religion, as understood by Him, for the more degraded classes of his countrymen. His purpose was to prove, not that these men were peculiarly accessible to the influence of the Gospel, but that those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous were even less accessible to it. Christ is the Saviour of all men, of men of all classes, morally and spiritually, no less than as regards social condition and outward circumstances. And it might, therefore, have been anticipated that we should find somewhat of the same differences of previous character in His own personal followers as are to be found in those men throughout the world to whom His Gospel was afterwards to be preached. And such differences we in fact do find. Matthew and Zaccheus the publicans, whose occupation was esteemed infamous among the Jews, and appears to have been attended by special temptations, and the woman who was a sinner, who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears in the house of Simon at Nain, were among the disciples. Pharisees like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea belonged, however, to the same

body. There is good reason to believe that James, surnamed, according to the early fathers, "the Just," was a Nazarite, devoted from his birth, like John the Baptist, to a life of self-denial and devotion.¹ Simon the Canaanite, or Simon Zelotes, as he is otherwise called, appears² to have belonged to a faction among the Jews distinguished for anything but laxity in religion. The centurion of Capernaum, an unlettered soldier, whose remarkable confession of faith takes its colour rather from the camp than from the schools, was, at least by the testimony of his fellow-townsmen, a man "worthy" of the privilege conferred on him, and one whose regard for religion had already found substantial expression. Nor is there any more beautiful picture of a pure and happy family life than that which is presented to us in the brief notices of Lazarus of Bethany and his sisters. In one point we do certainly find a remarkable family resemblance in all or almost all the disciples as regards their native character, or their character before they were changed by the grace of the Saviour. Some were more credulous, others more sceptical; some, like Martha, were more worldly; others, like her sister, more inclined to the religious life; some had lived grossly immoral lives, others had been comparatively guileless, and commendable in character, even before they came under the power of Christ: but all of them, as far as we have any knowledge of their natural dis-

¹ See Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, iii. 23. ² Smith, *Dict.*, s. v. "Simon."

positions and habits of mind, were more or less indisposed to the peculiar doctrines, and even to the spirit, of Christianity. We have only to glance at the earlier history of the chiefest amongst those of them who were afterwards most successful in spreading abroad a knowledge of the truth, to see that it was not from the disciples of Christ, but only from their and our common Master, that we have received the Gospel.

It would be impossible to enter here in detail on an examination of all the questions Individual which have been raised as to the his- disciples. tory of individual disciples. Who was the young man mentioned in a familiar passage of the Gospel of Mark, in connection with the events of the night before the crucifixion? Our Lord was being led from the garden where He was apprehended to the palace of the High Priest. As the officers of the Sanhedrim, "with lanterns and torches and weapons,"¹ and accompanied by a "great multitude,"² led Jesus across the valley of the Kedron, on through the streets of Jerusalem, "there followed Him," we are told, "a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."³ Is the writer of the second Gospel himself here referred to?⁴ Or was it, as Epiphanius alleges, James, the Lord's brother? Or, as Chrysostom supposes, St John?⁵

¹ John, xviii. 3. ² Mat. xxvi. 47, &c. ³ Mark, xiv. 51.

⁴ Olshausen, Com. iv. 187. ⁵ Alford, N. T., *in loc.*

Was it Lazarus of Bethany, whose residence was not distant, and who might be hastily drawn to the place by the night alarm, and whom we know the party of the Pharisees were eager to lay hold of?¹ Again, who was the young ruler with "great possessions," who came to Jesus, asking what good thing he should do that he might inherit eternal life, and who, after a struggle between the love of the world and higher aspirations to which it is evident he was no mere pretender, went away very sorrowful? Does this young man again appear in the person of the brother of Martha and Mary? "The age agrees, . . . as does the fact of wealth above the average. . . . The character of the young ruler, the reverence of his salutation, and of his attitude,² his eager yearning after eternal life, the strict training of his youth in the commandments of God, the blameless probity of his outward life,—all these would agree in what we might expect in the son of a Pharisee [as it is supposed the father of Lazarus was], in the brother of one who had chosen the good part. It may be noticed further that, as his spiritual condition is essentially that which we find about the same period in Martha, so the answer returned to him, 'one thing thou lackest,' and that given to her, 'one thing is needful,' are substantially identical.

¹ Smith's Dict. s. v. "Lazarus." Olshausen, *l. c.*, justly remarks that the incident gains significance only if we suppose the person to whom it relates to be in some way remarkable.

² Mark, x. 17.

But further, it is of this rich young man that St Mark uses the emphatic word ('Jesus, beholding him, *loved* him') which is used of no others in the Gospel history, save of the beloved apostle, and Lazarus and his sisters. We can hardly believe that that love, with all the yearning pity and fervent prayer which it implied, would be altogether fruitless. . . . However strongly the absence of the name of Lazarus, or of the locality to which he belonged, may seem to militate against this hypothesis, . . . there is just the same singular and perplexing omission in the narrative of the anointing in Mat. xxvi. and Mark, xiv."¹ Another question of the same kind relates to the identity of the unnamed disciple who, along with Cleopas, was overtaken by our Lord on the morning of the Resurrection, on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus. If, as is conjectured, this disciple was Luke, the writer of the Gospel in which alone the incident is recorded, we should have determined a point of some importance, namely, that that Evangelist must be included among the personal followers of our Lord. From the practice of St John, when he has occasion to refer to himself, to adopt similar indefinite terms, there is a presumption in favour of this view. But, as already said, the language of Luke in the introduction to the Gospel appears to imply that his conversion was posterior to the close of the personal ministry. Another question somewhat similar may be

¹ Prof. Plumptre, in Smith's Dict., s. v. "Lazarus."

noticed more fully, though nothing of much practical importance depends on its determination.

Among the most remarkable of the personal disciples (for as such they must be regarded) are those commonly known in the New Testament as the brethren of the Lord. In the account of one of the two visits paid by Jesus to Nazareth during the course of the Galilean ministry, we read that the Nazarenes were "astonished and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? *and his brethren, James and Joses and Simon and Judas?* And his sisters, are they not all with us?"¹ The same "brethren" of Jesus are at an earlier period mentioned as being along with their mother at Cana, on the occasion of the marriage feast, at which He wrought the first of His miracles, and as accompanying Him after the close of the festival to Capernaum, where it is probable that from about this time they and Mary continued to reside throughout the ministry.² At all events, up to the close of the labours of our Lord in Galilee, the brethren of the Lord are represented as sharing the unbelief which gave an unenviable notoriety in those days to their and His fellow-townsmen. As

¹ Mat. xiii. 54.

² Cf. John, ii. 12, with Mark, iii. 21, 31, etc. From the words of the Nazarenes, "And his *sisters, are they not all with us?*" Mat. xiii. 56, it may be inferred that at the time of the visit already mentioned the "sisters" alone remained in Nazareth.

a prophet He was, He said, "not without honour save in His own country, *and among His own kin and in His own house.*" On one occasion, at Capernaum—it was one of these occasions already referred to, when the multitudes were so eager for instruction that Jesus and the Twelve "could not so much as eat bread"—we find them seeking opportunities to waylay Him, that by persuasion, or even, if necessary, by force, they might detach Him from labours which in their eyes appeared so inexplicable that they deemed them irrational. "They went out to lay hold on Him, for they said, He is beside Himself."¹ The answer He returned, when told of this design, implied that, though akin to Him according to the flesh, they were not as yet connected with Him by the only affinity which He Himself recognised as of any value. "There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And He answered them, saying, Who is my mother or my brethren? And He looked around about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For *whosoever shall do the will of God*, the same is my brother and my sister and mother."

Towards the end of the second year of the ministry in Galilee, immediately before the last Feast of Tabernacles, or about six months before the

¹ Mark, iii. 21.

² Mark, iii. 31, *sq.*

Crucifixion, the brethren of our Lord were still found among those who rejected His claims as the Messiah.¹ At what time the change took place is not stated. It is sometimes supposed to have been probably the result of a special appearance of the risen Saviour to one of these brethren,² during the forty days in which He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs.³ But immediately after the Ascension we have evidence that by that time at latest they were numbered with the disciples. They are expressly mentioned as forming part of the select body of our Lord's followers, which, from the day that He was taken up till the day of Pentecost, "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," in expectation of the mission of the Comforter.⁴ In 1 Cor. ix. 5 they are referred to as fellow-labourers with Cephas and other apostles. Of one of them, namely "James the Lord's brother," we know that eventually he occupied a prominent position as one of the "pillars" of the early Christian Church, and especially in Jerusalem, where He long engaged in the work of the ministry, exercised, either in virtue of official rank, or more probably on personal grounds, an authority which, within its own sphere, was deferred to by apostles like St Peter and St Paul. It is also generally agreed that the same "brother of the Lord" was the inspired writer of the canonical epistle known as the "Epistle General of James."⁵

¹ John, vii. 1, *sq.*

² 1 Cor. xv. 7.

³ Acts, i. 3.

⁴ Acts, i. 13, 14.

⁵ See Alford, N. T., iv. 23.

Since a very early period in the history of the Church, the exact relationship, according to the flesh, in which the so-called "brethren of the Lord" stood to the Saviour, has been matter of controversy. The question is not without difficulty, and, as far as practical results are concerned, is of less moment than the attention often devoted to it might seem to imply. No doctrine of Scripture is involved in its determination. It has no connection, for instance, with the doctrine of the miraculous conception of our Lord; and the opinion as to the *perpetual* virginity of Mary the mother of Jesus, which can alone be said to be implicated in the question, though generally (not, however, at any time universally) received in the primitive Church, and one which has always commended itself, with or without reason, to the religious sentiments of the Christian world generally, is nowhere expressly set forth or implied in the teaching of Scripture. The principal opinions as to the nature of the relation in question may be briefly indicated. (1) Accepting the more natural and obvious meaning of the passages in which they are referred to, it is maintained that the "brethren of the Lord" were sons of Joseph and Mary, born after the virgin mother of Jesus had brought forth her "first-born Son," "the holy child Jesus." The only objection of much importance to this view arises from the difficulty of reconciling it with the fact that our Lord at His own death committed the care of His mother to the apostle John, and that from this period that

disciple accordingly "took her unto his own home." If Mary had four sons, besides daughters, still living, "is it conceivable," it is asked, "that our Lord would thus have snapped asunder the most sacred ties of affection?"¹ We are too little acquainted, however, with the whole circumstances to be enabled to judge how far such an apparent difficulty might admit of explanation. (2) Another view is, that the "brothers" as well as the "sisters" of our Lord were children, not of Mary, but of Joseph by a previous marriage, and that, to use the words of the author just quoted, and one of the most recent advocates of this hypothesis, "they are called the Lord's brothers only in the same way in which Joseph is called his father, having really no claim to the title, but being so designated by an exceptional use of the term adapted to the fact of the miraculous incarnation."² This view, which depends on traditions found in some of the Apocryphal Gospels, and in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hilary, Epiphanius, and other early Fathers, is adopted by the Eastern Church, but was in the fourth century rejected by Jerome as a pure conjecture borrowed from the "*deliramenta apocryphorum*."³ (3) The only other hypothesis that need be mentioned is that which was suggested by the last-named Father, and is ac-

¹ Prof. Lightfoot, Galatians, 264.

² *Ibid.*, 248. In the essay on the "Brethren of the Lord," to be found in this book, see a catena of references to the Fathers' and other early Christian writings bearing on the question.

³ Smith's Dict., s.v. "Brother."

cepted in the Western Services, by the later Latin writers, and by many modern scholars. The view of Jerome is, that the brethren of the Lord were His cousins after the flesh, being the sons of Mary the wife of Alpheus, or Cleopas (assumed to be identical), and the (supposed) sister of the Virgin; a theory maintained on the ground that while the term "brethren" is used in Scripture with more than one meaning, and sometimes¹ to express *kinsmanship* rather than actual brotherhood, the names of the persons known as "the brothers" of Christ, in three instances correspond with those of the sons of Alpheus and of Mary the wife of Alpheus. The most formidable, and it appears to be a fatal, objection to the hypothesis in question, is, that it assumes two, if not three, of our Lord's "brethren" to have been from the first in the number of the apostles; whereas up to within a few months of the crucifixion they are described as still without even faith in His Messiahship, and even after their conversion are expressly distinguished from the apostles.² The words of St Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians,³ "other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother," even if, as from the construction is doubtful, they imply that James was at the time referred to regarded as "an apostle" in the more extended sense of that term, do not necessarily mean that he was one of the Twelve.⁴

¹ *E. g.*, Gen. xiii. 8, xxix. 5.

² Acts, i. 13, 14.

³ Gal. i. 19.

