

# THE LIFE OF CHRIST

É. LE CAMUS



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# THE LIFE OF CHRIST

VOLUME I

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# THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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VOLUME I



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W. A. H.

GILBERTVILLE, MASS.,  
The Feast of the Ascension,  
1906.



## PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

*(Translated from the French)*

THIS is the sixth edition of this book. It has undergone some changes in form and has received some important additions. To ask the author the reason for thus retouching a work which the public has readily received with favour, would be like asking the artist, who always sees his ideal better than he can realise it, why, when every one is praising his work, he feels himself irresistibly moved to begin again, striving each day to throw more light on certain details, to make others more precise, to harmonise better all the outlines, until he has put into his picture or his statue all that he feels, all that he sees, all that he can.

The author, indeed, is aware that in putting pen to paper to write a life of Our Lord, one must from the first give up all thought of attaining even the most relative perfection. For how can one flatter himself that he has enclosed in a frame worthy of it, as if it were simply that of some great man, the astounding physiognomy of the Master, which, suddenly, when we think to grasp it and set it firmly on our earthly horizon, assumes superhuman proportions, and, in the midst of infinite light, mounts up toward heaven, where it is lost in God?

Thus, on the one hand, the subject in itself is beyond the comprehension of those who attempt it, and, the mysterious, the unfathomable, the superhuman mingling everywhere with the simplest and most popular of histories, compels one time and again to lay down his pen with a

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feeling of silent admiration and overwhelming awe. On the other hand, one is fated to feel no less discouraged by the manifest insufficiency of the documents that have come down to us, to treat, even superficially, so exceptional a subject. For every one knows the little care the Evangelists took to do the work of biographers. It is hardly, if at all, that one succeeds, by harmonising all four, in establishing the general trend of the Saviour's life, in the midst of heart-breaking omissions and the most evident uncertainty.

However, these are precisely the various and really insurmountable difficulties that have, in all ages, impelled the friends of Jesus to make the greatest endeavours in order to set in a brighter light, if not His whole divine Personality, at least some of Its particularly intelligible and consoling features. This should occasion no surprise; the subject is eminently worth the trouble.

To consider only the man in Mary's Son, what satisfaction, what interest in setting Him forth ever more truly, more living, in a word more plainly our Brother, before mankind, so justly proud of those who are its glory? Is He not the incomparable flower that has blossomed on the heart of humanity, the gracious, exquisite, exceptional product of its womb, the best, the purest, the greatest Son it has borne? And although He may appear to unbelievers only as the inexplicable result of the moral forces of humanity, since, by the consent of all, He is the sublime personification of justice, of holiness in all its forms, is it not He that must be held up as an example to our poor troubled world? Is He not the essentially beneficent Being Who forces sceptics to believe in virtue, because after having preached and practised it, He becomes its official protector by His salutary influence? Sin alone—and this singular phenomenon has its special meaning to one who reflects—

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in its blind hatred of virtue, has sought, in times of general aberration, to throw a sacrilegious veil over the incomparably sweet and beautiful head of the Son of Man Who, fascinating ideal as He is, deserves by every title the admiration, love, and imitation of men. But it is all to no purpose. A universal cry of indignation has always checked this odious attempt against the honour and the happiness of humanity. "In the lararium of my palace," said a pagan emperor, "I wish to see the image of Jesus of Nazareth; He was surely a true sage, and the sincere friend of mankind!" If ever the day arrives when the peoples will be too cowardly to proclaim their faith in that saying of Alexander Severus in answer to the intolerant secularism of those who would decree that the Best of Men shall cease to be regarded as the true Promoter of social progress, then indeed will the ungrateful world be ripe for slavery and political death. The religious consciousness of nations may torment itself about other matters; it will be all to no purpose. So true is it, even from a merely human point of view, that he who makes known the Son of Man renders an incalculable service to mankind.

But Jesus is not only the thrice-blessed and incomparable Seed of humanity. He is also the Ambassador of Heaven. In Him God has appeared to us, not by reflection, but in the very essence of His divinity. "He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also," He Himself has said. This Son, in fact, is no other than the Word, the Eternal Image of the Father. If therefore He is incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, to tell His story to men and to make them love it is to bring men in touch with God Himself, and to provide them with that permanent communion, that bread from heaven on which life in its loftiest, most real, and most lasting character depends.

Being both Man and God, Jesus is Mediator and Sav-

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our. With this twofold character He has held and, unto the end of time, He must continue to hold the most noble, the most generous, the most heroic souls, the honour of mankind. O powerful and mysterious attraction! For the sake of that Jesus Whom we love without seeing, to obtain His rewards which we hope for without even understanding how they are to be conferred, for His kingdom for which we all strive in spite of, let us say, against all and every one, Satan, the world and ourselves, we renounce our life with an ardent and un pitying faith; we embrace a career of sacrifice, imitation, obedience, and love; relying on His word, we, who are sublimely foolish, give up without regret the visible for the invisible, the tangible for a mere hope, the present for the future; we prefer to live our life in its loftiest phase in those supernatural regions of grace, where the senses have no part, where all things are done even in opposition to them, in that state of constant struggle where, in the words of the Gospel, we die that we may live.

Should not everything that concerns the Christ, the Son of God and King of our souls, namely, who He was, what He did, and what He said, interest us more deeply than the most absorbing subject among the human sciences? The smallest ray of light that we may throw upon His physiognomy, already so splendid with divine beauty, seems to us the most enviable triumph. When we have achieved that, we count as nothing the long hours spent in search of a more exact meaning of a word, in giving a more faithful account of an event, in placing in greater relief the details of a scene in which the Son of Man, Who is also the Son of God, is set forth for our admiration; and we tell ourselves joyfully that other souls will rejoice with ours in these new perspectives of the history of the Kingdom of God.

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This joy of the biographer is the more legitimate because, aiming at that greater good which is a nobler end than glory, his book, if conscientious and well done, is destined to survive him. The subject he has treated will never cease to be opportune. Whatever upheavals the new century may foresee with the advance of the human mind into the domain of the positive sciences of social and even of religious questions, I feel certain that, after all the storms, the crises, and the transformations, our world shall always find itself face to face with the Immutable, the One essential, Jesus Christ. On the morrow of that long and terrible battle, what great and beautiful works shall have lost their *raison d'être!* The Church, pursuing here below her eternal victory, will still offer to the broken and exhausted nations, as the element of rebirth and of renewed prosperity, the Good Book which teaches all the virtues, the simple and pious life of Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God. "Enough of blasphemy!" she will say. "Away with illusion! Away with folly! Look for salvation there where God has placed it, in the Gospel! *Tolle, lege!* To read the history of the Saviour is to make a step toward salvation!"

This confidence in the future, no less than the anguish of souls at the present day, impelled me, almost twenty years ago, to publish this book. It has also made it a duty for me to improve it.

The first editions underwent but little change, although I followed carefully the different books that appeared, at home and abroad, touching upon the Gospel history. It seemed to me unwise to overburden with notes, however useful, a work destined for all classes of readers. At the present time the illustrated and popular editions, the publication of which I authorized, leave me free to add to my first work whatever may seem to make it more com-

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plete. These numerous additions are the result of the reflection, the study, and the travels of twelve years.

Reflection has brought new intuitions, blessed light which the Christian soul perceives when, under the guidance of the Holy Sprit, it meditates on the great book of truth.

A particularly patient and careful study of the text has led me, on the other hand, to certain comparisons, combinations, and philological discussions which have a real value for the solution of certain difficulties. In this I have followed not my own opinions solely; I have had to listen much to those of others. It cannot be denied that, along with many errors, as regrettable as they are surprising, the exegetes of the present day in Germany, England, America, and even in France, have succeeded in scrutinising the Gospel, let us say the Bible, from every point of view as no other book has ever been scrutinised and investigated. It was necessary to present these new and often ingenious explanations to the minds of those unacquainted with this very interesting literature. This is what I have attempted. With this in view, I shall be pardoned for having, as before, quoted the New Testament in Greek. The original is always better than any translation, and it helps to make plain certain shades of meaning which are often important and decisive. Besides, Greek is a language familiar to the educated public. At any rate, the quotations are generally arranged in such a way as to make their meaning clear to those not sufficiently acquainted with the beautiful language of the Greeks, which was, as a matter of fact, the language of the early Church. My travels in Palestine, which I was enabled to make only after the first editions of this book had been prepared, and of which I have given some account in the work *Voyages aux Pays Bibliques*, proved to me that one must see with



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one's own eyes the topography of the Master's life in order to set in their proper places the different personages as they appear. Thanks to investigations made on the spot, there are many details which I have understood better, and which I have been enabled to put in a clearer light. From this point of view the German, Italian, and other translations of this book, which were made too soon, will be inferior to the English translation which now appears. Certain sites with regard to which I have been led confidently to change my opinion, because the evidence commonly accepted seems to me unfounded, have led to some new arrangements in the three maps accompanying the work.