⁴ See Prof. Lightfoot, Alford, Olshausen, etc., *in loc.*

Even from the above general statements it will be seen that (apart altogether from theological controversy, and on merely critical grounds) the question is not without difficulty. Neander speaks of it as "the most difficult in the apostolic history."¹ As already said, however, it is not one which, however it may be determined, involves any point of Christian doctrine. Let it be added that, as far as the facts connected with the history of the remarkable group of personal disciples of Jesus known as "the brethren of the Lord" have any special interest for us, that interest is very slightly affected by the view we may take of the exact nature of the relation in which these men stood to our Lord. In any case they were members of the family of which He in the days of His flesh formed part; they had known Him in those days when He lived in obscurity in Nazareth; they had enjoyed every opportunity of a familiar acquaintance with His whole life on earth: and the fact that these men, though, perhaps from the same natural prejudices which affected other persons amongst whom He had been brought up, they long resisted the evidence of His Messiahship afforded by His public ministry, ultimately numbered themselves among the followers of Jesus, at least one of them becoming a prominent minister of the early Christian Church, is, on any hypothesis, an important contribution to the evidence of Christianity.

¹ Planting, etc., 350.

Another question of a like kind relates to the early history of one—or rather, as will be seen, more than one—of the many women Mary Magdalene. who formed so important an element in the body of the immediate followers of our Lord. It was fitting that representatives of that sex, which, while it has a common interest with the other in the main design for which Christ came into the world, has benefited so largely in social elevation by the introduction of Christianity, should have been found among the earliest and most devoted of the personal disciples. That this distinction belonged to women in those days is well known. Their influence was no doubt in many ways of the greatest importance to the cause of Christ: and the warmth no less than the value of their attachment to that cause was recognised by our Lord Himself in the special tokens of His confidence which many of them received from Him. None of them was more highly honoured in this respect than Mary who was called Magdalene. A special interest, however, attaches to the history of this disciple from the place she holds in the early traditions of the Church—traditions which have left their traces on popular belief even to our own day, and even among Christian believers who profess to derive their knowledge of the facts of the Gospel history exclusively from the Scriptures. The principal questions are as to the identity between this Mary and Mary of Bethany; and whether the former (or, if the same person under different names, both)

must be identified with "the woman which was a sinner" of Luke, vii. 37.

The common legend may first of all be briefly paraphrased. According to this tradition, as it is found in the medieval and many more recent lives of the saints, and finds even wider circulation by means of early Western art, Mary Magdalene was the sister of Lazarus and Martha, and born of parents reputed noble, from whom she and they inherited great wealth and large possessions. Of the sisters, Martha was a model of virtue and propriety, while Mary abandoned herself to a life of luxury, and at length brought infamy on herself and shame to all who were connected with her. She became a "sinner," in the sense in which this term is applied in the Gospels to women who have given themselves up to the grossest licentiousness and impurity, being known by the name of the Magdalene, either from the distant Galilean town to which she had fled from the reproaches of her family, and for the greater freedom to follow her vicious inclinations, or from "the plaited hair," with which, after the manner of her class, she was accustomed to adorn herself.¹ In Galilee she was brought under the influence of the Saviour, by whose teaching she was converted to God, her sins, which were many, being forgiven her. It is here that she is first introduced to our notice in the Gospel, Mary Magdalene being no other than "the woman in the city which was a sinner," who came

¹ Cf. 1 Pet. iii. 3.

to Jesus as He sat at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and washed His feet with her tears, anointing them at the same time with precious ointment. She afterwards frequently accompanied Him in His progresses through Galilee, and on His journeys to Jerusalem, ministering to Him of her substance. On the occasion of one of the last-mentioned journeys, when Martha, her sister, entertained Jesus at Bethany, and was "cumbered with much serving," Mary Magdalene is found sitting at His feet, having "chosen the good part which should not be taken away from her." It was the same Mary whose tears, after the death of Lazarus, made Jesus Himself weep, and who in the beginning of the Passion week, a second time anointed the Saviour's feet with costly perfumes. Again, under her name of the Magdalene, she is found present at the Crucifixion and a witness of the Resurrection. After the Ascension the brother and two sisters, after various perils, arrived at Marseilles in France, where Mary Magdalene, having for a time preached the Gospel to the heathen people with great success, eventually retired to a wilderness not far from the city, and spent the last thirty years of her life in penance for her early sins—not, however, without celestial visions and other foretastes of the joys reserved for, no less than caused by, every sinner that repenteth.¹

It has been said that this legend, in its leading

¹ *Acta Sanctorum, Julii*, tom. v. 189, *sq.*; *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, ap. July 22.

statements, has been very generally accepted as authentic. As far especially as it sets forth Mary Magdalene and the "woman which was a sinner," who washed the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee, as the same person, or at least regards the former disciple as a woman who had been reclaimed by our Lord from a life of infamy, it may be said at this day to represent, as it has since the third or fourth century represented, the prevailing and almost universal popular belief as to her history. That in our own language the word "Magdalene" is used as a synonym for a woman of impure life, is a fact which of itself indicates how generally the tradition in question must at one time have laid hold of the popular mind.¹ It need hardly now be said that, however attractive the story may appear, it is without authority from Scripture, and indeed has no trustworthy evidence in its support. The only basis in the Gospels for the identification of Mary of Bethany with "the woman which was a sinner" of Luke, vii., is found in the fact that both of them are represented as (though evidently on different occasions and in different parts of the country) showing to our Lord a mark of respect, which was customary among the Jews, by anointing Him with precious unguents; and the only authority for supposing Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene

¹ For evidence of the prevalence of the opinion at different periods, see Lardner, Letter to Jonas Hanway, Works, x. 237, *sq.*; Professor Plumtre's Art. in Smith's Dict. of the Bible on Mary Magdalene; and Butler's Lives, *loc. cit.* (note).

the same person, appears to be that they alike bore a name which was apparently not less common in Palestine in that day than (though of course for a different reason) it now is in every country throughout Christendom.¹ But further, as we have no evidence to justify us in identifying Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, or either with "the sinner" of Luke's Gospel, so neither have we any other ground for attributing to one or other of

¹ The following argument brought forward by Baronius, an eminent Romish ecclesiastical historian, though regarded by Lightfoot as of some weight, will hardly be accepted as sufficient to prove the identity of Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany. "We say upon the testimony of John the Evangelist—nay, of Christ Himself—that it plainly appears that Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and Mary Magdalene were but one and the same person. For when in Bethany the same sister of Lazarus anointed the feet of Jesus, and Judas did thereupon take offence, Jesus Himself, checking the boldness of the disciple, said, 'Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of my burial.' (This translation follows the vulgate, *sine ut servet*; but according to a generally accepted reading the original admits of being so rendered.—See Alford's note, *in loc.*) Now that she that brought the ointment to the sepulchre for the anointing of the body of Jesus was Mary Magdalene is affirmed by Mark; and that she, with Mary the mother of James and Salome, did that office. When, therefore, neither in him nor in any other of the evangelists there is any mention of Mary the sister of Lazarus, *who was foretold by our Saviour that she should do that office*, it may easily be known that both these Marys were but one and the same."—(Annales Eccl. ad A.D. 32, quoted by Lightfoot, Works, iii. 76.) The whole account of the anointing at Bethany excludes the idea that any "precious ointment" was "kept" by Mary for future use, and requires us to believe our Lord's words only to mean that the anointing prefigured, though on her part unconsciously, the death and burial of Jesus. In Mark this meaning is expressly given to the act. "She hath done what she could; she is come *aforehand* to anoint my body to the burying."—Mark, xiv. 8.

them any such previous lapse from virtue as is supposed in the legend. To assume with Gregory the Great, in one of his homilies,¹ that the "seven devils" of which Mary Magdalene was dispossessed, were the "many sins" of Luke, vii., "is to identify two things which are separated in the whole tenor of the New Testament by the clearest line of demarcation."² The opinion of early Christian writers on the subject is divided, but, in a question of this kind, carries with it little authority. Lightfoot quotes a rabbinical tradition according to which one Mary or Miriam Megaddella or Magdalene (?), who was so called from a Hebrew word signifying "a plaiter of hair," and was a woman of infamous character, appears to be connected with the history of our Lord.³ It need hardly be said that a charge against a disciple of Christ by the unbelieving Jews is more likely to be false than true; but the tradition in question evidently refers not to the Mary Magdalene of the Gospels, but to another Mary,⁴ much more nearly connected with our Lord, and much more likely to be the object of the calumnies of the rabbinical writers.

Our only authentic information as to the life of Mary Magdalene is limited to a few particulars. Among the persons afflicted by demoniacal possessions whom our Lord miraculously restored to their right mind, was a woman out of whom "He cast seven" (the number, according to Jewish usage,

¹ See Smith's Dict., *loc. cit.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Works, iii. 76, *sq.*; xi. 354, *sq.*

⁴ See *Ibid.*, iii. 78.

implies "many") "devils." Her name was Mary ; but to distinguish her from other Marys "she was called Magdalene." She appears to have resided in Galilee ; and, from her surname, was probably a native of Magdala, a town on the shores of the Sea of Gennesaret, not far from Capernaum. After her dispossession, she was accustomed with other women, like herself persons of some fortune, occasionally to follow Jesus in His circuits of Galilee, and "to minister to Him of her substance." Her association with such disciples as the wife of Herod's steward, the wife of Zebedee, and the wife of Alpheus, not only on an equal footing, but, as appears from the priority always given to her name in the lists of the more remarkable women of the Gospel history, with some claim to pre-eminence over them, may be accepted as affording of itself a strong presumption that her character was free from reproach. When our Lord went up to Jerusalem for the last Passover, she accompanied Him with many others of her own sex. She was present at the Crucifixion, "looking on afar off ;" she was one of those who, having bought sweet spices, proceeded early on the morning of the third day to the sepulchre, to pay, as they thought, the last offices of respect to the body of the Saviour ; and it was to her that Jesus, after the resurrection, first showed Himself alive, and intrusted the duty of announcing to the Twelve themselves and to others of the disciples that He had risen from the dead. Such are the facts on which, by combining with

them details belonging to the history of other persons mentioned in the Gospel, and adding circumstances derived solely from the imagination, has been gradually constructed one, perhaps, of the most attractive and the most generally received, but also one of the most untruthful, of the legends of the early Church.

In this chapter no more has been attempted than to give some account of the general position and character of those who formed the personal disciples of our Lord. Of their history as disciples, and especially of the results of their discipleship, some notice will be taken in the sequel.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

AT almost every other period of the existence of the Church of Christ, the history of doctrine embraces an account of the views promulgated on every question of religious belief by a large number of leaders of public opinion, all of them differing more or less, some of them differing *toto cælo*, from each other in their teaching ; no one of them perhaps being even altogether consistent with himself in his exposition of that which he believes to be the truth. The history of the doctrine of the Church in the days of our Lord is in a great measure free from the difficulties which, for this reason, ordinarily attend the labours of the student in that important department of inquiry. At this period—at least within the pale of the Church itself—one voice alone was heard ; one Master was alone acknowledged by all the faithful, without exception. There were as yet no parties, no divisions, or sects, or heresies, in the Church. And to ascertain what was the doctrine of the Church, all that is neces-

sary is to confine ourselves to a study of the doctrine of Christ Himself.

It is true that other influences besides the teaching of their Master affected the actual beliefs of the disciples at this time. They had not always sat at the feet of Jesus. All of them had been originally brought up under other teachers. To speak only of the Jewish disciples, forming almost the whole body, they had brought with them to the Master whom they now alone recognised some previous knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures ; but probably, in every case, still more familiarity with the glosses and perversions of Scripture which formed the staple of the teaching of the Rabbis. They continued, too, to attend the synagogues ; and both there and in their intercourse with their countrymen were brought in daily contact with doctrine very different from that of Christ. How much effect their early training and their continued associations with Judaism had at this time, and indeed long afterwards, upon their minds ; how much the influence of the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees interfered with their right apprehension of the teaching of Christ ; how truly, in short, their faith was as yet an amalgam of the corrupt Judaism of their own day, and of the pure lessons of Christianity as taught by their Master, appears in every page of the Gospel. Even on the subject of so fundamental an article of the doctrine of Christ as that of the spiritual nature of the

Other influences but Christ's teaching in case of disciples.

kingdom of heaven, the truth that His kingdom was not of this world, that He came not to establish a temporal but a spiritual sovereignty, not to redeem the natural Israel from the yoke of Rome, but the spiritual Israel from the burden of sin,—even on the subject of this great article of Christianity, intimately associated as it is with every other in the whole system of the Christian faith, the views of the disciples were more or less perplexed and obscured, if not vitiated, by their Jewish education, and the popular beliefs of those among whom they continued to live, and with whom they continued to worship. During the last journey to Jerusalem, while Jesus Himself, in the solitude of a heart which knew little real sympathy, was eagerly looking forward to the completion of His work by the sufferings and death that awaited Him in Jerusalem, earthly hopes and worldly ambitions engrossed the thoughts of the unconscious disciples who walked by His side. If some of His own warnings at times awakened for a moment indistinct apprehensions and presentiments of approaching calamity, the impression was evidently transient. Even the death of Christ failed to dissipate their illusions. When the blow fell, the result was not the elevation of their conceptions of the nature of His kingdom, but the abandonment of their faith in Himself.¹ And His resurrection revived, along with their trust in Him as truly the Son of God, the carnal

¹ Luke, xxiv. 21.

expectations with which in their minds that trust had all along been bound up, almost identified. Their last words to Him before the Ascension were: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"¹ Of the conflicting opinions already deeply rooted in their minds, with which the truth as it proceeded from the lips of their Master had to contend in the case of the first disciples (as indeed also in the case of all converts from Judaism in the succeeding age), some notices have been already given in a former chapter, and the subject need not be resumed in this place.