Three times in twelve years, in company with M. Vigouroux, have I explored the mysterious land of the Gospel in every direction. What pious joy was ours! Even where some too confidently defined sites, which only a naïve and ill-advised piety ventures to recommend to the devotion of pilgrims, have been rejected, how many relics there still are which the faithful can confidently venerate! Jerusalem, the Holy and yet accursed city, where Jesus, the unacknowledged Messiah, was put to death and rose again; the Mount of Olives with its steep and rocky slopes which beheld Him in tears over the misfortunes of His people, and then later on ascending gloriously to His Father in Heaven; Bethlehem, the unpretending village where He was born in a stable while angels chanted His coming to the shepherds who watched, then as now, in the ancient field of Boaz; Bethany, the hospitable home of friends; the Jordan with its mournful banks sanctified by the ministry of the Baptist, and the revelation of the Messiah; the Well of the Samaritan woman with its limpid water still enjoyed by the pious pilgrim who halts at the foot of Ebal, before Gerizim, in the plain of Sichem: Nazareth with its white houses ranged along the hillside, where carpenters are at work like

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Joseph in the ancient time, where the youthful mothers are beautiful and modest like Mary, where the children, with their flowing dress, retain in their deep and dreamy gaze something of the exquisite sweetness of Jesus's look; the Galilean Mountains with their green and flowered summits where Jesus prayed and preached; the lake of Tiberias, a broad silver mirror surrounded with white, red, and blue highlands, at the foot of which He passed the happy years of His life—all these are so many souvenirs that will ever whisper to the soul the most touching and most suggestive words.

It was on the shores of this lake—where we spent four days—that I wrote this preface. After long centuries of devastation and ruin, all is silent now where once there was so much life. And yet, even in this deathlike stillness, I thought I heard the sweet, alluring, well-loved voice of the Master. I heard it from those black rocks along the shore where He had so often sat instructing the people; I heard it in the soft murmur of the breeze that seemed its perpetual echo; I heard it in the fragrance of the flowers of the field which He had praised as a work of love wrought by divine Providence; I heard it when I bent over the gently sounding waves which long ago had borne Him upon their bosom or had hailed Him as they died upon the shore. It came to me from all sides, in the calm of the starry night, at the first rays of dawn, in the scorching heat of the day, in the storm, in the opalescent light of the setting sun, ever charming, victorious, divine. At such times, with hands joined in supplication, I prayed: "Lord, show Thyself once more! Why conceal Thyself from those who work and pray, ardently desiring to make Thee better known and seen by a world that is dying for not having beheld Thee? Hear the cry of those who despair of life in their great need of faith and consolation. They

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repeat to us the words of the Greeks to Philip of Bethsaida: '*We would see Jesus!*' Alas! we know not how to show Thee."

In the depths of my heart the Master seemed to answer: "Seek Me, and make Me known there where I am always, in the Scriptures and in the Church, in the Scriptures where you hear My word, in the Church where you must needs see that I am alive. In the one and in the other I am with you unto the end of the world."

I paused at this thought: that the most beautiful, the most real, and the most authentic representation of Jesus Christ here below was, in truth, the Church, with her succession of saints, the unfailling and miraculous blossoming of the divine seed. It may be in view of this manifestation promised in the course of time, that none of the Apostles or of the Disciples either intended or was authorised by the Holy Spirit to leave us a complete account of the sojourn of the Son of God among men. For does it not seem as if the best of mankind meet in this Church to continue in their different rôles the life of Our Lord on earth? To the former, doctors or Apostles, belongs the honour of maintaining His entire body of doctrine, of continuing His preaching, of burning like Him with zeal for souls; to the latter, the first of all ranks and names, the merit of practising His gentleness, His humility, His self-denial, His filial abandonment to His Father, His generous love for mankind. The former, without fear or resentment before those who persecute them, unwearied and resigned amid suffering and humiliation, ready for any martyrdom in supreme sacrifice, show forth again His divine courage, tempering strength with mildness; the latter, with all the delicacy of exquisite virtue, purity of heart, detachment from the things of earth, ardent desire of heaven, the manifold works of charity, passion for the

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right under all its forms, manifest His incomparable sanctity. So that in reality the Church, in her development in time, is merely writing, for the benefit of all, the true life of Jesus Christ.

This is true beyond doubt, but only on condition that some charitable hand, taking up the words and works of the Master in the Gospel, shall present them to souls that will be nourished by them and so build up the Church. We must sow Jesus Christ if we would have Him live. The work of the Holy Spirit is to give fecundity to the seed; that of the friends of the Master is to scatter it. They have received this mission officially. In view of this who can be surprised at seeing us bestow upon so critical a work an ever increasing and more undivided attention? Nothing can be above such a ministry. The Apostle writing to the Galatians speaks of it as *giving birth to souls in a new life by "forming" Jesus Christ in them*; a sublime definition and a watchword which all good workers in the Kingdom of God have passed on to one another through the ages.

E. LE CAMUS.

CARCASSONE, *February 2, 1901.*

[The Feast of the Purification called in Greek the *Meeting of the Lord.*]

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I

### THE PERSONAL MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN HUMANITY

GOD, THE CREATOR, OWED IT TO HIS GLORY TO RAISE UP FALLEN HUMANITY; HE FOUND IN HIMSELF THE MEANS OF DOING SO, WITHOUT SACRIFICE OF HIS JUSTICE; IT WAS FOR THE WORD TO BECOME INCARNATE AND TO BRING BACK CREATION TO ITS BEGINNING—THE BELIEF IN A RESTORER TO COME FROM HEAVEN WAS UNIVERSAL—THE SUDDEN, WIDESPREAD, AND, HUMANLY SPEAKING, INEXPLICABLE REVOLUTION WHICH HAS TRANSFORMED THE WORLD, IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, PROVES THAT THIS DIVINE MANIFESTATION HAS TAKEN PLACE.

EVERY one that admits the existence of a personal God, Creator of the world and Father of our humanity, must also admit, not only the possibility, but, in view of the fall of man, even the probability and the almost reasonable necessity of the direct manifestation of that God here below. For when the Creator calls a being into life, He does so for His own glory; now this glory consists in finding the reflection of His own goodness in that being. Thus, by a first general law, He decreed that all created things, deriving their being from Him, sustained by His concurrence, and, as a consequence, adorned with His goodness, should inevitably glorify Him, whether in the lower order of their

material existence, or in the gradual development of their animal life. This, however, was not sufficient to complete the harmony of the divine plan. This latter seemed to need for its climax a being of a higher order who, resembling more closely the Author of the universe Himself, would remind us more sensibly of His royal independence. Therefore by a second, particular law, man received the perilous prerogative of choosing between good and evil. But in creating this new and sublime element, free will, as a means of supreme glorification in the universe, God faced the danger inherent in this awful experiment. To place at the head of creation a pontiff who should sum up and spiritualise in his soul the unconscious hymn of the universe, was to risk the introduction of a usurper who might make himself an idol, and by his revolt disturb the universal harmony, instead of assuring its final perfection by his filial adoration.

The danger would produce merit, and merit give rise to glory. If man made wise use of his liberty, the divine master-work would be perfect, expanding in all its primal beauty, giving homage to its framer. If he employed it for evil ends, it would be sullied, profaned, destroyed. God, however, had still the power to restore it, vesting Himself, in this reparation, with a glory greater yet than that of the first creation.

It is the latter alternative that has come to pass. Serious philosophy has not doubted the fall of man. Hence God has had the work of raising us up again. He could not do it by an act of His omnipotence without injury to the moral compound which is the distinguishing characteristic and honour of our nature. To do violence to our free will would not have proved the restoration of humanity, but rather its annihilation. It was only by means of a slow, gradual process of persuasion that He was to lead

back His erring and rebellious children. In vain had He essayed it in the universal lessons He had given to human reason, pleading with man, now in the depths of his conscience, now beneath the transparent and changeful veil of creatures. The passions, the vices overwhelmed His voice; and, blinded in obstinacy, man refused to acknowledge the signs. No one of the sages of the Orient, of Greece or of Rome was eloquent enough to force the human race to lift its head and look toward heaven. In vain had God spoken to His privileged people beneath the tents of the patriarchs, amid the thunders of Sinai, and in the woes of exile by human voices which He inspired. Nothing had been changed on earth: sin remaining at all times almost universal, the glory of the Creator was plainly compromised. There was but one more trial to make, and that incomparably sublime and decisive. Since the world would not go to God, God had only to come to the world, and there establishing Himself in the midst of His rebellious creatures He could dwell a member of this lost humanity and a living sign which some might deny, but none lose sight of. By Him was to be restored the balance of the scales which our liberty thenceforward moves up or down at will. As counter-weight to the evil concupiscence, found in the very nature of man, God, indeed, had only to grant His grace, that is, His light, His strength, an intimate communication of His own life.

Such is the first conclusion at which our philosophic reasoning easily arrives. But we must go farther.

If God owed it to His goodness and to His glory to mend this ruined work, did He not owe something, also, to His forgotten and offended majesty? Could love silence justice, and effect a reconciliation without a thought of atonement? Certainly not. Who, then, was to make this atonement? Was it man? He, though capable of self-

destruction, was unable to effect his own redemption. Was it God? But if God alone were to give satisfaction to Himself, where would be man's merit in the amends for sin? The solution of the difficulty is to be found in the triple mystery that constitutes the essence of Christianity: in the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption.

For a long time and, as it were, naturally, had man, despite the promptings of reason, feared to profess one only God; he could not conceive an eternal soliloquy in unchanging isolation to be the ideal life of perfect bliss. Therefore did all the ancient religions admit a multiplicity of gods. Ordinarily error is only truth in disarray. God, indeed, is One only; but He is not alone in His eternity. He lives a triune life which constitutes His perfect beatitude. He, the Being par excellence, is pre-eminently permanent and infinite activity; for it is of the nature of being to disclose itself first as a force. But He is not only a Being; He is also Intelligence, and, being such, He produces exteriorly His thought, which is naught but the perfect knowledge of Himself. Now, this exterior form in which He beholds Himself whole and entire, although distinct from Him, has not been absolutely cut off from Him; it parts not from Him, for He is the Infinite. And yet, though remaining joined to Him in the one same Essence, It constitutes a Reality, a Person as complete and as perfect as the eternal Principle that gave it birth. Moreover God cannot look upon His own Thought, His eternal Reason, His Wisdom, His Word without loving It; nor can the Word Himself in turn look upon the Father, that fountain of Godhead, *fontana Deitas*, whence He has sprung, and fail to reciprocate His love.