I. The first fact to be attended to in regard to the doctrine of Christ—understanding
 Unity of Christ's doctrine with that of the prophets and apostles. by these words the doctrine taught by our Lord Himself in the days of the personal ministry—is the fact that essentially and in its leading principles the doctrine of Christ was in entire harmony with that to be found in the revelations of the divine nature and will, which had been made through Moses and the prophets under the law, and were afterwards delivered to the Church through the apostles. In other words, there is no real or essential distinction between the teaching of our Lord and any teaching which is to be found elsewhere in the Scriptures.

A very different view is often maintained on this point. In particular, it is very often alleged that

¹ Acts, i. 6.

there are distinctions between the doctrine contained in the four Gospels, as taught by Christ in person, and the doctrine contained in the apostolical Epistles. A contrary opinion sometimes maintained. With more consistency others maintain that the teaching of Christ not only conflicts in some things with the teaching of the apostles, but is also at variance with that of Moses and the prophets—occupying, indeed, an independent position as regards both ; as if Christ, not only in the dignity of His person and the nature of His work as the Redeemer of mankind, and also the power and authority with which He spake, but even in the tenor and character of the doctrine which He taught, stands absolutely alone, and must be regarded as one who held and promulgated views on many of the most momentous questions of religious belief and religious obligation which are, in the strictest sense of the words, *peculiar to Himself*.

Accordingly, it is sometimes supposed that every man, in determining what is truth, must make up his mind on such questions as these : whether he is to take his rule of faith from the law or from the Gospel ; whether Paul or Jesus be the safer guide ; whether there can be any truer expression of the Gospel than the words of Jesus Himself.

Of course, all such views as are now referred to imply a denial of the inspiration of the writings of the prophets and the apostles ; indeed, they imply a denial of the inspiration of Christ Himself. Ac-

ording to Christ's express words, there can be no variance between His own doctrine and that of Moses and the prophets. "Think not," He said, "that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."¹ And as to the apostles—at all events as to the Twelve—He Himself commissioned them to preach the Gospel; He also promised them the direction of the Holy Spirit to enable them to fulfil this duty; and He said to them, "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me."² If, therefore, the doctrine of Christ differed essentially from, and, much more, if it was at variance with, the doctrine of those whose doctrine, according to His own account, He came not to destroy but to fulfil, and to whom He was accustomed to appeal as "testifying of Himself," or with the doctrine of the men who, selected by Him for the purpose, went forth under the direction of His Spirit to teach in His name, it is not their authority only, but also His, that must be regarded as compromised.

The supposed variance between the teaching of the apostles and that of our Lord may be here especially referred to. The question which has been raised on this point affects the authority for some of those articles of the Christian religion, as that religion is commonly understood and received, on which the whole character and complexion of our faith as Christians depend. If we are to be-

¹ Mat. v. 17.

² Luke, x. 16.

lieve that, for instance, the doctrine of the Atonement, or the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, as that doctrine is set before us in the teaching of the apostles, was, as has sometimes been maintained, unrecognised in, and foreign to, the teaching of Christ Himself, the same result must follow which Paul contemplated in another case—"Our faith is vain ; we are yet in our sins."¹

Now, as to this point it must be remembered that those who uphold the doctrine which has hitherto been received in the Church do not admit that there is any variance between the teaching of Christ and that of the apostles.

It is true, as will be afterwards more particularly noticed, that on some points of Christian doctrine, the Saviour Himself, during His personal ministry, was, for reasons to be also afterwards explained, less full and explicit in His statements than those men were to whom He committed the task of preaching the Gospel after His decease.

Admission as to the comparative incompleteness of Christ's teaching.

Another admission must also be made, if the term "admission" be appropriate in a case in which the point conceded is practically without importance. Many of the most characteristic doctrines of Christianity as taught by the apostles will be sought for in vain in the discourses of Christ *in the same forms* in which they were afterwards promulgated. Even in the Epistles, a systematic, technical, or scientific

Nomenclature different.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 17.

statement of Christian verities is not often to be found. No such thing occurs in these inspired writings as "a catechism or regular elementary introduction to the Christian religion, set of articles, confession of faith, or by whatever other name we may designate a regular compendium of Christian doctrine."¹ Nor even are particular doctrines, as a rule,—if, indeed, in the exact sense of the word, they are ever—set forth in systematic or scholastic forms, in those forms with which we are familiar in the theological literature of later times. And much of the technical nomenclature with which Christian doctrine has since become associated, and which, in fact, is a product of controversies that had not then disturbed the peace of the Church, is as foreign to the teaching of the apostles as to that of our Lord Himself. In the Epistles of St Paul and other apostles, however, doctrine *is* sometimes expounded in technical and systematic forms which do not occur in the Gospels. It need hardly be said that this fact does not imply that there is any difference in the teaching to be found in these two great divisions of the New Testament Scriptures. That the same truths may be delivered in the exact language of science on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in less definite but more generally intelligible forms, this every one knows. Every one knows, too, that to secure the object the religious teacher has in view—the instruction of those whom

¹ Whately's *Essays on the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion*, 312.

he addresses—it is indispensable that the same truth should be presented sometimes in the one form and sometimes in the other, according to the special circumstances and requirements of his audience. It is no evidence, then, of any disagreement or want of harmony between the teaching of the apostles and that of our Lord that the language in which it is expressed occasionally differs, the former finding it necessary for the purpose of making their meaning the more intelligible to the particular persons to whom they addressed themselves, or to guard against then prevalent misapprehensions and perversions of the truth, to express themselves to some extent in exact and definite language, which their Master did not need to use, and, in the circumstances, could not, without defeating His object, have employed. The fact itself, however, that, as regards the forms of their teaching, such a distinction exists between our Lord and the apostles must—whatever importance attaches to it—be acknowledged. It has been truly said that “Christ Himself never uses *the word* Sacrifice with the least reference to His own life or death.”¹ Though in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican “the Pauline *δικαίω*” appears to be “anticipated by our Lord, not merely as regards the thing, . . . but as regards the word itself,”² no such definite statement of the doctrine of justification by faith as occurs repeatedly in the Epistles of St Paul is in corresponding terms to be found

¹ Jowett, Ep. of St Paul, ii. 556.

² Trench, Parables, 510.

in the discourses of our Lord, nor yet are the terms "Mediator," "Propitiation," "Atonement," ever used by Christ with relation to Himself or His work.

If, however, thus less fully developed, and if not always expressed in the same definite and scientific terms, it may be proved that the doctrine of Christ, as taught during the personal ministry, is not at variance, but essentially and in its substance identical, with that of the apostles.

As an illustration of the kind of evidence which may be brought forward to this effect, Doctrine of Atonement. let me refer for a moment to a particular doctrine, and that the doctrine which is most characteristic of the teaching of the apostles, the doctrine of the Atonement. This doctrine is taught in many forms in the apostolical writings. It is there declared that "Christ died for our sins;"¹ that "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us;"² that "God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;"³ that "we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;"⁴ that the Church is "purchased with His own blood;"⁵ that "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;"⁶ that "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3.

² 1 Cor. v. 7.

³ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁴ 1 Peter, i. 18.

⁵ Acts, xx. 28.

⁶ 1 Peter, iii. 18.

of the whole world;"¹ that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."² Innumerable other passages might be quoted to the same purpose. It is sometimes denied that this doctrine is to be found in the epistles of Paul and other apostles. But even by those who cannot fail to acknowledge, with whatever attempts to explain away the fact, that "the language of sacrifice and substitution" does occur in some of these epistles,³ it is contended that the doctrine finds at least no place in the teaching of our Lord. After saying "it is hard to imagine that there can be any truer expression of the Gospel than the words of Christ Himself," Professor Jowett, in his well-known essay 'On Atonement and Satisfaction,' goes on to say, "that among all the figures of speech with which Christ describes His work in the world, . . . none contain any sacrificial allusion. . . . Reading the parables simply and naturally, we find in them no indication of atonement or satisfaction. . . . The Sermon on the Mount, which is the extension of the Law to thought as well as action, and the two great commandments in which the Law is summed up, are equally the expression of the Gospel. The mind of Christ in its own place is far away from the oppositions of modern theology."⁴ It will be observed that in these statements, as in those of many other writers of the same school of religious thought as Professor Jowett, no less than of schools

¹ I John, ii. 2.

² Gal. iii. 13.

³ Jowett, ii. 560.

⁴ Ep. of St Paul, vi. 556, *sq.*

differing in some things very much from that, it is not only the absence in the teaching of our Lord of the nomenclature of the apostles on the subject of the Atonement, but the absence of their doctrine—not a difference of words, but a distinction as regards the thing itself, which is asserted. To show how far such an assertion is from being justified by the facts, it would be necessary to enter into inquiries too wide and extensive to be appropriate in this place.¹ It must here suffice to notice very generally the fact that the doctrine of the Atonement, instead of being either passed over or much more excluded in the teaching of our Lord, is in that teaching, if less fully and, as a rule, in different forms than in the apostolical writings, most clearly and distinctly to be found.

(1.) Reference may first of all be made to all those words of Jesus in which He speaks of His death as a fulfilment of the Mosaic Law, and of the predictions of the prophets: thus in general but most comprehensive terms claiming for that death the same sacrificial and propitiatory character which, with relation, in like manner, to the typical institutions of Moses and the words of the prophets, is ascribed to it in the epistles:—“Then He took unto Him the Twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are *written by the prophets concerning the Son of man*

¹ See on the whole subject, Archbishop Magee ‘On Atonement and Sacrifice;’ and with reference to modern controversy, the recent work of Professor Crawford, ‘On the Doctrine of Holy Scripture respecting the Atonement.’

shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again.”¹ “Then said He unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe *all that the prophets have spoken!* Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”² “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that *all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me.* Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, *Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations.*”³

(2.) There are many more direct statements of our Lord to the same effect: statements which, if, for reasons already suggested and to be afterwards more particularly noticed, necessarily less full and explicit than those made by the apostles after the death of their Master had been accomplished, will be seen at least to contain the germ and seed of the apostolical doctrine of the Atonement:—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the

¹ Luke, xviii. 31.² Luke, xxiv. 25.³ Ibid., 44, 57.

wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up ;”¹ “That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”² “The Son of man comes not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”³ “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. . . . 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 shall give him is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world.”⁴ “I am the good Shepherd ; the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. . . . As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father ; and I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . This commandment I received of my Father.”⁵

(3.) Above all, we have the selection, by our Lord, of a symbol of His death in the sacrament which was specially to be celebrated in commemoration of Himself by His disciples, and so celebrated “till He come again ;”⁶ a selection difficult to be accounted for, “unless we seek a solution of it in the great truth that His death is the only propitiation for the sins of the world,”⁷ with the words of the institution. In these words, “Take, eat, *this is my body which is given for you ;* this do in remembrance of me. . . . This cup is the New Testament

¹ Cf. John, xiii. 33.

² John, iii. 14.

³ Mat. xx. 28.

⁴ John, vi. 47, *sq.*

⁵ John, x. 11, *sq.* See other passages to the same purport collected in Crawford, 389, *sq.*

⁶ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

⁷ Crawford, Atonement, 392.

in my blood, *which is shed for you :*" or, according to Matthew, " This is my blood of the New Testament *which is shed for many for the remission of sins,*"¹ we have, it must be remembered, not only a direct statement, delivered in the most solemn circumstances, and in connection with one of the most sacred institutions of Christianity, of the sacrificial and propitiatory character of the death of Christ, but such a statement made in terms which by their evident reference to the sacrifices of the Levitical economy, and especially to the Paschal offering, must have had, in the minds of those to whom they were addressed—Jews, and Jews who were at the moment engaged in keeping the feast of the Passover—a fulness and depth of meaning in this direction which they do not obviously convey to ourselves.

It is not, therefore, admitted that any variance exists between the doctrine of Christ No variance admitted. and that of either the ancient prophets admitted. (including Moses) or the apostles. It is, on the contrary, maintained that the doctrine to be found in the Gospels is essentially the same with that to be found in the other scriptures ; that the very earliest revelations of the will of God to our salvation had in them the seeds and elements of the Christian faith, and in no wise differed from the order of sound words received in the apostolical Church, except so far as—to use our Lord's own figurative explanation—the seed cast into the ground differs

¹ Luke, xxii. 19 ; Mat. xxvi. 27.

from the plant which is gradually developed out of that seed, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear ;¹ that all truth as spoken by God, at sundry times and in divers manners, from the first to the last of the revelations which He has made of Himself, is in essence the same truth : the same truth, though not always made known with the same fulness or in the same forms, in which respects it is adapted to the needs and to the capacities of those to whom it is from time to time addressed ; that there is in fact no system of doctrine peculiar to Christ's own teaching, whether in comparison with that of the prophets, or in comparison with that of the apostles ; nor, on the other hand, any system of doctrine peculiar to their teaching as compared to His ; and that in all Scripture—all alike given by inspiration of God—there is to be found from first to last "one faith," even as there is from first to last revealed "one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."²

One word more as to the supposed inconsistency between the doctrine of the personal ministry and that of the ministries of the apostles. It must be remembered that the apostles themselves, at least, always disclaim any innovations in doctrine on their part. They profess to speak the things which they "had seen and heard."³ The

No variance with doctrine of apostles admitted by themselves.

¹ Mark iv., 26.

² Eph. iv. 5 ; 1 Tim. ii. 5.

³ 1 John, i. 1.

“end of their conversation” is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”¹ There is a peculiarity in the case of St Paul. He had not been a personal follower of Christ, and he received the knowledge of the truth, though from Christ Himself, yet by extraordinary revelation.² But none of the apostles insists more strongly on the unity of the faith of the Church, nor condemns more strongly the heretics who, in his own day, “perverted the Gospel of Christ,” or “preached any other gospel,”³ and “consented not to wholesome words, *even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ;*”⁴ none more loyally acknowledges Christ as his only Master. That he had “kept the faith” was one of the very grounds on which, in the immediate prospect of death, he looks forward for the crown of righteousness which he was so soon to receive.⁵ And it is a remarkable circumstance that the very same apostle whose doctrine is sometimes supposed, against his own most solemn asseverations, to conflict with that which, as delivered by our Lord, is recorded in the writings of the evangelists, had, as his most intimate associates and attached friends, two of these evangelists themselves — namely, Mark and Luke; and on the authority of Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius,⁶ even appears to have been consulted by the latter in the compilation of his inspired “treatise of all that Jesus began

¹ Heb. xiii. 7.² Gal. i. 12.³ Gal. i. 7, 8.⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 3.⁵ 2 Tim. iv. 7.⁶ Smith's Dict. of Bible, s.v. “Gospel of Luke.”

both to do and to teach until the day in which He was taken up." ¹

II. That a gradual and progressive development of the doctrine of Christ took place even within the period of the personal ministry itself, is a fact which has been pointed out by many writers on the Gospel history, and it is one which on every account requires to be carefully attended to: but it has more special claims on our attention, inasmuch as it affords a key to the solution of many difficulties in connection with the teaching of our Lord; and, indeed, in order that the general strain of that teaching may be understood, must always be kept in view.

The fact now referred to—a fact for which there is abundant evidence—is in itself in accordance with the principles on which we know all truth has been communicated from first to last to mankind. In the history of revelation upon the whole, we find that more and more light has been given as men were more and more capable of benefiting by it. The disciples, even within the brief subsistence of their personal relations to Jesus, did not enjoy the singular privileges bestowed on them without result. They were much less capable of understanding the doctrine of Christ at the commencement than at the close of the ministry. Far as they were, even at the very last, from having escaped from the slowness of heart to believe and

¹ Acts, i. 1.

the dulness of understanding which characterised the earlier days of their converse with their Master, they became day by day better prepared to have set before them the higher mysteries of the faith. And it might have been expected that as they became able to bear it, the truth should have been more fully and clearly made known to them.

It is not to be supposed that any foundation exists for the rationalistic hypothesis that there was a development of doctrine in the mind of our Lord Himself; or that the different phases of His public teaching represent corresponding changes or modifications in what is called the "plan of Christ," which from time to time suggested themselves to Him, or were forced upon Him by the progress of events; that the religious system which has since been identified with His name, not only was gradually revealed more and more clearly by Him to His disciples, but gradually took shape and arrived at maturity in His own mind. This daring hypothesis has been adopted by (among many others) M. Renan, who has worked it out with his usual skill and ability, and with, it must be added, his not less customary disregard of the facts of the history of our Lord. According to M. Renan, "the kingdom of God" was at first, in the view of Christ, no more than a purer Judaism. He had no thought beyond purifying the lessons of the Rabbis from their materialistic conceptions of religious duty; and thus infusing new life into the faith and

No growth
of doctrine
in the mind
of Christ
Himself.

observances of His countrymen. A visit paid to Jerusalem some time after the death of John, on the occasion of one of the Passovers, led to the first change in His views. For some reason, He was now for the first time forcibly struck with the pride and irreverence of the priesthood, and wounded in His religious sentiments by the "repulsive details" of the Temple worship. The feeling that He Himself, lost in the crowd, could make little impression, and was received only with disdain in the capital, increased His dissatisfaction with all that He saw. He left the holy city with the novel idea, but an idea ever afterwards rooted in His mind, that the abolition of the sacrifices, the suppression of an undevout and overbearing priesthood, and, in a word, the abrogation of the Mosaic law, had become an absolute necessity. He was no longer a Jewish reformer, but a sworn foe to the very existence of Judaism.¹ Then after an uncertain interval arose the conception of His own supernatural character and powers, of the fulfilment in Himself of the predictions of a Messiah, a Son of man, a Son of God, with other not less important accessions to the original theory of the "kingdom of God," with which He had entered on His ministry.² The last stage—all hope of His acceptance by the nation as a temporal leader having been abandoned—was that in which He deliberately resolved to attempt to reunite His followers by the sacrifice of His life.³

¹ *Vie de Jésus*, 213, *sq.*

² *Ibid.*, 236, *sq.*

³ *Ibid.*, 307, *sq.*

It need hardly be said that any hypothesis to the effect that the latest teachings of Jesus were the result of after-thoughts, suggested to Him in the course of His public labours by the circumstances of His life, or by the progress of His mental development, is not only without authority from Scripture, but is disproved by all the information which we possess on the subject of the history of Jesus. The truths found in His later discourses, if not so distinctly and fully expressed, are implied in words which He spoke at the very commencement of His public labours. Not only did He, without remonstrance, suffer John the Baptist publicly to announce Him as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,"¹ and Nathaniel, unrebuked, to recognise in Him "the Son of God" and "the Messiah"²—incidents both of which occurred at Bethabara, immediately after the Temptation, and within little more than a month after the Baptism; but at the first Passover we find the same and cognate doctrines taught by Himself. He then spoke of the Temple as His Father's house.³ He foretold His death and resurrection;⁴ and to Nicodemus, a man whose education and spiritual aptitudes appear to have especially fitted Him for a confidence, for which our Lord's own disciples and the generality of the Jewish nation were not yet prepared, He spoke still more plainly: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the king-

¹ John, i. 29.² John, i. 49.³ John, ii. 16.⁴ 1 John, ii. 18.

dom of God. . . . No man hath ascended up into heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. . . . As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life. . . . For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him should be saved.”¹ These words were spoken at the very commencement of the ministry; and as opportunities offered, similar anticipations of the doctrine of the kingdom of God, as that doctrine was afterwards more fully proclaimed, are to be found in words of Jesus used on various occasions about the same period.

On this point, Neander, on purely critical grounds, adopts the only view which can be reconciled with the divinity of our Lord; “Jesus knew and testified to His Messiahship from the beginning, from His first public appearance until His last declaration made before the High Priests in the very face of death; although He did not always *proclaim it with equal openness*. . . .” John tells us that some of the apostles were slow to believe, and wavered in their faith. All this, however, does nothing to prove similar fluctuations in Christ’s conviction of His Messiahship. According to Matthew, Jesus commenced His ministry like John the Baptist, by summoning men to repentance as a preparation for the coming kingdom of God. But

¹ John, iii. 3, *sq.*

this by no means implies that His intention and His announcement at the beginning were the same as those of the Baptist; . . . nor was the aim of His ministry altered by the resistance which it eventually encountered. . . . He was far from trusting to the momentary impulses under which [at the first] the people, excited by His words and actions, sought to join themselves to Him. He readily distinguished, with that searching glance which pierced the depths of men's hearts, the few who came to Him, drawn of the Father, and following an inward consciousness of God, from those who sought Him with carnal feelings, to obtain that which He came not to bestow. There was no extravagance in His demands upon men, nothing exaggerated in His hopes of the future. Everywhere we see not only a conscious possession of the Divine power to overcome the world which He was to impart to humanity, but also of the obstacles it should meet with from the old nature in which the principle of sin was still active. . . . It is undeniable that from the beginning Christ aimed at the spiritual development of the kingdom of God."¹

If, however, there was no change in the idea of the kingdom, or, in other words,² of the truth to which He came to bear witness, in the mind of our Lord Himself, it is not the less certain that that idea was not at the first so fully and clearly developed

Successive stages in the development of Christ's doctrine.

¹ Life of Christ (Bohn), 83, 57.

² Cf. John, xviii. 37.

in His teaching as afterwards. He discovered it to His disciples gradually with more and more distinctness, teaching them as they were able to bear instruction.

At the commencement of the ministry, our Lord's doctrine appears to have been little in advance of that of His forerunner, John the Baptist, with whose special message He began Himself to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."¹ The relation of Jesus to John is sometimes strangely misapprehended and misapplied in more ways than one. To suppose that our Lord began His ministry as a follower of the Baptist, and with no other purpose for some months than that of adopting the same character in which John, as a preacher of repentance, had met with so great success,² is an idea not more untenable than to hold that our Lord's ministry was wholly independent of that of His forerunner. A close interconnection may be traced between all those by whom at sundry times and in divers manners God has spoken to men. "The Old Testament prophets form a regular succession; they are members of an unbroken continuous chain; one perpetually reaches forth the hand to another."³ To use the words of Delitzsch,⁴ "every revelation in its organic develop-

¹ Mat. iv. 17.

² Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 107.

³ Caspari, quoted by Fairbairn on *Prophecy*, 199.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

ment could only present something new in so far as it took up the old, in order to confirm and still further unfold it, without the possibility, in the process of development, which proceeds from God Himself, the Unchangeable, of running into contrariety with what had preceded." Our Lord expressly recognised this interdependence of all the agencies by which God has revealed Himself to mankind, and always carries on the work of grace, when He said to the disciples, "one soweth and another reapeth, . . . other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."¹ Nor did He Himself, in whom all prophetic activity culminated, profess to stand wholly isolated from the prophets who had gone before Him. To find that our Lord began His own ministry by taking as His starting-point the message which had by Divine inspiration been delivered by John, himself a messenger sent from God, and sent to prepare the way for Christ, need not surprise us. And this we do find. Not that the *intention* of our Lord was even at the first identical with that of John. But for a time His *teaching*—though, as Neander says in the passage just quoted, not even then *identical*—evidently appears to have been so little in advance of John's, that the distinction was hardly recognised. His choice of the same localities for His early ministrations as those in which John laboured, and His permission of the use by His disciples of the same initiatory rite (which

¹ John, iv. 37.

appears throughout all the rest of the ministry to have been discontinued, though under another form reintroduced before the Ascension), were no more than in keeping with the fact that for a time Christ not only preached "repentance" like John—this He always continued to do—but preached the kingdom of heaven as not already revealed, but as only at hand.¹

The first great stage in the progressive revelation of His doctrine by Christ is represented by the Sermon on the Mount. The date of the delivery of this discourse cannot be confidently determined, but it appears probable that it must be placed early in the second year of the Galilean ministry.² When the Sermon on the Mount is compared with all that we know of the doctrine peculiar to John, who was distinctively a preacher of the righteousness of the law, looking forward certainly to the kingdom of God, but not himself belonging to it,³ it is impossible not to be struck with the advance here made in the doctrinal teaching of our Lord from the time when He began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." We already find ourselves in a new world. It is very difficult to characterise the discourse now referred to by any form of words which will not be felt to be more or less inappropriate. But the common description of it as the Moral Code of the Christian Lawgiver per-

¹ Matt. iv. 17.

² Cf. Greswell, Wieseler, Neander.

³ Luke, vii. 28, xvi. 16.

haps most nearly expresses its tenor upon the whole. It is rather a republication (in a new form) of the moral precepts of the Old Testament than of its promises; the Christian rule of life rather than the Christian law of faith. It does not embrace the whole, nor even all, the most distinctive precepts of the Christian code, as that was finally given to the world; for some of which, as for instance the "new commandment," afterwards promulgated, "love one another *as I*" (*Christ*) "*have loved you*,"¹ the disciples were not yet prepared. But it relates chiefly to the Christian life, as distinguished from the faith and hope of the Christian. It ratifies, and at the same time brings out more fully than had hitherto been done (we must conclude, than from the hardness of men's hearts *could* hitherto have been done² with advantage), the great principles of the moral law. No design to interpret in their complete or Christian sense the typical observances and the promises of the Old Testament can be traced in it, beyond at least the general declaration that Christ was come "to fulfil the law and the prophets." But regarded in the light now explained, the Sermon on the Mount is far in advance of any teaching which had before been heard in Israel. The formula, "ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you" . . . —a formula sometimes used with reference to unauthorised interpretations or corruptions of the law of God as

¹ John, xiii. 34.