From this, therefore, comes the third manner of life in the divine essence or nature: Love, the bond which unites eternal activity to eternal thought, the affection which is

breathed from the Father to the Son, and reciprocally from the Son to the Father, and which under the name of the Holy Spirit forms in Christian theology the very link of the life divine. If then God is not alone in His mysterious and indivisible unity, we perceive how He can send to fallen man not a Teacher simply, but a Redeemer. The Redeemer will ransom man by the payment of the demands of divine justice; He will pay them out of His own abundance, without its being absolutely true to say that the God Who asks the pardon and the God Who grants it are perfectly identical. Moved by a sentiment of pity, one of the august Trinity will separate from the eternal group in order to confer on man's atonement the infinite character which clothes man's sin but with which his repentance never can be indued.

Of the Three Divine Persons, He Who has been from the beginning, if we may so speak, the most concerned with our world, is the Son, or the Word. Indeed, the creation, though the direct work of the Father, was fashioned, made real by the Son, or in the Son. The Son is its great ordainer, its universal reason. Every being comes from the Word, imitates the Word, participates in the Word; and the Word, immovable as He is in the bosom of the Father, following the beautiful thought of St. Athanasius, holds in His hands the beings of creation, as the strings of a lyre; He gives them action, development, and surcease, producing by them a harmony worthy of His divine hand. In the realm of the intellect, His action is still greater. The Word is like the sun, without whose light man remains unable to see. In a word, from all time the Son was with us; and if God wished to save the world, it was needful for the Son to become one of us.

But to become man meant not only to come in contact with humanity, but to assume human nature completely, to

bring it under His personal dominion, and to control it as a portion of Himself. The term that best expresses this hypostatic union is: *Incarnation*.<sup>1</sup> The Incarnation, preserving intact and complete both natures, the divine and the human, unites them in one person almost as in us the ego shelters the body and the soul under a single responsibility. So that, after this supreme and most intimate union, the works and words of the man will become, in a sense rigorously exact, the works and words of God. They will be humanly divine and, at the same time, divinely human.

Then will commence again in this First born of a new race the pure and holy generation of the Sons of the Most High. Traces of the fall will doubtless yet remain, but as shadows that place in more brilliant light the glory of the divine restoration. Man, by having God for brother, will be associated with the life of heaven. He may enlighten his intelligence at the fires of divine truth, guide his will according to the regulations of eternal law, feel within his breast the very breath of God. Thus, by the Incarnation, humanity will be brought back to the principle whence it had strayed, to its Author, to its term; and in this cycle, in the beautiful words of St. Thomas, will be discovered the reason of its final perfection.

This is the ideal of rehabilitation set forth by theology, and, under divers forms, looked forward to by all peoples.

Indeed, in the East, we cannot discover one religion that does not retain among its doctrines, even the most fantastic, some deep trace of these longings of human-

<sup>1</sup> The expressive term *σάρκωσις* is derived from St. John i, 14. Nearly the same term is found in Justin, *Apol.*, ii, 41: *σαρκοποιηθέντα λόγον*. Employed by Hippolytus, *Opusc. I cont. Beron.*, by Irenæus, *Hær.*, iii, 21, it finally prevailed over such terms as *οικονομία*, *πρόσληψις*, *ανάληψις*, employed by the Greek Fathers.



ity for a mediator.<sup>2</sup> China awaits Kiunt-se, the shepherd king, the great teacher of the nations, the holy one, who will come from heaven to govern the world.<sup>3</sup>

In Japan, in Siam, in Thibet,<sup>4</sup> the people, according to the teaching of Fo, join to the idea of a God descending upon earth to instruct mankind the notion of a God atoning for their sins. Within a radius nearer yet to Palestine, while the Hindus look for the incarnation of Vishnu or of Brahma, who will destroy the perverse work of Kaliga, the Great Serpent,<sup>5</sup> the seers teach that Mithra, the supreme intercessor, will triumph over Ahriman, the spirit of evil, and will reunite all mankind in one single family, with one language and under one sceptre.<sup>6</sup> Oshanderberga, the *Man of the World*, will extirpate evil here below and restore the universe to its original condition. Kings will bow down to him, and in his hands<sup>7</sup> all things will flourish. There will rise up Sosiosh the Conqueror, the Restorer of sanctity, who is to purify the world and restore to it with happiness the dignity it had lost. He will destroy every kind of evil, and tear up the very roots of sin.<sup>8</sup>

Egypt awaits Horus, the son of Isis, mother of the human race, the hero, who will strike to earth the serpent Typhon, the ancient personification of the enemy of man;<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Trench, *Hulsean Lectures for 1845-46: Christ the Desire of All Nations*; Maurice, *The Religions of the World in Their Relations to Christianity*, London, 1854; Volney, *Les Ruines*, p. 228; Boulanger, *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme oriental*, sect. x.

<sup>3</sup> The books *Likiyki*, and *L'Invariable milieu*, ch. xxvii and xxix.

<sup>4</sup> Huet, *Ahnetan. Quæst.*, lib. ii, ch. xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Dubois, t. iii, 3e partie, p. 433. See also the *Bhagavat Pourâna* and *Vana Parva*, v. 15092 *et seq.*

<sup>6</sup> *Mémoires de l'Académie des inscriptions*, t. lxi, p. 298.

<sup>7</sup> The *Zendavesta*, quoted by Hyde, *de Relig. vet. pers.*, p. 388.

<sup>8</sup> See *Yacna* lvi, wherein is celebrated the triumph of Craosha or Sosiosh, the divine offspring of Zoroaster.

<sup>9</sup> Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris*, Nos. 24, 25, etc.

and the Arabian nomad beneath his tent invokes the coming saviour of the nations.<sup>10</sup>

At the antipodes, the tribes of America held that Puru would send his own son from heaven to exterminate the serpent; <sup>11</sup> while the Mexicans hoped for a religious transformation which would substitute innocent offerings for human sacrifices.<sup>12</sup>

In the North of Europe the Scandinavian races in their devotions called upon Thor, the most valiant of the gods, who was to slay the dragon and fall himself in the midst of his triumph.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the Druids, in the gloom of their forests, raised up altars to Isis, the virgin whose son they awaited.<sup>14</sup>

But how much stronger and better informed was this hope in the two great civilisations of antiquity! Athens heard Socrates warning his disciples of the inability of man to determine our duty to God and neighbour, and appealing from the depths of his heart to the universal teacher who should instruct the human race. Alcibiades declared that he would behold with extreme joy the advent of this sage, and that, in order to be a better man, he was ready to follow all his precepts. In the meantime, he trusts in the goodness of the gods that this hallowed day may not be far off.<sup>15</sup> Plato avers that the well-defined conviction of his master was that God's envoy alone could reform the corrupt morals of mankind.<sup>16</sup>

Rome in her turn gladly gives ear to the eloquence of Cicero, as he announces one law, immutable and uni-

<sup>10</sup> Boulainvilliers, *Vie de Mahomet*, i, ii.

<sup>11</sup> Gumilla, *Histoire Naturelle de l'Orénoque*, t. i, p. 171.

<sup>12</sup> Humboldt, *Vie des Cordillères*, t. i, p. 266.

<sup>13</sup> Edda, *Fab.* xxv.

<sup>14</sup> See Elias Schedius, *De Diis Germanis*, ch. xiii

<sup>15</sup> Plato. *Alcibiades*, ii.

<sup>16</sup> *Apolog. Socrat.*

versal, which is to govern all nations under one common ruler, God, the visible king of all men.<sup>17</sup> If, perchance, any sudden prodigy occurs in the midst of the forum, the eternal city takes fright, and believes that nature is on the point of giving birth to a new king of the Romans.<sup>18</sup> She has her misgivings of the coming of this king who, according to the Sibyl, must be welcomed if one would be saved.<sup>19</sup> Virgil, in his harmonious verses, and under the most attractive imagery, sings of the near advent of a prince, son and fellow of the gods. He beholds the whole world stirred, in his honour, to its very foundations; earth, sea, and sky feel a tremor of joy in welcoming the era which is about to begin.<sup>20</sup>

These aspirations, these hopes become universal; and Tacitus, as well as Suetonius, tells us of the general persuasion, according to an ancient and constant tradition, that the East should achieve the conquest of the West, and that men coming from Judea should dominate the world.<sup>21</sup> At last we find the very country indicated toward which mankind is looking. We have seen that the peoples of Asia looked for the liberator to come from the region of the setting sun, while the nations of Europe awaited him from the countries where it rises. It is, therefore, where these two worlds join that we needs must seek for the blessed land whence he will come. Thus it is that Judea becomes the pole of the universal hopes of mankind.

A marvel yet more singular: for centuries the people who dwelt in this country believed in the coming of a Messiah-Redeemer. "Praised be Thou Jehovah, my God

<sup>17</sup> *De Republica*, lib. iii.

<sup>18</sup> Suetonius, *Vita Cæs. Aug.*, ch. xciv.

<sup>19</sup> Cicero, *De Divinat.*, lib. ii, cap. liv.

<sup>20</sup> Virgil's fourth eclogue reproduces several verses of the Sibyl, whose prophetic testimony he invokes. See Gallæus, *Lib. Sibyll.*, p. 356; etc.

<sup>21</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.*, v. 13. Suetonius, *Vita Vespasiani*, ch. iv.

and the God of my fathers," cried the Jew in his daily prayer,<sup>22</sup> "It is Thou who mind'st the mercy done to our fathers, and who givest a Saviour to the sons of their sons! Thou makest Jeschua to grow, salvation. Let the trumpet of deliverance sound forth! Raise the standard to call back the exiled. Rebuild Jerusalem forever, and restore to the midst of Sion the throne of David. Send soon the scion of the great king, Thy servant; may Thy kingdom come, for we have ever hoped in the redemption. Praised be Thou, O Lord, who makest to grow the tree of salvation." And on the great Jewish solemnities, between the third and the fourth libations of the paschal supper, as at the Hosanna of the great Hallel for the feast of the Tabernacles, this appeal to the coming Messiah assumed an accent of enthusiasm and of sadness, as majestic as it was affecting.

Even in the days of King Herod, the Jewish people and their theologians<sup>23</sup> had hopes in common and awaited with impatience the Redeemer of Israel. Literature makes renewed efforts to prove that His coming is near at hand. At that time appear the Apocalypses of Esdras<sup>24</sup> and of

<sup>22</sup> After the time of Esdras, the daily prayer of the Jews was in two principal forms: the *Schema* (Hear, Israel) and the *Schemoneh esré* (the eighteen desires of the Israelite). The above passage is quoted from the latter.

<sup>23</sup> See the paraphrases of Onkelos and Jonathian, which, though compiled near the end of the first century of the Christian era, nevertheless sound the traditional note of the ancient rabbis.

<sup>24</sup> The Apocalypse of Esdras must have appeared about 28 B.C. Though the author was a Jew, the book seems to have been written in Greek. For a long time known only in the Latin translation, it was found in Arabic about the middle of the seventeenth century, and more recently (1820) in Ethiopic, by Lawrence, who has translated it. The author pictures God gradually developing His providential plan and preparing the coming of the Messiah for the time when vice will be at its height. The Eagle with three heads, six pairs of wings, and four pairs of pinions, that is to say, the Roman Empire, will then meet her vanquisher. With a breath the Envoy of God will destroy the nations leagued against Him. The setting is one of touching beauty. A Christian pen has considerably retouched it.

Enoch,<sup>25</sup> the Assumption of Moses,<sup>26</sup> all so many effusions of enthusiasm, intended to rouse Jewish patriotism, and to prove that the hour is indeed come when the promised Messiah is going to declare Himself to His people. Anna and Simeon assert that they have received from heaven an assurance that they will salute Him ere they die. The doctors of the Sanhedrim, who propound to the Magi the prophecy of Micheas concerning Bethlehem, are not surprised at the news of His birth. Later they send emissaries to summon John the Baptist to make known if he himself be the Messiah. Even the High-priest himself, from his tribunal, gives official expression to the conviction of all Israel with regard to a Messiah, when he calls upon Jesus, the accused, to say if He be the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And yet the prophets had been silent for four centuries. Since Malachias, the last of them all, had closed the book of divine revelations with the proclamation, "Behold he

<sup>25</sup> The Apocalypse of Enoch gives a yet more lively expression of the aspirations of Judaism at the time when Jesus was to appear. Of the three parables, the second especially portrays this solemn advent of the Messiah and the fruits of His work. Very widely known from the beginning of Christianity, since not only Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, but also the Apostle Jude himself allude to it (*Epist. Jud.*, v. 14-15; compare with Enoch, i, 9), in the course of time this work had almost disappeared. There was but a fragment of it preserved in the *Chronographia* of Georgius Syncellus (792), when toward the end of the eighteenth century (1773) Bruce brought it from Egypt in Ethiopic. The original was composed probably in Aramean. In 1887 the Greek text of the first thirty-two chapters was found in an Egyptian tomb of the Christian epoch. Divided into five parts, it treats particularly of the Messiah in the second and fourth.

<sup>26</sup> The Apostle Jude, in his epistle, v. 9, seems to allude to this work, of which the Church for a long time knew only those portions quoted by Origen (*De Princ.*, 3, 2, 1) and some other Fathers. A large portion of it was recently found at Milan in a Latin translation, and published by Ceriani, *Monum. Sacr. et Prof.*, vol. i, Milan, 1861, and later by Fritzsche, *Lib. Apoc. V. T.*, Leipzig, 1871. We may say, according to certain details in the seventh chapter, relating the sanguinary scenes at the intervention of Varus in Palestine, that this composition dates back to the time of the birth of Jesus. (See Ewald, *Hist. of Israel*, vol. vi, p. 55, of the English edition and ff.)

cometh,"<sup>27</sup> the greatest woes had come upon the head of this unfortunate people. But, even beneath the sword of the conqueror, in the midst of most cruel persecutions, Israel still had hope. Israel knew that the second temple would look upon the Desired of all nations, and would witness the general disorder of the universe.<sup>28</sup> According to the most positive calculations, Daniel's seventieth week was about to begin,<sup>29</sup> and the coming of Eternal Justice was now looked for. Israel believed that this son of the woman, of the race of Abraham, of the tribe of Juda, this Law-giver like unto Moses, this Child-God of the house of David, offspring of a virgin, desired of all nations, would be born in Bethlehem, when the sceptre had gone out from Juda.<sup>30</sup> This was his faith, and, groaning under a foreign yoke, his arms raised to heaven in the temple and in the synagogues,<sup>31</sup> or brandishing the sword in

<sup>27</sup> *Malachias* iii, 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Aggæus*, ii, 3, 10.

<sup>29</sup> The famous prophecy of Daniel (ch. ix), the fulfilment of which was expected at that time, whatever modern exegesis may say (*Matt.* xxiv, 15; Josephus, *Antiq.*, x, 11, 7), seems to establish as the starting point of the seventy weeks, not the edict for the reconstruction of the temple proclaimed by Cyrus in 536 B.C., *I Esd.* i, and renewed by Darius in 520, *I Esd.* vi, but the edict for the rebuilding of the city with its walls and its gates, granted by Artaxerxes I, Longimanus, to Nehemias, in the twentieth year of his reign (*II Esd.* ii, 1; *Eccles.* xlix, 15), or the year 454 B.C. According to the simplest calculation, the first period, seven weeks, forty-nine years, indicated in the prophecy, extended from 454 to 405; the second, sixty-two weeks, 434 years, from 405 B.C. to the year 30 A.D.; finally, the third extended in its first half-week from 30 A.D. to 33 A.D., and by its second half from 33 A.D. to 37, in all 490 years from the edict of Artaxerxes Longimanus to the substitution of the New Covenant for the Old, or down to the evangelisation of the Gentiles.

<sup>30</sup> *Gen.* iii, 15; xii, 3; xlix, 10; *Deut.* xviii, 15, and xix; *Is.* vii, 14; ix, 2-6; xi; *Jere.* xxiii, 5, 6; *Mich.* v, 2, 5.

<sup>31</sup> The *Psalms of Solomon*, the work of an unknown author, composed shortly after the profanation of the holy places by Pompey in 63 B.C., inform us, with a trace of real poetry, of the emotions of this oppressed people. In the religious assemblies every devout Israelite delighted in breathing forth in these songs, which had become popular, the aspirations of his soul for a better future and his faith in the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David, awaiting the while the resurrection and the eternal reward (*Ps.* ii,

revolt,<sup>32</sup> he demanded if the Messiah of the Prophets was not yet come.

But, at this very time of universal expectation a revolution, singular, sudden, and decisive, divided the history of mankind into two great parts. No man could have dreamed of it, much less have brought it to pass, and it is explicable only in the hypothesis that the personal manifestation of God has taken place on earth.

In the days of the first Cæsars peoples of different origin experienced a thrill so profound that in an instant they were thrown to the very antipodes, so to speak, of their civilisation. Ideas, manners, social or individual life were, of a sudden and for all time, transformed. Paganism and ancient errors in religion vanished like the dark before the first rays of the sun. Philosophy found on the lips of the lowly, of womankind, of childhood, transcendent truths which it had long and vainly sought. Henceforth the human soul had a clearer perception of right and wrong; vir-

36; v, 22; xii, 1-38; xiv, 2, 7; xv, 11, etc.). Lost sight of, like most of the productions of apocryphal literature of those times, the *Psalter of Solomon* was published in 1626, by P. Lacerda, S. J., in accordance with a manuscript of Augsburg. It has been seriously criticised by German rationalists. See Hilgenfeld, *Mess. Jud.*, p. xi, and Fritzsche, *Libri Apocryphi Vet. Test.*, Leipzig, 1871, p. 569 and fol.