² Cf. Mat. xix. 8.

before revealed, but more commonly introducing additions to, or expansions of, that law—sufficiently indicates what a particular examination of the discourse throughout will confirm, that in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord stands forth not so much as a teacher of the law, but as a lawgiver. His hearers themselves drew the distinction. They said, “He taught as *one having authority*, and not as the Scribes.”¹

The next great stage in the progressive development of doctrine on the part of our Lord Himself is coincident with the adoption of a novel mode or form of teaching which continued ever afterwards to be frequently employed by Him.

The exact period when the earliest of the parables were spoken—namely, the series of parables of Mat. xiii.—is uncertain ;² but from the Gospel of Luke it is evident that the incident could not have taken place earlier than two or three months after the date of the Sermon on the Mount, the intervening period having been occupied by a circuit of Galilee, in the course of which our Lord “went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.”³

That this series of parables marks a new de-

¹ Mat. vii. 29.

² Neander, *Life of Christ*, 200.

³ Luke, viii. 1. Wieseler, *Chron. Syn.*, 292, supposes an interval of only two days between the parables on the lake and the Sermon on the Mount, making the Sermon fall on April 12th, and the parables on April 14th of the year 29 A. D. Greswell gives no

velopment of Christian doctrine, appears from the words of our Lord Himself. In answer to the question, "Why speakest thou to them in parables?" He said to the apostles, "To you it is given to know *the mysteries of the kingdom of God*, but to them it is not given. Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand ;"¹ words which imply that truths were now made known for the first time ; "mysteries," *i.e.*, truths hitherto "kept secret ;"² and truths for which, even then, the great body of the hearers of our Lord were as yet unprepared. And when we inquire into the purport of these parables, we find how truly the nature of their teaching corresponds with the view thus suggested by the explanatory words of our Lord Himself. Jesus had already frequently preached to the disciples that the kingdom of God was at hand, or was already among them. Here He for the first time gives them an insight into the true nature of that kingdom, a subject on which, in common with their countrymen generally, they laboured under gross and inveterate errors and illusions. It was the first occasion on which He intimated to them the great, and to them as yet unwelcome, truth—a truth which, even afterwards, they were slow to

specific date, but assumes, as appears to be required by Luke, xii. 1, sufficient time to have elapsed for an extensive circuit of Galilee.

¹ Mat. xiii. 11, 13.

² Rom. xvi. 25.

learn—that He came into the world to found not an empire but a Church, to redeem not Israel from foreign subjugation, but the world from sin. The very adoption of the parabolic form of teaching on this occasion implies the novelty of the doctrine thus set forth. The new mode of teaching—that it was new is proved by the question of the disciples just referred to¹—was, with a wisdom which we can in some degree appreciate, adapted to be the vehicle of this new development of the doctrine of Christ. He had to convey truth, of which it was essential the disciples should have some intimation, but for which many of them were as yet wholly unprepared, and the apostles themselves prepared very imperfectly. Speaking of the parables generally, Trench says, “Had our Lord spoken naked spiritual truth, how many of His words, partly from His hearers’ lack of interest in them, partly from their lack of insight, would have . . . left no trace behind them! But being imparted to them in this form, under some lively image, in some short and seemingly

¹ It was new, at least, in our Lord’s own practice. It has been very unnecessarily made a question whether teaching by parables had been in use before the time of Christ,—some Oriental scholars maintaining that no scheme of rhetoric was more familiar to the Jews than that of parables, the nation inclining to these figures by a natural genius (Lightfoot, Works, xi. 204); while, according to others (*e.g.*, even M. Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 167), nothing in Judaism afforded any models for a style which they believe He Himself created. We have, in fact, in the Old Testament Scriptures themselves, at least one parable (2 Sam. xii. 1, *sq.*; cf. Judges, ix. 7, *sq.*) of essentially the same character as those of the Gospels.

paradoxical sentence, in some brief but interesting narrative, they awakened attention, excited inquiry, and even if the truth did not at the moment, by the help of the illustration used, find an entrance into the mind, yet the words must thus often have fixed themselves in their memories, and remained by them.”¹ To this it must here be added that the true doctrine of the nature of the kingdom of God as a whole, was one to which all the prejudices and prepossessions of the Jews of that age were in violent opposition, and which, without being in some degree veiled, could not at this time have gained a hearing at all from any class of the people.

No account of the doctrine of Christ would be complete which did not take into view Discourse on the Bread of Life. the memorable discourse spoken in the synagogue of Capernaum, in which our Lord declares Himself to be the Bread of Life.² This discourse is to be found only in John’s Gospel, and, with the incidents connected with it, forms one of the very few recollections of the Galilean ministry which are preserved in the supplementary narrative of that evangelist. The time is so far specified that we are told the Passover was nigh at hand.³ Assuming “the feast” mentioned in the immediately preceding chapter to be also a Passover, this was therefore the third anniversary of the greatest of the Jewish festivals since our Lord’s entrance on His ministry. It was also the only one which He

¹ Notes on the Parables, 25. ² John, vi. 26, sq. ³ Ibid., 4.

did not keep in Jerusalem, His reason for absenting Himself, elsewhere explained, having been the danger of a premature interruption of His work from the bloodthirsty designs of the Pharisees.¹ At this moment Capernaum was already crowded by the bands of worshippers passing through the city on their way to the feast,² many of them lingering in the neighbourhood that they might avail themselves of the opportunity of seeing the miracles and hearing the doctrine of our Lord.³ As already mentioned in another connection, our Lord was so exhausted by the extraordinary labours imposed upon Him on this occasion, that He found it necessary to seek rest by a temporary retirement from Capernaum. He crossed the lake with His disciples, and took shelter in the desert on the eastern side, in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida-Julias, that He and the Twelve might "rest a while." How this object was defeated by the eagerness of the multitudes, who, learning His destination, followed Him by another route, has also been already noticed. Then followed the miracle of feeding the five thousand. It is not necessary here to detail the circumstances of another miracle which has rendered memorable the return the same night to Capernaum. The following day was either a Sabbath or a feast-day in connection with the great festival which was about to be celebrated in Jerusalem. The synagogue was consequently

¹ John, vii. 1.² Mark, vi. 31.³ John, vi. 2.

open at Capernaum for divine service; and it was there, and in the circumstances now briefly recapitulated, that in the presence of many of those who had followed Him to the desert place, and had now returned, the discourse to which our attention must for a little be directed was spoken.

It seems impossible to interpret in more than one sense the tenor of that discourse. "The Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. . . . I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. . . . 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 shall give him is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I shall raise him up at the last day; for My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."¹ The true scope and meaning of words such as these admit of no serious discussion. Their obvious reference to the Jewish Passover, which was then "at hand,"² and with which at the moment the thoughts of the hearers of our Lord must

¹ John, vi. 33, *sq.*

² John, vi. 1.

have been occupied, only renders that meaning more explicit. It has been a subject of controversy how far any allusion may be supposed to be, by anticipation, here made to the Lord's Supper, that holy sacrament of the Christian Church which was instituted by our Lord in the following year, on the occasion of the last recurrence of the Paschal observance during His ministry, and instituted in terms some of which have a remarkable correspondence with the words of our Lord in this place. That the sacrament of the supper was *alone* referred to in the discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, is a view which may be set aside. It has been held by Bengel and other expositors, who, like him, are far from sympathising with the Romanist view of an *exclusive* reference to the ordinance of the holy communion, that in verse 51, as Jesus foretold His own death, so He "also foretold the institution of the holy Supper," and that indeed the whole of the discourse concerning His flesh and blood has in view "not only the passion of our Lord, but also *in connection with that (cum ea)* the holy Supper." It is improbable that even to this extent there should have been made a direct reference to an ordinance of which the disciples not only did not, but could not, have any knowledge. But however this question may be determined, it seems impossible for a moment to have any hesitation as to the ultimate meaning of our Lord's words in the whole of the discourse now referred to; impossible to doubt

that whether the Christian sacrament be, like the Jewish observance, incidentally alluded to or not, the doctrine itself to which both ordinances alike point is here directly taught by our Lord.

It is not necessary to say anything as to the value of the evidence for the progressive nature of the teaching of Christ which is furnished in this discourse. He had before expounded the spiritual nature of the Moral Law. He had begun a little later to open the eyes of His disciples to the general scope of His ministry, as intended not to establish a temporal but a spiritual kingdom. These were truths easy of acceptance in comparison with that now—though less clearly and definitely than was done afterwards—declared. Even apart from the consideration of its own nature, we have evidence that to the disciples themselves this was doctrine not only new but more difficult to receive than any before addressed to them by their Master. “Many of the disciples, when they heard those things, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . . [and] from that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him.”¹

The last epoch of the doctrinal teaching of Christ may be regarded as represented by the discourses of our Lord, spoken to the Twelve on the eve of the Crucifixion, which are found in John, xiii. and the three subsequent chapters. Of these discourses it may be

Discourses
in Upper
Chamber

¹ John, vi. 60, *sq.*

enough to say, in the words of a writer who has happily illustrated the feature of our Lord's ministry now referred to, that when we pass to them from such early discourses of Christ as, *e.g.*, the Sermon on the Mount, "we have left behind us the language and associations of the Old Testament: we have entered a new world of thought, and hear a new language which is being created for its exigencies."¹ It cannot but be felt that, at any earlier period of our Lord's labours on earth, words like those now addressed to the disciples by their Master could have had no place without an anachronism. He Himself indeed avows the novelty of some of the doctrines now promulgated. When He forewarns the disciples of coming trials, He says, "These things *I said not unto you at the beginning*, because I was with you." He calls the command that they should love one another as He had loved them "a *new* commandment." He enjoins them to offer prayer *in His name*, with the explanation that such a rule had not been hitherto in force. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive."² The most characteristic doctrine of the discourses now referred to is that of the Holy Spirit. But "all subjects have here assumed their distinctively Christian character; they are *in Christ Jesus*. The faith fixes itself on Him, and on the Father *through Him*. The prayer is *in His name*. The love is a response to *His* love. The

¹ Bernard: Bampton Lectures for 1864, 78.

² John, xvi. 4, 24.

service is the fruit of union with *Him*. To abide *in Him* is the secret of life, safety, fruitfulness, and joy.”¹

III. At the same time, however, that, as we have thus seen, the doctrine of Christ is not essentially different from that which may be gathered from the Scriptures generally, and at the same time that in the course of the ministry the higher mysteries of the Christian faith were by Him gradually revealed more and more fully to the disciples, it must be noticed that it did not enter into our Lord’s purpose to give during His own life a complete exposition in definite terms of all saving knowledge.

A complete exposition of doctrine not contemplated ;

The general principle on which a revelation of “the will of God to our salvation” has been made to man from first to last, may be expressed in the words in which the false prophets of Ephraim objected to the form of teaching employed by Isaiah: “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little.”² In no one age, by no one teacher, has a compendium of all saving knowledge been ever delivered once for all. It has been by a successive and continuous series of communications, none of them complete in itself, all of them fragmentary and partial, regarded alone, that the aggregate of divine knowledge has for the instruction of the world been

Nor to have been anticipated.

¹ Bernard : Bampton Lectures for 1864, 78.

² Isaiah, xxviii. 30.

gradually accumulated in the form of sound words, which is now in Scripture delivered in its completeness to the Church. God has spoken to us at sundry times ; and He has spoken to us by many prophets, each of them entering into and preparing for the labours of the others. A complete exposition of all the counsel of God is not to be found in the books of Moses, nor in the Prophets, nor in the Psalms, nor in the apostolical Epistles. If it be so that neither is such an exposition to be found in the Gospels, that fact is but in perfect harmony with the general scheme of revelation—a scheme according to which Christ, who has spoken in the law, and by the prophets, and by the apostles no less than in His own person, reveals Himself to the Church not in any one part of Scripture but *in all Scripture*,—"all Scripture [being] . . . profitable for doctrine . . . that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."¹

There is, in fact, no complete exposition of all revealed truth in the teaching of our Lord. Above all, it must be added, we shall find in that teaching, if not total silence, at least—using the word in no unworthy sense—reserve, as to some of those doctrines which are most prominently and distinctly proclaimed in the teaching of the apostles after the close of the personal ministry : that is to say, as regarded some great doctrines of that faith of which He is the Author and the Finisher, the teaching of our Lord

Statement of
the fact on
this subject.