<sup>32</sup> But little was needed to push this people, thus penetrated with pious hope, on to heroic though unfailingly ill-starred enterprises. Thus under Herod, some hardy citizens, at the word of two eloquent and pious men, Juda, son of Sariphee, and Mathias, son of Margaloth, had thrown down the Roman eagle from its perch on the eastern gate of the temple, and, boasting of their bold act, welcomed death defiantly. Again a few years later the Jews rebelled against Sabinus, governor of Syria, who was on the way to Jerusalem to administer provisionally the succession of Herod, and, through their hatred of foreigners, in the midst of the religious emotions of Pentecost, brought about their own massacre at the hands of Varus. Nothing could check this glowing faith in an early restoration of the theocracy which was finally to triumph over the Gentiles. We know that, at a sign, Juda the Gaulonite or the Galilean and the Pharisee Sadoc armed thousands of men against Rome when Quirinius endeavoured to take the census of Judea. At any time this strange people was ready to die, with this device upon their lips: "Israel has but one Lord and Master; and He is Jehovah."

tue, officially introduced, became common in the world. God is known and loved of His creatures; man learns his own worth, in this life, to his masters and his fellows; and, in eternity, to his conscience and his Creator. The ancient world is so obliterated and cast in a new mould, that modern science, despite its efforts, remains powerless fully to restore even the memory of it. Of that statue<sup>33</sup> with the golden head, and breast and arms of silver, with belly and thighs of brass, and legs and feet of iron and of clay, symbol of that humanity which had filled the first ages of the world with a hideous mingling of grandeur and of woe, of power and of weakness, there was left not a trace, and the ruins of this monster became like paltry straws blown from the threshing-floor by the breeze on a summer's day. But who has slain the past? Who has created the present? Who was the rock that fell upon this giant statue and ground it to powder? Was it chance? That is but a word, not a power. Was it public conscience become pure in the lapse of ages and ripe for the moral transformation of man? But where has this strange maturity appeared? History tells us that never had corruption been more profound, scepticism more general, or the soul more abject; and from such a state of prostration could there have proceeded, as a natural consequence, the most astonishing and energetic vitality? No! Whether we will or not, it must be confessed, history here furnishes the most disinterested, complete, and authentic testimony. A new religion is established, not by circumstances, by men or by institutions, but in spite of them. It was not the haven where the mind of man sought shelter, but the temple of the unknown God into which man was drawn in spite of himself; it was not the legitimate offspring of the conscience of the time, rather it was built

<sup>33</sup> *Daniel* ii, 37-43.



up in contradiction of that conscience. We cannot doubt it; it was a personal, free, and superhuman cause that brought this religious renewal to pass in spite of every kind of opposition.

Indeed, out of the mountains of Judea, on which Roman civilisation anxiously fixed its regard, there now issued forth men prepared to overturn the world and regain, as it was feared, universal dominion. In the twinkling of an eye and, so to speak, borne on the four winds of heaven, these men are everywhere: to-day in Syria, to-morrow in Athens or in Corinth, straightway in the very city of the emperors, they speak to all people, not indeed of themselves or of their doctrine, but of a Master Whose conquest they were, of a King Whom they would enthrone, of a God Whose adoration they would enforce. Paganism, in its ignorance, may have, like Suetonius,<sup>34</sup> confounded them with the Jews whose sons they were, or, like Tacitus,<sup>35</sup> it may have spoken of them with disdainful pity; it is true, nevertheless, that paganism was awed by their courageous activity and boundless ambition.

Personally incapable of the accomplishment of this gigantic work, they counted on the power of Him Who had sent them. They were but humble, weak, and simple men; but they felt within their souls an energy that buoyed them up, and this handful of destitute, foolish men, as they called themselves,<sup>36</sup> undertook the most astounding conquest ever conceived by the ambition of man. The history of their apostolate is, of a certainty, irrefragable proof that their mission was divine; for these men aimed at the impossible, and despite the absolute insuf-

<sup>34</sup> "Judæos, impulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes, Roma expulit." (Suetonius, *Claud.*, 16.)

<sup>35</sup> "Auctor nominis ejus Christus; Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat." (*Annal.*, xv, 44.)

<sup>36</sup> *I Cor.* iv, 10.

iciency of the means to the end, the impossible has been achieved. Before the event, one might have said that their plan of campaign was either absurd or divine; after their triumph, the absurdity disappears, and there remains only the divine to account for the wonder. We shall speak of this later on.<sup>37</sup>

It will suffice here to call to mind that these men were not the real authors of the revolution brought about under the influence of their preaching. Personally quite unequal to the task, they loyally attributed the glory of their triumph to Him Who sent them, and behind them, we are constrained to bow, with reverence and wonder, to the august personality of Our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

It was Christ Who filled their breasts with inexhaustible enthusiasm. It was He Who enlightened their minds with irresistible light; it was He Who spoke by their mouth; it was He Who in them marched to the struggle, to martyrdom, to victory; and when the world, overthrown and broken to pieces, but yet saved, lifted its head to see Who was its conqueror, it contemplated with more of love than of fear, alone and unrivalled, the majestic and winning face of Our Saviour Jesus.<sup>38</sup>

This new Master so satisfied the world that after Him no other has been looked for. His Name, His life, His worship are everywhere. The endeavours of impiety and of hate, after more than eighteen centuries, have not in the slightest succeeded in compromising His reign. When in a criminal nation, immorality and blasphemy like a rising tide submerge His cross, He bears it away to more hospitable peoples. In truth, His royalty has never ceased to be universal and gloriously indefectible.

<sup>37</sup> *L'Œuvre des Apôtres*.—E. Le Camus.

<sup>38</sup> Near the end of the first century, Pliny, the Younger, in a famous letter addressed to Trajan (*Epist.* 98, lib. x), attests the great religious movement which tends to the adoration of Christ: "Carmen Christo, quasi Deo, dicere."

Mankind always desires to know Him, to adore Him, and to love Him. In Him has humanity founded its hopes as in their final term. For nearly nineteen hundred years it has lived and died for Him; and on the cradle as on the tombstone, on its pages of glory or of grief, it has ceased not to write with its blood, its tears, its genius, this profession of its own venerable faith: "Yes, God has manifested Himself personally to man, in JESUS OF NAZARETH."

## CHAPTER II

# THE BOOKS WHICH CONTAIN THE DETAILS OF THIS MANIFESTATION

THE EPISTLES AND DISCOURSES OF THE APOSTLES—THE  
FOUR GOSPELS—THEY WERE WRITTEN BY THE APOSTOLIC  
GENERATION—SUMMARY HISTORY OF THE SYNOP-  
TIC GOSPELS—CAUSE OF THEIR SIMILARITY—ST. JOHN  
AND HIS WORK—PROOFS, HUMAN AND DIVINE, OF THE  
VERACITY OF OUR FOUR BIOGRAPHERS.

FOR earnest men one can imagine nothing more interesting than the history of this manifestation, and as a matter of fact no books have been more studied, more variously discussed, or more completely dissected than those in which it is recounted. Unfortunately, these books, Epistles, discourses of the Apostles, and even Gospels, are very brief and, from many points of view, unsatisfactory. Let us say a word with regard to the belief they deserve.

The earliest writings to make mention of Jesus Christ are without a doubt the Epistles of St. Paul. The author, converted to Christianity between the years 36 and 38 of our era, was in close touch with the events of which he speaks. He had probably passed his youth in Jerusalem, where we find him present at the martyrdom of St. Stephen, whence he sets out on the road to Damascus, where he is overwhelmed by grace. Despite his close intimacy with the Pharisees there is nothing to lead one to believe that he ever saw or heard the Master; but we know from him-

self that after his conversion he found and sought more than one occasion for instruction in the history of the Saviour.<sup>1</sup> The enthusiasm of his apostolate while arising from the interior, supernatural manifestation which he had received, was also inspired by positive facts capable of completing his conviction and of making his faith logical and well founded. Owing to his natural inquisitiveness and his character of mind, he was prone to listen, to gather, and to discuss. His letters tell us that he knew not only the doctrine, but the public life and certain discourses<sup>2</sup> of the Master. Truth to tell, he indicates only the most salient points, but he does so with authority sufficient to inform us that he knows fully all the rest, all, from the divine pre-existence of Jesus and His birth of woman down to His death and resurrection, from the anguish in Gethsemani to His apotheosis in Heaven. He speaks of His poor and humble life, of His mild and merciful character, of His power over nature, of His doctrine so new and so astounding, of His rôle of mediator and of supreme law-giver, of His expiatory sacrifice, and if once in a while he wishes to give details,<sup>3</sup> it is plain that his knowledge is certain, and that none could give them better than he.

A source more ancient yet than the letters of St. Paul would be the series of discourses given by the Apostles in the first days of their ministry. The book of the Acts of the Apostles has preserved some of them, and though it is of later publication than the first three Gospels, if the

<sup>1</sup> He goes to Jerusalem to see Peter and James (*Gal.* i, 18; *Acts* ix, 28), and very probably procures the first accounts of the oral Gospel already, perhaps, gathered together in manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> See the institution of the Last Supper, e. g., *I Cor.* xi. In a most curious book, Howard Heber Evans, London, 1884, has essayed to prove that Paul was the author of the Gospel of St. Luke and of the Acts.

<sup>3</sup> M. Godet has very ingeniously made evident the passages of the Epistles which have in view the Gospel, whether oral or partly written, already spread in the Church. (*Introd. au N. T.*, Neuchâtel, 1897, vol. ii, p. 254.)

story it contains is authentic, it is evidently in this simple, unaffected narrative of the beginnings of Christianity that we must seek for the first attempts at biography made by the nascent Church in honour of Jesus. There are, in fact, found, scattered here and there, all the principal traits of this divine life. Thus John has preached the baptism of repentance, when Jesus of Nazareth, the servant of God, filled with the Holy Ghost, begins to select His disciples, and inaugurates His ministry in Galilee. The Master then passes through Judea, doing good, miraculously healing the sick, and more particularly the possessed. Thus does He put in practice the word that He had said: "It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive."<sup>4</sup>

Finally, one of His disciples betrays Him: it is Judas; and the Just, the Holy One, cited before Pilate by the doctors and the Jewish people, beholds Himself condemned by the Roman procurator who, nevertheless, gives testimony to His innocence. They prefer a thief before Him, they put Him to death upon a gibbet, they seal Him up in a sepulchre. Indeed, God permits all this only that by the cross peace, pardon, and salvation may be given unto men. For, the third day Jesus rises again from the dead, and for forty days He shows Himself to His disciples, conversing, eating, and drinking with them. At last He ascends into Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, after having given to the Apostles promises of consolation for the future, and, in particular, a pledge that He will come down again to judge the world.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that all these indications, as well as those in the Apocalypse,<sup>6</sup> which was

<sup>4</sup> *Acts* xx, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Acts* ii, iii, x, xiii, etc.

<sup>6</sup> The most radical criticism acknowledges the authenticity of the Apocalypse. But therein we find at every step Jesus Christ dead for the sins of men, risen again in glory, etc.

written perhaps shortly after the death of St. Paul, about the year 68, are not, properly speaking, sources of a life of Jesus Christ. They show simply how general, in the primitive Church, was the knowledge of all that concerned its Founder. So that at that time it was necessary only to sum up the universal tradition, and the history of the manifestation of God was almost compiled.

From the time of the Apostles, four different authors have attempted this work, and the books they have left are called the Gospels.

The Gospel or Good-Tidings was the natural title of a work that announced to the world the fulfilment of the promises that Heaven had made to earth from age to age.

If one considers this work of biography attentively, there is nothing more surprising than its simplicity, or even its apparent insufficiency compared with the profound impression it has made on mankind. Incomplete, without pretension or art, it seems as if composed in the course of a familiar conversation. Let us not look for an orderly written history,<sup>7</sup> but rather for the testimony of hearts that evoked, without a thought of chronology, souvenirs of which they were full. Perspective is wanting to such a degree, that at first sight St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke seem to confine the ministry of Jesus to one year. And yet the effect produced is that of the grandest and most striking painting. From these lines in which warmth radiates over all, throughout the calm of the most simple narrative, where admiration, clearly seen, is ever cloaked

<sup>7</sup> The Abbé Azibert has recently published (1897) a *Concordance, Synopsis Evangeliorum Historica*, that does the greatest honour to his sagacity. It is based on the identification of St. Mark ix, 29, with St. John vii, 10, and, changing hardly anything of the order of either Evangelist, it constitutes a consecutive history of the Saviour. But must one really seek for a chronological order when the Evangelists seem to have been neither desirous nor capable of establishing it?

with reserve, and where, in a style neither concise nor diffuse, the most difficult questions are treated with incomparable clearness and delicacy, there rises a figure that is never obscured. We seem to see the Master as He acts. From His lips leap forth burning words penetrated with mercy and persuasiveness. The most consummate artist, the most powerful genius has never so strongly engraved the portrait of his hero.

An honest soul cannot read ten lines of this book without being moved and seized with a desire to be better. One finds himself suddenly transported into a new world, with a wider horizon and a clearer sky. Whence can so strange a phenomenon arise, if not from the very personality these pages bring forth into light? If there were nothing but a legend in so fine a book, would man have so watered it with his tears, so covered it with devout kisses, honoured it with such virtuous rapture? No, indeed. A work of the mind or of the imagination would not so surely and so persistently go straight to the hearts of all men.

We can then foresee that a critical examination of our four Gospels, however rapid, will oblige us to acknowledge their evident authenticity and perfect veracity.

Already, in the second half of the second century, they are spread over the entire civilised world. Tertullian reads them in Carthage; Clement of Alexandria in Egypt; Irenæus has received them from Polycarp in Asia Minor, and again comes upon them in Lyons, his bishopric among the Gauls; Justin Martyr, born in Sichein in Palestine, invokes their testimony at Rome. Thus in all the great religious centres of the primitive Church they are already published and unanimously accepted as the Word of God. Their universal diffusion, together with the authority they enjoy within a century after their publication, constitutes an undeniable argument in favor of their apostolic origin.



In fact, the men who speak to us of these books are separated from the Apostles by only one generation. St. Irenæus, for example, knew St. Polycarp, and St. Polycarp knew the Apostle St. John. How shall we admit that the Bishop of Lyons accepted as apostolic books of which his master had never spoken to him, or how shall we suppose that Polycarp, the friend of the Apostles, spoke to him of those books as being apostolic, if, in reality, they were not such?

Add to this first consideration that at the same epoch (150–200 A.D.), the Catholic Church was not alone in reading our four Gospels. The different heretical sects of that time, also, had them in their hands. Whoever is acquainted with the profound division which parted these dissenters from the orthodox can have no doubt that neither the former nor the latter received the Gospels from their adversaries, and consequently it is certain that they all possessed them in common before their separation. But this, in the case of the majority of the Gnostic and Marcionite sects, brings us back to the first years of the second century.

About the year 115 or 120, in fact, we find in Papias,<sup>8</sup> Bishop of Hierapolis, contemporary of St. Polycarp and disciple of the Apostles, historical information concerning the writings of Sts. Matthew and Mark. “Matthew,” he says, “has written the discourses of the Lord in Hebrew, and each one has translated this text as best he could. As for Mark, the presbyter John said that he, as interpreter of St. Peter, had carefully put down all that his memory retained, yet without putting the discourses and the acts of the Lord in their exact order. What is there astonishing in this? He, himself, had neither heard nor followed the

<sup>8</sup> He suffered martyrdom at Pergamos about the year 164, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, having arrived at extreme old age, ἀρχαῖον ἄνδρα, ἰωάννου ἱκουστήν, says St. Irenæus. (*Adv. Hæres.*, v, 33.)

Master. Attached to the person of Peter, he was familiar only with the tradition of that Apostle, who, in his preaching, earnestly sought, not the chronological order of Our Lord's discourses, but merely the needs of his hearers. Hence we must not blame Mark for having written certain things in the order which his memory furnished him. He endeavoured only to omit nothing that he had heard, and to relate only what was most exact."<sup>9</sup> The silence Papias observes with regard to the writings of St. Luke and St. John is certainly somewhat strange, but in this text quoted by Eusebius we have only a simple fragment. It is possible that in the five books of his great work, the Bishop of Hierapolis gives special explanations of these two Gospels, compiled right in the midst of the Asiatic surroundings in which he lived.

In addition to this, the few works we have of the Apostolic Fathers—at that epoch there was little writing and much action—cite the Synoptics and even St. John more than once. To be sure, they do not always employ the diacritical formula *ἑτέρα γραφή λέγει*,<sup>10</sup> like the second Epistle of St. Clement of Rome, or, like that said to be of St. Barnabas, the consecrated reference *ὡς γέγραπται*;<sup>11</sup> but these passages are too numerous and too exact to belong only to the oral tradition of the Church. Thus it is that by the quotations of St. Polycarp in his epistle to the Philippians written about the year 107; by the seven authentic letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the glorious martyr of Jesus Christ, who appeared before Trajan with

<sup>9</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, iii, 39.

<sup>10</sup> Ch. 2, 3, 4, 6, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Destructive criticism had sought to get rid of the argument furnished by the letter of St. Barnabas, by seeing therein a harmless interpolation of the translator; but since the discovery of the Sinaitic manuscript by Tischendorf, it has had to admit that the formula *ὡς γέγραπται* was truly the author's and not the translator's.

the valour of a hero, and was thrown to the lions by the Romans; by the first epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians written after the great persecution of Nero, about 69 A.D., or of Domitian, about 96, we go back to the writings of the first disciples of Jesus Christ.

Now, among these writings themselves, do not the Acts of the Apostles prove the existence of the Gospel of St. Luke? Were not the Acts written before the death of Paul? Does not St. Luke himself show that the publication of St. Matthew and that of St. Mark were probably simultaneous, while St. John, in his Epistles, affirms the authenticity of his own Gospel?

Here then is a complete and solidly established<sup>12</sup> chain of extrinsic proofs connecting the Gospels with the apostolic circle in which they were composed. The intrinsic proofs suggested by a deep study of the text, the style, the facts, and a comparison with the time and places in which their authors lived, would be no less conclusive.

But this is not the place to put them forward; they will present themselves in the course of this work; and when we see that practically unlettered writers have bequeathed us most exact accounts with very precise details, local colouring, most authentic reports of religious, political, and

<sup>12</sup> It is evident that we intend here to trace only the outline of an apologetic demonstration of the authenticity of the Gospels. A general introduction is no place for complete treatises on the different questions upon which it touches. Besides we shall take up this question again in the third part of *l'Œuvre des Apôtres, la Période d'Organisation de l'Église*. The reader may with profit consult Lardner: *Credibility of the Gospel History* (London, 1727-57); P. Schanz, who published (1879-85) a learned commentary on each of the four Gospels; Rudolph Cornely, *Introd. Spec. in sing. N. T. libros* (Paris, 1886); Westcott, *Introduction to the Gospels* (London, sixth ed., 1881); Charteris, *Canonicity* (1881); *l'Introduction au N. T.*, by the learned professor of Neuchâtel, F. Godet (1898); Zahn, *Einleitung in das N. T.* (Leipzig, 1891); B. Weiss, *Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das N. T.* (Berlin, 1886); and among Protestants of very liberal colour, Jülicher, *Einl. in das N. T.* (Freiburg, 1894); Harnack, *Die Chronologie der Altchristlichen Litteratur* (Leipzig, 1897).

moral conditions, exceedingly careful indications as to topography, on a subject already replete with difficulties, we shall be forced to acknowledge that the Gospels were not a tardy effusion of the imagination, the product of the pious reveries of the nascent Church, but an exact and authorised history of events of recent occurrence. Everything contributes to establish the fact that they are really the authentic work of men who saw and heard Jesus Christ.