¹ 2 Timothy, iii. 16.

was less complete, definite, and explicit than the teaching of the apostles after His death. Bishop Hinds says strongly: "Some of the most important parts of the Christian scheme were either wholly omitted by Him, or lightly touched upon. . . . His revelations were for the most part communicated by parables, or by hints and allusions equally obscure; and although it is true that His apostles were allowed an explanation of these, yet it is clear that at His death, and even after His ascension, they were [left] as much in the dark on some of the main truths of redemption as were the Jews who crucified Him."¹

One explanation which has been given of a fact at first sight so remarkable is that of the Reasons of this fact. author just quoted, who says: "Our Saviour's object in His ministry was not to teach Christianity. . . . The office of making Christians was the office of the Comforter. . . . God manifested Himself in the flesh to redeem the world, and to atone for sin—to be made the object of a new faith, the subject of a new religion. God manifested Himself by the Spirit, to instruct men in what He had done, and to teach them what they were bound, in consequence of this, to do."² The same important principle is thus explained by Dr Whately, in that eminent author's valuable 'Essay on the Importance of studying the Writings of the Apostle Paul:': "Jesus Christ did not come to *make* a revelation, so much as to be the *subject* of

¹ Early Christianity, Part II. c. 1.

² *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

a revelation. . . . He *accomplished* what He left His apostles to testify and to explain: He offered up Himself on the cross that they might teach the atoning virtue of His sacrifice: He rose from the dead that they might declare the great mystery of His divine and human nature, and preach that faith in Him by which His followers hope to be raised, and to reign with Him.”¹

For a full explanation, however, we must take into account the nature of the aims of the ministry itself as already explained. We have found that the doctrine of Christ was more immediately addressed, not to the Church generally, but to His personal disciples, and was specially intended for their instruction at the moment—not for the instruction, in the same direct and immediate sense, of all mankind. Who, then, were these men? What were their position and circumstances at that time? According to our Lord’s own repeated testimony, they were as yet unable to receive, even to understand, those words which must have been spoken by Him had He expounded to them in definite and explicit terms the whole of the doctrines which, under the inspiration of His Spirit, they afterwards themselves were commissioned to publish. “I have yet many things to say to you,” were among our Lord’s last words to them before His death, “but *ye cannot bear them now* ;” and then He went on to say, “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will lead you

¹ Essays on Some of the Difficulties of the Writings of St Paul, 70.

into all truth."¹ The prejudices of the disciples, their slowness to believe or even to understand truths which appear to have been fully within their reach, have been already noticed. It may be doubted, indeed, whether any class of men, even had they been much more intelligent, and much less prejudiced and prepossessed against the peculiarities of the Christian system than the personal disciples at this time were, could have been benefited by a perfectly full and definite proclamation of some of the doctrines of Christianity, if addressed to them during any period of the personal ministry. It appears to have been indispensable that the work of redemption should be accomplished before the doctrines founded upon it could be thoroughly understood; and all this time the two great events which lie at the very foundation of Christian doctrine, and which, according to St Paul, became afterwards the fundamental articles of the Gospel which that great apostle preached, and which the primitive Church received—namely, the death of Christ for our sins according to the Scriptures, and His resurrection from the dead according to the Scriptures—were still events of the future.² At least we know that for such doctrines the actual disciples, the men to whom our Lord did address Himself, were not prepared. Had our Lord in His teaching intended to promulgate the truth without any special regard to the present instruction of those who heard Him, we might

¹ John, xvi. 12, 13.

² I Cor. xv. 3, *sq.*

have been surprised at the omission or imperfect exposition on His part of any point of Christian doctrine. But He addressed Himself not so much to the Church, but to the personal disciples ; He adapted His teaching to their state of mind and their circumstances at the moment ; He contemplated, as His more immediate and direct aim, their instruction ; that is, the instruction of those, to speak to whom of "all the counsel of God," in full and definite language, would have been to give babes strong meat, suitable only for men "of full age, even those who . . . have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."¹ We must bear in mind the principle laid down by the apostles themselves as to Christian teaching. "I, brethren," St Paul writes to the Corinthians, "could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat ; *for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.*"²

Our Lord, then, did not attempt to set before the disciples during His own life a complete and definite statement of all Christian doctrine. As He founded His doctrine on truth already, in the writings of Moses and the prophets, published to the Church, and as He Himself during His own ministry carried forward gradually and progressively the revelation of God's purpose, as the Church was more and more able to bear it ; so He left to be completed by His

¹ Heb. v. 14.

² 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

apostles after His death, speaking by His Spirit, a work in which, unlike that of our redemption, He never professed to stand alone.

This fact is one of great importance. To suppose that in the teaching of Christ, as recorded in the four Gospels, we have an exhaustive exhibition of Christian doctrine, is not only an error, but an error which is susceptible of pernicious application. It necessarily leads to the rejection as false, or, at least, as unauthorised and unimportant, of much of the teaching of the apostles after Pentecost. And the error is not uncountenanced by theologians of great name and authority in the Church, in our own day, while it is in itself capable of being so presented as to appeal to that very principle of entire trust in the Saviour, which it, in fact, does much to undermine—to that reverence for the great Teacher with which it is, in fact, to some extent inconsistent. The well-known argument of Professor Jowett has been answered by anticipation by an author already quoted, Archbishop Whately. "It is hard to imagine," says Professor Jowett, "that there can be any truer expression of the Gospel than the words of Christ Himself, or that any truth omitted by Him is essential to the Gospel. 'The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant greater than his Lord.' The philosophy of Plato was not better understood by his followers than by himself, nor can we allow that the Gospel is to be interpreted by the Epistles, or that the Sermon on the Mount is only half Christian, and needs the

fuller inspiration or revelation of St Paul, or the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.”¹ “Our Lord’s discourses while on earth,” writes Dr Whately, “though they teach, of course, the truth, do not teach, nor could have been meant to teach, the *whole* truth, as afterwards revealed to His disciples. They could not, indeed, even consistently with truth, have contained the main part of what the apostles preached, because that was chiefly founded on events which had not then taken place. What chance then can they have of attaining true Christian knowledge who . . . under that idle plea, the misapplication of the maxim, that ‘the disciple is not above his Master,’ confine their attention entirely to the discourses of Christ recorded in the four Gospels as containing all necessary truth; and if anything in the other parts of the sacred writings is forced upon their attention, studiously explain it away, and limit its signification at all hazards, so that it may not go one step beyond what is clearly revealed in the works of the Evangelists? . . . The apostles, who were divinely commissioned by Christ Himself, either were inspired by Him with His Spirit, which ‘led them into all [the] truth,’ or they were *not*: if we say that they were not, we make Him a liar for giving them this commission and this promise, as well as them for preaching what they did: if they were thus divinely authorised, it must follow inevitably that what they said (I mean in the

¹ Epistles of St Paul, ii. 555.

teaching of the Christian religion) was said by Him, and has exactly the same authority as if He had uttered it with His own lips. . . . '*He that heareth you*' (said Christ to His apostles), '*heareth Me*; and *he that despiseth you, despiseth Me*; and *he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me.*'"¹

With regard to the doctrine of Christ, let it be added that it was not only by the words of His lips, but also by His works, His life, His sufferings, and His death, that our Lord instructed the disciples in the knowledge of those things which were most surely believed among them. Some reference has been made to this important truth already. It is not proposed to enter upon an exposition of it in detail in this place. But our attention cannot be too often recalled to a means of religious knowledge, available not only to the personal disciples, but through the Gospel history in a great measure available to all men, without due attention to which we shall form no adequate conception of the nature or extent of the truth, "as the truth is in Jesus."

¹ Essays on Peculiarities of Writings of St Paul, 67.

CHAPTER VII.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES.

ON some topics which often occupy the largest space in the religious history of the disciples of Christ at other periods—namely, those relating to ecclesiastical organisation, forms of worship, and external observances generally—the history of the disciples of the period of the ministry of our Lord is blank—blank, at least, to this extent, that it has nothing to record beyond conformity on the part of these disciples, as far as all such matters are concerned, to the law and practice of the Church to which they had belonged previous to their conversion to Christ. During the whole period of our Lord's ministry, His personal followers submitted in all respects to the institutions of Moses, and neither adopted nor had provided for them any other.

In the first place, they conformed in all points to the Mosaic law. Almost without exception, they were men of Jewish extraction, who up to the time of their conversion—if such a term can be applied to their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah promised to their fathers—had been

Disciples
continued
to conform
to Mosaic
laws and
institutions.

in the habit of serving God after the custom of their nation.¹ And this course they continued to pursue after as before their conversion.² Nor in so acting did they do either more or less than follow the example and fulfil the injunctions of their great Master. Our Lord Himself lived and died in communion with the Jewish Church. He lived and died a Jew: protesting, certainly, against the corruptions by which the law given by Moses had been overlaid, especially through the influence of ecclesiastical traditions; constantly assigning, too, to that law a depth of meaning of which few of His countrymen had any conception; besides also in His teaching frequently foreshadowing those higher revelations of the truth, and that simpler and more spiritual worship, which were afterwards in His name to be formally introduced by the apostles, but yet conforming in all points to its ordinances and commandments. He was "made under the law."³ To use the words of Stier, "He received circumcision. . . . He was redeemed as the firstborn, though Himself the Redeemer; in all probability He offered every sacrifice which was required of an Israelite, . . . though Himself the propitiatory and Paschal Lamb, the antetype and substance of all these shadows. He visited the Temple and the synagogue; He Himself submitted to every custom and ordinance in Israel, and even, when no sin attached to them, to those which were not ordained

¹ Mat. xv. 24. ² John, vii. 10, xvi. 2, &c. ³ Gal. iv. 4.

of God.”¹ And while He did not fail often to take pains to prepare their minds for the coming change, He required of His followers,² as He thus yielded Himself, obedience in the mean time to that which was in fact still the law of God.

Some account of the ecclesiastical organisation and ceremonial observances which obtained among the Jews in the time of our Lord, and which were therefore submitted to by the disciples, has been already given in a previous chapter.

But the disciples not only thus conformed to the institutions of the Jewish Church; No special institutions. they were also, in the second place, without any special institutions of their own.

It is, of course, not inconceivable that with a loyal observance of the Mosaic law there How distinguished from Church after Pentecost. might on the part of these men have been conjoined the use of religious institutions and forms of worship peculiar to themselves as Christians. We know that this identical course was in fact adopted at a later period—namely, in the years which immediately followed the mission of the Comforter on the day of Pentecost—adopted at least by those members of the apostolic Church who were Jews by birth, and more especially by the whole body of the native Jews who formed the members of the Churches of Judea. Throughout the whole apostolic age the Mosaic law continued to be observed

¹ Words of Jesus (Clark), i. 31. ² Mat. xxiii. 2, 3.

by the Jews as a nation ; and although virtually abrogated by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, was only practically set aside by the destruction of the Temple and its attendant judgments. At the very moment of the investment of Jerusalem by the army of Titus, the holy city was crowded with worshippers, who had come from all parts of the world to be present, as usual, at the feast of the Passover—a circumstance, it is told, which greatly aggravated the horrors of the siege.¹ All the time of the labours of St Paul in carrying the Gospel over the earth, and proclaiming that what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God had done by sending Christ—all this time the rites and ceremonies of the law continued to be fulfilled as before. In their order the feast-days were celebrated ; the daily sacrifice was offered up ; the white-robed priests with naked feet, not shrinking from the cold pavement of the house of prayer, went through their prescribed services, or having put off their sacred vestments for the ordinary apparel of other Jews, and accompanied by their wives and families, mingled with the crowds in the streets of Jerusalem ; and neither the Temple nor the multitudinous synagogues were without worshippers. And all this time, among these worshippers, and side by side with their unbelieving countrymen, were to be found the members of the Christian Church.² But though

¹ Josephus, B. J., vi. c. 9, § 3.

² Acts, xxi. 26, &c.

thus conforming to the rites of the national religion in which they had been brought up—so doing, doubtless, under a misconception of their new duties and privileges—the Christians in the apostolic age had at the same time a separate organisation and distinct observances of their own. They had a form of Church government¹ and an order of ministers.² They met together for divine worship in congregations consisting exclusively of Christians.³ They did not receive converts into their society without the administration of the sacrament of Christian baptism⁴—baptism in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. They addressed prayers to Christ as God, or to God in the name of Christ.⁵ While observing the old institution, they had also selected a day different from the Sabbath to be dedicated to holy uses.⁶ And they were accustomed frequently to meet together, and to break bread and pour out wine, according to the command of Christ, in commemoration of Him whose body had been broken and His blood shed upon the cross.⁷ Thus, in the case of the members of the Christian Church under the apostles, there was for a time at once conformity to some extent to Judaism, and yet also the use of separate observances of a distinctively Christian character. Now, did not something of

¹ I Cor. v. 4, &c.

² Acts, vi. 4; Eph. iv. 11.

³ Acts, iv. 23, 24.

⁴ Acts, ii. 41, xix. 5.

⁵ Acts, vii. 59; Philip. ii. 10.

⁶ Acts, xx. 7.

⁷ Acts, ii. 46.

the same kind also occur during the personal ministry? In short, notwithstanding their general compliance with the institutions of Judaism, were there not also in use among those believers at this time, as later, observances peculiar to themselves as believers in Christ?

The answer to this question is that no traces of any such observances occur. Nor ought we to expect to find that any such observances were in use. The time for the formal institution of the Christian Church had not yet come; and the same principle which required that our Lord, during His earthly ministry, should observe Himself, and should enjoin His disciples to observe, the institutions of Moses, must be held to have forbidden the introduction at that time even of isolated practices which might be considered as innovations in religious worship. And we have no traces of peculiar observances, even as used in conjunction with those of the Jewish Church. As to the two sacraments, which are more than any other of its institutions characteristic of the religion of Christ, neither of these was at all events in use. Christian baptism was not instituted till after the Resurrection;¹ nor was the Lord's Supper instituted till at least the very close of the life of Christ. It has been assumed certainly by M. Renan² and others that the last-named sacrament had been a customary rite among the disciples for some time before the last journey

¹ Mat. xxviii. 19.

² Vie de Jésus, 304.

Time of institution of Baptism and Lord's Supper.

to Jerusalem. The only grounds on which this assumption rests are the discourse at Capernaum, to be found in John, vi., and the fact that at Emmaus our Lord was recognised by two disciples, who were not of the number of the Twelve, by the manner in which He "broke the bread" at the evening repast—an act, it need hardly be said, not peculiar to the sacrament.¹ According to the plain meaning of the words of the first three Gospels,² and on the independent testimony of St Paul,³ the date of the institution of the sacrament of the Supper was "the same night in which Jesus was betrayed," or the night immediately before His death, the event it was especially intended to commemorate.

An apparent exception to the rule now stated is found in the existence in the Gospels of the Lord's Prayer. that form of words which is commonly called the Lord's Prayer—a prayer which has always been and doubtless will always be used in the Church of Christ, both because it was given to the first disciples by the Saviour Himself, and because it is found in every age and in all circumstances to express in the simplest and most perfect form the profoundest devotional feelings and the highest aspirations of all who believe in Jesus. The Lord's Prayer is found with some slight variations of phraseology, and in a different connection, in two of the Evangelists. It appears in

¹ See Luke, xxiv. 30, *sq.*

² Mat. xxvi. 18-26; Mark, xiv. 18-43; Luke, xxii. 7-47.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 23.

Matthew as a part of the Sermon on the Mount, and is there prefaced with the words, "After this manner pray ye."¹ In Luke's Gospel very much the same form of words occurs again, as having been on another occasion repeated by our Lord in the course of His answer to the request of one of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."² It must be noticed that, according to the view of some of the best expositors of Scripture, the context in neither of the Gospels in which they are found entitles us to regard the words which are known by this name as a prescribed form, so much as a rule of direction in prayer. It was, however, in all probability intended to be used as a form, at least by the personal disciples, who were themselves, in the synagogues, accustomed to forms of prayer. But even as a form, its introduction was in harmony with the regulations of the Jewish Church, and its terms were not less adapted to the use of men who still worshipped God according to the laws and institutions of Moses than to the members of the Christian Church.³ It is a prayer for all faithful

¹ Mat. vi. 9.

² Luke, xi. 1.

³ In some respects it was specially adapted to men living under the earlier dispensation. Bishop Hinds says it was "composed for our Lord's companions while on earth," and adds that to this fact "we may attribute certain omissions which, we may presume, would not have been made had it been originally composed in reference to the Lord's future Church. There is no mention made in it, *e.g.*, of the Holy Spirit; that *new Comforter* was not to come until Christ had gone away. The petitions in it are not made *in Christ's name*, and yet His promise [a promise given immediately before the close

men in every age, and does not belong to Christianity as distinguished from Judaism any more than faith in the Redeemer.

All then that can be said here is, that not only did the disciples, at the period with which we have at present to do, conform to Jewish religious observances and institutions, but that they did not employ any others. If a change was made in forms of religion in the case of any of the disciples, such a change must have been confined to converts originally beyond the pale of the Jewish Church, and may be presumed to have tended in the direction of conformity to the institutions of Moses (see John, iv. 22). But of the rule applicable in cases of this kind we have no information.

of the ministry] is, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father *in my name*, He will give it you" (John, xv. 6, xvi. 23). . . . "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive*" (John, xvi. 24; cf. Acts, i. 24, vii. 59, 60).—Early Christianity, 67.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISCIPLES AFTER THE ASCENSION.

THE history of those men who constituted the members of the Church in the days of our Lord, as far as that history is to be learned from trustworthy sources, ends, in the case of much the greater number of them, with the close of the ministry itself. Peter, when it was signified to him by what death he, grown old in his Master's service, should in after years glorify God, seeing another of the disciples standing by, "saith," we are told, "to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?" His curiosity was not gratified; and there are very few of those who with John followed Christ in the days of His flesh, of whom we ourselves now are permitted to recall in the pages of history more information than was made known to Peter by anticipation regarding the disciple whom Jesus loved. Peter himself, and John, and James the Lord's brother, are the only immediate followers of our Lord who hold a prominent place in the Acts of the Apostles. After the Ascension all, or almost all, the others disappear, at least as regards their separate identity,

from our view not less completely than would have been the case if they had, as some of them wished to do, accompanied their Master when He was taken up into heaven. As far as authentic sources of information are in our hands, we lose every trace of them from this time. Information, however, as to the general character of the after-history of the disciples, is not wanting, and is full of interest and importance. And we have also important and interesting details with regard to some of the more prominent members of the body individually. It is not here proposed to do more than to refer very cursorily to facts belonging rather to the next age than to the times of our Lord, and having only an incidental connection with the special subject of our present inquiries.

I. In the first place, let us attend to the after-history of the disciples in relation to their personal attainments as believers in Christ.

At the time of our Lord's death the position of the disciples in this respect was perhaps not such as, looking merely to the greatness of their privileges, without taking into account the many disadvantages under which they at the same time laboured, might have been anticipated; but it was certainly higher than is always assumed. They were placed in circumstances so exceptional, and the weaknesses and errors from which none of the faithful are in any age exempt manifested themselves in them

Personal attainments of the disciples.

under forms to us so extraordinary, that we might almost be tempted to conclude that up to the last these men were not as yet entitled to be regarded as Christian believers. We are left in no doubt, however, on this point. That many of them were not only "Christians," if not in name, yet—which is of more moment—in deed and in truth, but men who, though still in the infancy of their faith, possessed the elements of a very high Christian character, is a fact for which we have the direct testimony of our Lord Himself. He discriminated, certainly, between different members of His professed followers. He knew that there were some among the number who did not believe at all.¹ Even in one of the twelve apostles, and that before the event proved the real character of the man, He had recognised a traitor to His cause. Some of them enjoyed more of His confidence, and were said by Him to feel more attachment to Himself than others. But speaking generally of the "little flock" which was the fruit of His personal ministry, no less than of the "other sheep" He had which were not of the same fold, He said expressly, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands;"² and again, more especially with reference to the eleven, "O Father, . . . I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou

¹ John, vi. 64.

² John, x. 27.

gavest me out of the world ; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me, and *they have kept Thy word*. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me ; *and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. . . . They are Thine.*"¹

It must always be remembered that they had enjoyed great and remarkable privileges. If without many of the ordinary means by which in other times Christ communicates to His people the benefits of redemption, they were admitted to privileges which, though exceptional and extraordinary, were real and important. In default of the possession of that more complete and more definite revelation of Christian doctrine which was afterwards, as a sacred deposit, delivered to the saints for the use of the Church, but for which they as yet were not prepared, they had in the midst of them the great Teacher Himself, by His living voice to guide and instruct them, according to their necessities and their capacity at the moment. As yet a Christian ministry had no existence, and the "hirelings" then ministering in Palestine "cared not for the sheep," and "did not feed the sheep ;"² but of these men the Pastor and Bishop of all souls, the "Good Shepherd" Himself, took the spiritual oversight. We must remember His own words, "While I was with them in the world, *I kept them in Thy*"

¹ John, xvii. 5-9.

² John, x. 13 ; Ezek. xxxiv. 8 ; Mark, vi. 34.

(the Father's) "name : those whom Thou gavest Me *I have kept*, and none of them is lost."¹ Above all, they had in that which was the chief characteristic of the personal ministry a provision for their spiritual advancement, which itself doubtless compensated for all their disadvantages, and was sufficient to compensate for even greater disadvantages than any under which they necessarily laboured.

They had ever before them the Man Christ Jesus Himself—before them in a sense in which such a manifestation was best suited to their weakness, most intelligible to them, most likely to have influence over them. They knew Christ *after the flesh*.² They were *eyewitnesses* of His majesty.³ I do not ask whether they were able fully to avail themselves of the unexampled opportunity of spiritual improvement thus furnished them ; they benefited by it, doubtless, less than if their eyes had not been as yet so dim, and their hearts so hard and unimpressible. Nor do I ask whether we ought to envy them their privilege in this respect. It is not granted to us. As we have seen, even the history of Christ in the four Gospels, full and graphic as, beyond any history ever written, is the portraiture there set before us of that perfect Life, does not and cannot afford later believers an identity of experience in this respect with the first disciples. One of the Evangelists himself concludes his narrative with an acknowledgment of the hopelessness

¹ John, xvii. 12.

² 2 Cor. v. 16.

³ 2 Pet. i. 16.

of any attempt to perpetuate in books the actual life of Christ.¹ It was not meant, doubtless, even had it been possible, that we of another age should, as to the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, be placed in *exactly* the same position as His personal followers. We have other and different, and for us doubtless more fitting, means of knowing the Lord. For us it is better to walk by faith than by sight. There is a peculiar blessing for them who "have not seen and yet have believed."² We are not, at all events, in the same position with these men. It is but a faint echo of the voice of Him who spake as never man spake that reaches our ears; it is but an indistinct and shadowy outline of the countenance marred more than any man's, but yet fairer than that of the sons of men, which we can discern with our straining eyes. But that voice these men heard with their own ears; with their own eyes they saw the face of God! "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among them, and they beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."³

And such extraordinary privileges were, let it be repeated, very far from having been, even at the moment, altogether unfruitful in the case of the first disciples. These men were not without grave errors and defects. Let us, however, fear to speak slightingly of the spiritual state of persons whom our Lord Himself so highly honoured. Nor have we cause so to speak. Their Christian character had

¹ John, xxi. 25.

² John, xx. 29.

³ John, i. 14.

not many opportunities of developing itself, but we see what it was in the strength of their attachment to Christ personally, and in the sacrifices which they made for Him. We must not judge them by standards applicable only to other men. Measure them by their circumstances, their opportunities, and their times, and even at this period of their history there will be found in these men the germs at least of all which they afterwards by the grace of God became.

That, however, we may form a complete view of the results of their relations to Christ on their personal belief and character, it is not of course enough that we should confine our attention to the actual condition of the first disciples at the time of the death of their Master. The bread cast upon the waters may not be found for many days.

Of the history of most of the personal disciples after the close of the ministry of Christ, as has been already said, we know nothing. If we trust early tradition, we shall find Zaccheus labouring for some time as a companion of St Peter, and afterwards Bishop of Cesarea ; Lazarus of Bethany Bishop of Marseilles ; Joseph of Arimathea settled as a minister of Christ at Glastonbury in Somersetshire, where he erected the first Christian place of worship in England ; St Thomas preaching as a missionary in India ; St Andrew in Scythia. Apocryphal accounts of the after-life of all the personal disciples might indeed be quoted without limit. If, however, we are without authentic information,

except in a very few instances, such knowledge as we do possess is full of importance.

It is true that we do not find at any stage of the history, as far as we know it, of those who had lived under the ministry of Christ, any examples of perfect Christian attainment. Even the mission of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, great as its results were, did not at once remove all the prejudices, errors, and weaknesses which we find in these men when Christ was still with them; and to the last all of them were in many ways very far from being "already perfect." It is supposed that the visit of Peter to Antioch, mentioned by St Paul in Gal. ii., occurred about the year 50 A.D., or twenty years after the ascension of our Lord. On that occasion we find something of the same want of firmness in maintaining his own convictions which had been shown by this great apostle in the High Priest's palace on the night of the trial of our Lord before the Sanhedrim.¹ The tardiness with which the apostles generally, and more especially James "the Lord's brother," long the head of the Jerusalem Church, learned to recognise (if some of them ever recognised) the scope of the Gospel as to the true relations between Judaism and Christianity, cannot fail to strike every attentive reader of the Acts of the Apostles.

In clearness of apprehension of those very truths which by the inspiration of God they preached to others, and in zeal for the advancement of the

¹ Gal. ii. 12, 13.

Master's cause, even the Twelve appear to have soon suffered themselves to be outstripped by many who had entered much later on the race; those whom they themselves had been the means of bringing to Christ, in some things became their teachers and ensamples.