Who were these men? That is what it behoves now to tell.

St. Matthew, in the opinion of the Church and of all antiquity, composed the first of the four Gospels.

A tax-gatherer of Galilee, Matthew was soon called to follow Jesus. First quitting his desk, he became a disciple, and later one of the twelve Apostles.<sup>13</sup> He has been identified, quite naturally, with the person to whom the other Gospels give the name of Levi.

It is difficult, in fact, to acknowledge here two different histories in an account absolutely identical, with the exception of the names; and though there is nothing to prove that Levi is Lebbeus or Thaddeus, everything, on the other hand, inclines us to the belief that Levi, like Paul, changed his name with his change of life and vocation. The name Matthew, Gift of God, was, without doubt, only a living token of the grace the Apostle had received on the day on which he was called.

<sup>13</sup> Certain apparently accidental hints, picked up by critics in the first synoptic Gospel, sustain these sayings of tradition with regard to its author. Thus in the Gospel, St. Matthew is found to be constantly humiliated, whether by the qualification of publican, or by the secondary place he holds in the list of the Apostles. This list gives the names of the Apostles in couples. Of each couple the more worthy is invariably named first: Peter and Andrew, James and John, etc. But while the other two synoptics give the first place to Matthew over Thomas, the first Gospel mentions Thomas before Matthew. Besides this, it is remarkable that in the insidious question concerning the Roman tax, St. Matthew employs technical expressions: τὸ νόμισμα τοῦ κήνσου, which are not found in the other Gospels and betray the former profession of St. Matthew.

His book bears an impress more Jewish than all the others. One would say that he is uttering to a faithless people a final summons to bow before their disowned Messiah, and, as it were, the awful ultimatum which precedes the moment of final ruin. The right of Jesus to the sceptre of David is juridically set forth on the first page, and the genealogy which attests it is only the beginning of a demonstration continued throughout the entire book. The author wishes to show how all the prophecies of the old law converge toward Jesus, and in Him find their perfect realisation. This is why he ordinarily groups around certain prophetic words the facts of which the biography is composed.<sup>14</sup> Thus his exposition develops in order until, having shown in Jesus the Salvation expected from age to age, the Law-giver greater than Moses, the Victim offered up for the sins of mankind, he lets us see Him as the great Judge of the future and the final consummation of the ancient Covenant.

According to Papias<sup>15</sup> and all the ancient ecclesiastical writers,<sup>16</sup> St. Matthew composed his Gospel in Hebrew. Eusebius even relates that St. Pantænus<sup>17</sup> found it writ-

<sup>14</sup> At the commencement of His Galilean ministry (iv, 14-16), he places a general prophecy. The sermon on the mount and the miracles which follow (viii and ix) end with the prophecy of Isaias (viii, 17). The discourse to the Apostles (ch. x), the words of chs. xi and xii, are grouped around the prophecy of Isaias (viii, 17, etc.). The ardour shown by this Evangelist in establishing the agreement of the history of the Messiah with the prophecies prompts him more than once to employ texts acceptable only in an accommodated sense, and even taken from writings which we no longer possess. Instead of straining his citations it is better to admit fearlessly that for him, as for the Jews of his time, the Scriptures as a whole referred to the Messiah. So that, whenever one finds a passage, or even a word, therein, capable of being adapted to a fact in the life of this Messiah, he takes them quite simply as a prophecy of that fact, without a care as to the direct and real sense they have in the prophecy from which they are borrowed.

<sup>15</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, iii, 39.

<sup>16</sup> St. Irenæus, *Adv. Hæres.*, iii, 1; Clement of Alex., *Strom.*, i, 21; Tertulian, *De Carne Christi* (ch. 22, etc.); Origen, in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, vi, 25; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*, 14, etc., etc.

<sup>17</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.*, v, 10. Cf. St. Jerome, *De Viris Illus.*, 36.

ten in that language among the East Indians, to whom St. Bartholomew had originally made it known. To contradict the almost unanimous testimony of a most respectable and enlightened antiquity would plainly be rash. Yet, can we concede that the Greek text of St. Matthew is simply the work of a translator? No, indeed; for the writer assumes a liberty of procedure too pronounced.<sup>18</sup> If he quotes the Old Testament, it is at times according to the Hebrew, but often according to the Septuagint. His plays upon words, so happy in Greek, would be impossible in the Aramean language.<sup>19</sup> With him it is not Cephas, as a translator would have transcribed it, but Petros, as a Greek ought to say it. Finally, certain Syro-Chaldaic expressions, scattered here and there, complete the evidences of a pen which in its work readily evokes reminiscences of a foreign tongue. Moreover, if the present text is only a translation, how shall we account for the total and premature disappearance of the original text? However authorised the translator may have been, he could not cause the original work of an Apostle to be utterly forgotten, unless he himself had written under the direction and with the approval of the author.

It is precisely this last hypothesis that is accepted by all those who have been unwilling to sacrifice either the testimony of the ancients in favour of an Aramean text, or the philological arguments of the moderns in favour of a Greek original. In a country where two languages were spoken indiscriminately, it is not improbable that a book, intended alike for the Jews of Palestine and for those of the Dispersion, should have a twofold version in order to

<sup>18</sup> From Erasmus to Bleek, Ewald, Ritschl, Keim, and Delitzsch, the majority of critics have sustained this thesis. See the history of this controversy in Credner, *Einleitung*, i, p. 78.

<sup>19</sup> E. g., ch. vi, 16: ἀφανίζουσι, . . . δπως φανῶσιν; see Hug, *Einl.*, vol. ii, p. 55, etc.

satisfy the needs of all. Were not the works of Josephus written in both idioms? It was probably in this way that the Greek text, furnishing, with no less authority, an advantage more universal than the Hebrew, came at last to be preferred in the Church, which had become Hellenised at an early date.<sup>20</sup> It bore the name and authority of St. Matthew, by whom it had been published, or, at the very least, officially approved and adopted; it was written in the most universal language of the time; perhaps also it had been more completely developed as a history; this was enough to secure it its unique success.

This book must have been composed in the Aramean edition, in Palestine, about the year 50, before as yet the Church had spread much in the pagan world. The Greek edition came later, but before the year 70, for in recounting the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, the author says nothing of its fulfilment. This plainly supposes that catastrophe to be still an affair of the future. According to St. Irenæus,<sup>21</sup> the exact date of its composition would be at the very time when St. Peter and St. Paul were preaching in the Eternal City, that is, about the year 64 A.D. According to Eusebius's<sup>22</sup> account, Matthew wrote it at the time when, already advanced in age, but still an indefatigable Apostle, he was preparing to leave Palestine to go and convert the nations.<sup>23</sup>

At almost the same time, two other accounts of the life of the Saviour were published, one, the Gospel of St. Mark, in the capital of the Roman Empire; the other, the Gospel

<sup>20</sup> The Gospels of the Hebrews and the Ebionites are the offspring of the Aramaic text transformed by intentional and often ridiculous interpolations.

<sup>21</sup> *Adv. Hæres.*, iii, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Hist. Eccles.*, vi, 14, and vi, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.*, iii, 24. More recent authors than he (*Rufinus, H. E.*, x, 9; *Socrates, H. E.*, i, 19; *Nicephorus*, ii, 41) suppose that Ethiopia, Macedonia, and some parts of Asia were evangelised by him.

of St. Luke, in the midst of Greek civilisation. "When Peter was preaching at Rome under the influence of the Holy Ghost," says Clement of Alexandria <sup>24</sup> following some ancient traditions, "his hearers turned to Mark in great numbers and besought him to write down what they had just heard. Mark must have had full knowledge of it, for he had long been the disciple of Peter. He therefore compiled his Gospel, and gave it to those who sought it. Peter, knowing this, did nothing either to prevent or to encourage him." Eusebius, who has preserved us this testimony, adds that the Apostle officially authorised this writing that it might be read in Christian assemblies. St. Irenæus <sup>25</sup> supposes that St. Mark, having written the discourses of St. Peter after the death of the Apostle, gave them to the Church of Rome, as a pious indemnity for the loss of her two illustrious founders. At all events, all the ancients from Papias down to the Canon of Muratori, and from St. Justin to Origen, are unanimous in their recognition of the Gospel of St. Mark as nothing other than a summary of the preaching of St. Peter.

Modern criticism <sup>26</sup> is far from contradicting this evidence. Indeed, we perceive in this composition an author who proposes, not to demonstrate, like St. Matthew, the fulfilment of the prophecies, but to expose, as St. Peter must have done, and to communicate the feelings of admiration experienced by the witnesses of the Gospel story. The Roman people, with its inborn love of the sublime, could not but be captivated by this manner of setting forth the majestic figure of the All-powerful Christ, the irresist-

<sup>24</sup> See Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi, 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Hæres.*, iii, 1.

<sup>26</sup> The best commentaries on St. Mark are: among Catholics, Schanz, *Comment. über Markus* (Freiburg, 1881); and among Protestants, Meyer, Morrison (third ed., London, 1882), and Fritsch, from a philological standpoint.



ible Conquerer Who dominates His people by His wonderful works. When, therefore, St. Mark, at the commencement of his book and without other preparation, bursts forth into those words which reveal the oratorical origin of his narrative: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," he might well have added, "as preached by the Apostle Peter, who saw and heard the Master."<sup>27</sup> For, in this series of striking pictures which unroll before the reader's eye, one sees again the glowing imagination, the deep conviction of the son of Jona. Interrogations, inversions, a flood of terms crowd beneath his pen and give to his style an exceptional vivacity. If he wishes to deny, he triples the negation; if he seeks to interest, he looks for the most gracious diminutives. In the use of verbs, he prefers the present since it hastens the action and is particularly fitting to the oratorical form of the narrative. Without a doubt Peter spoke in this manner,<sup>28</sup> relating on his own account what the others

<sup>27</sup> It has been said that Peter's discourse to Cornelius (*Acts* x) is the miniature of the Gospel of St. Mark.