The crown of martyrdom itself first fell not to an apostle but to one of the Hellenistic converts of the post-pentecostal ministry of the apostles in Jerusalem. Nor of Stephen might it only be said,

“Converted last, yet first with glory crowned;”

it might also be said that he had earned this distinction by pre-eminent fervour of spirit and clearness of vision¹ as a believer in Christ.

St Paul was as one “born out of due time;” yet he himself declared, “In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles,” and he might have made higher claims. Like other Hellenistic converts, he was less trammelled by the various prejudices shared by them with all their brethren in Palestine which for so long prevented the earlier disciples from grasping the central truths of the Gospel with a firm hand; and if we are to measure his zeal and love by the results of the labours to which they prompted him, and by the paramount position in the Church which they ultimately secured for him even in the lifetime of Peter himself, we shall certainly not place him, as regards these graces, below any of those who had been in Christ before him.

¹ Acts, vi. 5, 8, 10, 11.

At the same time, however, in the later history of Peter and John, the only holders of the original apostolate, and of James the Lord's brother,¹ the only other of the personal disciples of whom (beyond the fact of the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee) we have particular in-

¹ The often-cited account of the martyrdom of James, as quoted by Eusebius from a lost work of Hegesippus (c. 160 A.D.), gives a curious, if not always trustworthy, illustration of the times.

“The charge of the Church was undertaken with the apostles by James the brother of our Lord, who is called by the name of ‘Just’ by all from our Lord’s time till our own, for there were many of the name of James. Now, he was holy from his mother’s womb; he drank no wine or strong drink; he ate no animal food; no razor ever went upon his head; he anointed not himself with oil, and used not the bath; to him only was it lawful to enter into the holy place, for he wore no wool, but only linen; and he only was wont to enter the Temple; and he used to be found lying on his knees, and entreating forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like a camel’s, from his always kneeling in prayer to God, and entreating forgiveness for the people. On account, therefore, of the excess of his righteousness (*δικαιοσύνην*), he was called the ‘Just’ and ‘Oblias,’ which is in Greek ‘bulwark of the people’ and ‘righteousness,’ as the prophets testify concerning him. Some of the seven sects among the people, who are described by me in my history, asked him, ‘What is the gate of Jesus?’ and he said that He was the Saviour, from which some believe that Jesus is the Christ. But the aforesaid sects did not believe either in the resurrection or in one who should come to award to every man according to his deeds; but all who did believe, believed through James. When many, therefore, even of the rulers, were believing, there was an alarm amongst the Jews, and Scribes, and Pharisees, saying, ‘The whole people is in danger of falling into the expectation of Jesus as the Christ.’ They came, therefore, to James, and said, ‘We beseech thee, restrain the people, for it has gone astray after Jesus, as though He were the Christ. We beseech thee to persuade all that come to the Passover concerning Jesus, for to thee we all give heed, for we and

formation in the New Testament, there is abundant evidence that these men had not failed to "walk worthy of their holy vocation," and had not been "barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of their Lord Jesus Christ." Even their enemies "took knowledge of them that they had been with

the whole nation bear witness to thee that thou art just, and "receivest not the person of men." Do thou therefore persuade the multitude not to be deceived concerning Jesus, for the whole people and all men give heed to thee. Stand, therefore, on the pinnacle of the Temple, that thou mayest be visible from above, and that all thy words may be well heard by all the people, for on account of the Passover all the tribes, with the Gentiles also, have come together.' The aforesaid Scribes and Pharisees, therefore, placed James on the pinnacle of the Temple, and cried to him and said, 'O just one, to whom we all ought to give heed, inasmuch as the people is gone astray after Jesus, who is crucified, tell us what is the gate of Jesus?' And he answered with a loud voice, 'Why ask ye me concerning Jesus the Son of Man? He sits in heaven, on the right hand of the mighty power, and He also is about to come in the clouds of heaven.' And many being convinced, and glorifying (Jesus) on the testimony of James, and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' then again the same Scribes and Pharisees said amongst themselves, 'We have done ill in furnishing so great a testimony to Jesus; let us go and cast him down, that they may be struck with fear, and so not believe on him.' And they cried, saying, 'Oh! oh! the just one too is gone astray.' And they fulfilled the prophecy written in Isaiah, 'Let us take away the Just, for he is troublesome to us, therefore shall they eat the fruit of their deeds.' They went up then and threw down the Just one, and said, 'Let us stone James the Just,' and they began to stone him. For he had not been killed by the fall, but, turning round, knelt and said, 'I beseech Thee, Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' But whilst they were thus stoning him, one of the priests, of the sons of Rechab, the sons of Rechabim, who are mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah, cried, saying, 'Stop! what do ye? the Just one prays for you.' And one of them, one of the fullers, took the club with which he

Jesus."¹ And not only in the notices of them in the Acts of the Apostles, but in those of their discourses and writings which have come down to us—discourses and writings in which, as in other inspired utterances of men possessing like them the prophetic gift, we see the individual character and spirit of the men themselves everywhere reflected—there may be traced a love to the Master whom they had once seen, though they now saw Him no more, a depth of spiritual experience, a strength of faith, and ardent aspirations after holiness of heart and life, not unworthy of the extraordinary distinctions which had been conferred on them. As to the question how many of them bore testimony with their blood to the sincerity of their faith, we have no certain information. That Simon Peter and James the son of Zebedee were among the number we know from the New Testament itself. According to early tradition, James the Lord's brother, almost the whole of the Twelve, including Matthias, and many others, gave the same evidence of their faithfulness even unto death.

used to press the clothes, and struck it on the head of the Just one. And so he bore witness (*ἐμαρτύρησε*), and they buried him on the place by the Temple, and the pillar still remains on the spot by the Temple. He has been a true witness both to Jews and Gentiles that Jesus is the Christ. And immediately Vespasian besieged them."—Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 23, ap. Stanley, *Apostolic Age*, 326, *sq.*

¹ Acts, iv. 13.

II. It may also be very briefly inquired what share the first disciples had in the accomplishment of the chief purposes of the personal ministry of Christ, the foundation of the Christian Church, and the diffusion of Christianity over the world.

Results in
the history
of the
Church.

Into the history of these events themselves, even as far as they belong to the age immediately succeeding the ascension of our Lord—an age throughout which most of the personal disciples must have continued to survive—it would be out of place here to speak in detail. That history has only an incidental, though it is an intimate and most important, relation to the history of the Church in the time of our Lord Himself. After the death of Christ, the Church entered into, in some respects, a wholly novel condition. It was placed under “another Comforter,” and in the midst of a new dispensation. And though many of the same persons belong to both—the same persons, only at different stages of their spiritual history—even the membership of the Church at the later period is, as regards its predominant elements, a different body. We find ourselves in the midst of a society consisting for by far the most part of persons who had not known Christ after the flesh. Nor is there only so great an accession of new men that the original disciples form no more than a fraction of the whole community; but the classes of men are very different—different in their nationality, in their spirit,

and in their interests. New questions come to the front; new difficulties are encountered; new powers and privileges are enjoyed. The apostolical age is the appointed and natural sequel of the personal ministry, but has characteristics and properties in a very great degree peculiar to itself.

The question, however, how far the personal disciples were specially connected with the first institution and the after-progress of the Church in this age, may be very shortly referred to.

It was not *exclusively* through the direct labours of those men "who had continued with our Lord in His temptations" that, even in the times of the apostles, the most signal successes of the Christian Church were secured, or its great work accomplished. Of the new members who, even at the commencement of the apostolic age, were in great multitudes daily added to the Church, many soon began to take part in the work of the ministry itself, passing by rapid steps from the position of disciples to that of fellow-labourers with the apostles. The men who "from the first had been eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word," no longer were the only preachers of the Glad Tidings, and in some of the spheres of evangelistic labour which were now opened up, even ceased to take the most prominent position. It was by one of the Hellenistic, and therefore probably, comparatively, recent converts to Christianity—namely, Philip the Evangelist—that the Gospel was first (since the time of the personal ministry) preached to the Samari-

tans, and that the Ethiopian eunuch, one cut off "from the congregation of the Lord,"¹ was baptised; and it was by Hellenists that, soon after the time of Stephen's martyrdom, and probably nearly contemporaneously with the baptism of Cornelius, the Gospel was first carried beyond the limits of Palestine.² With a still more remarkable series of facts of the same kind every reader of the New Testament is familiar in the history of the life of St Paul.

If, however, not carried on exclusively through the direct labours of the original apostles, the establishment and propagation of Christianity, as narrated in the Acts, must, there can be no doubt, be primarily attributed to these men. Even if we had no other information, the terms of the commission given, oftener than once, and in more than one form, to the Twelve, no less than the whole history of the personal ministry, with the evidence it affords of the care specially taken to train these disciples for such a work, would leave us no room to question the fact now stated. The terms of that commission do not necessarily imply that the making disciples of all nations, and the preaching of the Gospel to all the world, should be fulfilled by the Twelve in person. It is a work which was not accomplished fully in the lifetime of any of them, nor is even yet accomplished. All that

¹ Deut. xxiii. 1.

² Acts, xi. 19; cf. Alford *in loc.*; and Prof. Lightfoot's Galatians, 289, *sq.*

could be meant is, that these men should initiate the work—initiate a work which, in the nature of things, it was impossible that they should carry out without co-operation, or without the aid of fellow-labourers at the time, and, afterwards, successors in the same ministry. And thus understood, their commission was beyond doubt fulfilled. It was to these men that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were first given at Pentecost. For the first seven years after that event, the apostles, restricting their labours to Jerusalem, appear to have laboured alone, ceasing not, both in the Temple and from house to house, “to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”¹ Their labours were attended by extraordinary success, three thousand souls being in one case, and five thousand in another, added to the Church in a single day, and from time to time believers being added to the Lord more and more, “multitudes both of men and women.” Then it was of Peter, one of the Twelve, that God made choice that, in the case of Cornelius the centurion, “the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe.”² If Samaria received the word of God at the hands of Philip the Evangelist, the tidings no sooner reached the ears of “the apostles which were at Jerusalem” than they sent Peter and John to carry forward the good work.³ So it was in like manner at Antioch. “They sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch: who,

¹ Acts, v. 42.

² Acts, xv. 7.

³ Acts, viii. 14.

when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”¹ But, above all, it was by the preaching of those who had themselves heard the word from Christ Himself that all who, not originally of their company, worked along with them in the propagation of the Gospel, had, with one extraordinary exception, been brought to the knowledge of the truth, and had had delegated to them the authority under which they ministered.

Into the questions which have been raised as to the peculiar relations in which that eminent servant of Jesus now referred to, stood to the original disciples and to the progress of the Gospel in the apostolic age, I shall not attempt to enter in detail. The extent and importance of the labours of the Apostle Paul have been already noticed. Was his ministry, however, wholly independent of that of the personal followers and the original apostles of Christ? In the Epistle to the Galatians he calls himself “an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father,” and says, “I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”² In these words does St Paul claim co-ordinate authority with the original apostles, or a wholly separate and independent authority?

¹ Acts, xi. 22.

² Gal. i. 1, 11, 12.

That the former¹ is the true interpretation, is evident from the whole history of the relations of St Paul to the Twelve. He was specially called both to discipleship and to the office of an apostle by Christ Himself, who miraculously appeared to him for this purpose on the road to Damascus. He had received direct visions and revelations of the Lord.² He had himself seen the risen Saviour, and was thus personally a witness of the Resurrection, to which they of their own knowledge testified.³ He was therefore in the same position with them as an apostle. Nor have we any reason to think that it was inconsistent with the authority given to the Twelve, or with the importance of their services, that our Lord should after His death have conjoined with them in their labours one who had obviously pre-eminent qualifications for the accomplishment of some of the purposes which entered into the design of Christ upon the whole. That Paul, at the same time, is not to be regarded as taking so great a part as he did in the dissemination of the Gospel in the apostolic age, altogether independently of the Twelve, appears everywhere, and is indeed distinctly assumed in his own words to the Galatians.⁴

Let it only be added that, in any case, it is to Christ Himself that the institution, establishment,

¹ See Prof. Lightfoot, Galatians *in loc.*

² 2 Cor. xii. 1; 1 Cor. xi. 23, &c.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 8, ix. 1.

⁴ Gal. ii. 9. See Lightfoot, Galatians, 283, *sq.*; Neander, Planting, &c. (Bohn), i. 94, *sq.*

and after-progress of the Christian Church must ultimately be ascribed. Paul, Apollos, Cephas—who are these but ministers of Christ? Whatever the Gospel of Christ has already done for the world, no less than whatever triumphs await it in times yet to elapse before Christ comes again—with all the results of the faith and patience of those who by that Gospel have been or may be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth, and washed and justified and sanctified in the name and by the Spirit of Christ—must be traced back to those “days of the Son of Man,” when the “great salvation,” which He has also purchased with His precious blood, “began to be spoken by the Lord” Himself.

THE END.

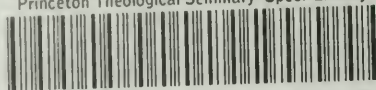
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