<sup>28</sup> Klosterman, *Das Markus Evangelium*, has composed a curious work to prove that Mark has frequently changed the "we," the first person of the pronoun which Peter must have used in preaching, into "they," the third person required in a simple historical narrative, and this at the risk of leaving some inexactitude in the text. Thus in ch. iii, 13-19, the election of Peter is not mentioned; only the surname which he receives is told, while the election of the other Apostles is clearly indicated, even when they have a surname. The reason for this must be that Peter, in his preaching, said (v. 14): "And He made that we twelve should be with Him"; and (v. 16): "He gave me," etc. Again in i, 20, etc. The sudden cessation of the continued narrative which occurs after v. 8, in the last chapter, gives rise to the belief that his work was interrupted by the death of Peter, and was only completed by the author later on; for it is quite evident that he no longer reports the preaching of St. Peter. If this observation is well founded, we may conclude that the second Gospel was composed about the year 67. The mention of the two sons of Simon the Cyrenean, Alexander and Rufus (xv, 21), may be explained only as an honour rendered to living persons, one of whom, at least, was at Rome when St. Mark's Gospel appeared (*Rom.* xvi, 13). Finally, the advice in parentheses, *δ ἀναγινώσκων νοείτω* (xiii, 14), unites with the other proofs to show that St. Mark wrote before the ruin of Jerusalem, and consequently before the year 70 A.D.

had forgotten to say, never to exalt himself, but always for his own humiliation and belittlement.<sup>29</sup>

Papias, therefore, is right in calling the work of St. Mark memoirs. The book, written in Greek, was published in Rome. Latin idioms Hellenised, numerous neologisms, Greek coins given in Latin equivalents, are abundant proof of this.<sup>30</sup> The Gospel history, too, proves that John-Mark was at Rome when St. Paul was preaching there,<sup>31</sup> and, consequently, he was there at the same time as St. Peter. It was there in all probability that the Roman name Mark was added to the Jewish John. At all events, he was a native of Palestine, and probably of Jerusalem. There, his mother, Mary, owned a house in which the chief of the Apostles took refuge, when he was miraculously delivered from prison.<sup>32</sup> Converted by St. Peter,<sup>33</sup> who called him his son, John-Mark had participated in the missions of Paul and Barnabas, his relative,<sup>34</sup> and his great activity made him one of the important men of the primitive Church.

At about the same epoch, 65 or 66 A.D.<sup>35</sup>—a time when those who had known the Master were becoming fewer and fewer—appeared likewise, but amid Greek surroundings, our third Gospel. Its authorship is ascribed to Luke, sometimes to Lucanus. According to St. Paul, Luke, by profession a physician, was of pagan origin, for he is classed among the uncircumcised. He became the faithful and best-beloved co-worker of the Apostle of the Gentiles.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Matt.* xvi, 13–23, and *Mark* viii, 27–33; cf. *Mark* xiv, 72.

<sup>30</sup> Λεπτὰ δύο ἢ ἕστιν κοδράντης. Cf. ii, 4; v, 9, 15, 23; vi, 27, 37, etc.

<sup>31</sup> *Col.* iv, 10.

<sup>32</sup> *Acts* xii, 12.

<sup>33</sup> *I Peter* v, 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Col.* iv, 10; *Acts* xii, 25, etc.

<sup>35</sup> The *Acts of the Apostles* were written before the martyrdom of St. Paul, of which they make no mention, and consequently before the year 67 at the latest. But this Gospel was written before the *Acts* (*Acts* i, 1).

<sup>36</sup> *Col.* iv, 14; *II Tim.* iv, 9, 12.

A native of Antioch,<sup>37</sup> according to Eusebius and St. Jerome, he speaks Greek as his mother tongue, and mentions Hebrew as a speech unknown to him.<sup>38</sup> The elegance of his style indicates that he belonged to the educated class. Indeed, the physicians of that epoch practised their profession only after serious examinations before a special board (*collegium archiatrorum*), and then under the surveillance of a medical administration severe enough to revoke from incapable physicians the diplomas they had procured.

St. Luke, then, contributes a new element of human science, and even of native incredulity, to the sum of the testimony which our four Evangelists render to Jesus. He is not a Jew, nor is he ignorant, and yet he admits the miraculous as the others do; he recounts it with the same complacency, and believes it with the same simplicity.

According to tradition, he published his work under the patronage of St. Paul,<sup>39</sup> and quite recently there has been a suspicion that "the books and especially the parchments" requested of Timothy by the Apostle at the time when "only Luke was with him,"<sup>40</sup> were perhaps the notes needed by the disciple for the work he was undertaking.

<sup>37</sup> The satisfaction with which he recounts the establishment of the Church in that city supports this opinion (*Acts xi*, 20-24), and hence the incident at Troas explains itself (*Acts xvi*, 10).

<sup>38</sup> *Acts i*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Tertullian, *C. Marc.*, iv, 2-5. Origen, in Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi, 25, affirms that St. Luke's Gospel was approved by Paul, *ἐπαινούμενον*. Elsewhere Eusebius (iii, iv) says that, according to many, St. Paul, in speaking of *his* Gospel, meant the Gospel of St. Luke. Besides the close relation that unites certain passages of the third synoptic with the Epistles of Paul (compare *Luke xxii*, 19-20, with *I Cor. xi*, 23-25, on the institution of the Eucharist; and *Luke xxiv* with *I Cor. xv*), it is evident that the universal character of the preaching of Paul is admirably reflected in the historic narration of Luke. Luke regarded the Master from the same point of view as Paul. He has grasped and presented Him in the same light, calling to salvation the entire world, publican, gentile, prodigal, thief, fallen man, and establishing Himself the Messiah-King not only of Israel but of all humanity.

<sup>40</sup> *II Tim.* iv, 11.

However that may be, the personal work of St. Luke is clearly indicated in the prologue which forms so happy an introduction to his book. With touching modesty, and in a style that recalls the preambles of the best historians of Greece, he seeks to excuse the boldness of his enterprise. Many have already essayed this work; he, in turn, will try it, consulting the purest sources,<sup>41</sup> the testimony of those who have witnessed all from the beginning, and have become the servants of the Word. Like his predecessors, he is only one of the second generation to whom it was not given either to see or to hear what he relates, but he has sought to procure all information necessary to classify, complete, and follow from point to point that which the others had compiled at hazard. Whereas they have written the history of the public life of Jesus only from the beginning of its immediate preparation, the preaching and baptism of John the Baptist, as did the preachers of the Gospel,<sup>42</sup> he has begun farther back and has gone to the very origin of the Messianic history. As yet only fragments have been grouped together; he has striven to make a continuous picture, by distributing, as well as possible, the events and discourses of the Gospel.<sup>43</sup>

Whatever his success from this point of view, he cannot be denied the merit of having demonstrated, as he proposed, the immovable certitude of the preaching of the Apostles. This preaching comprised two principal points: the expiatory death and the glorious resurrection of Jesus, the twofold folly of one man immolated for all the rest,

<sup>41</sup> We have only to compare the admirable Greek of the prologue with the rest of the book, so frequently marked with Aramaic idioms, to see that the author in his work suppresses all personal initiative and endeavours to follow, step by step, the certain documents he has in hand.

<sup>42</sup> St. Peter at the house of Cornelius (*Acts* x, 37), and St. Paul in Antioch of Pisidia (*Acts* xiii, 23).

<sup>43</sup> Such has seemed to us, after long study, the true sense of this prologue, so variously interpreted by critics and so frequently distorted.

and of a crucified Jew become the King of Earth and Heaven. To enforce the acceptance of these strange doctrines by the Gentiles, he demonstrates to them felicitously and step by step the entire continuous development of the Messianic plan: Jesus born in a crib, growing up in obedience and in the silence of the workshop, later inaugurating His spiritual kingdom by the calling of His first disciples, developing it by the solemn consecration of His twelve Apostles, proclaiming it publicly by the official mission of His seventy disciples, and finally, on the occasion of His last journey for the Paschal celebration, boldly establishing it in the Holy City. The book of the Acts completes the demonstration. St. Luke, after displaying therein to the pagan world this Messianic kingdom issuing from a stable, will show it to us planted beside the very throne of the Cæsars in the capital city of the universe, the conquest of which it is destined sooner or later to achieve.

Side by side with this call of the Gentiles to the light of the Gospel, he places the gradual alienation of the children of Abraham, until their final and irremediable rejection takes place. The twofold historical demonstration of the vocation of the former and the rejection of the latter presents a clear idea of this book, which is addressed to the *very excellent Theophilus*. As to whether this be the name of a person known in the primitive Church, or a qualification of every Christian, who, by faith and virtue, becomes the friend of God, we are inclined to accept the first hypothesis.<sup>44</sup> But, whoever

<sup>44</sup> The title of "Excellence" accompanying it seems, indeed, to indicate a person of some importance. In the opinion of many this Theophilus is no other than the Jewish High-Priest, son of Annas and brother-in-law of Caiaphas, who was deposed by Herod Agrippa I. This is not probable. The book was written for any reader but a Jew. Besides the topographical and liturgical indications, of no use to an inhabitant of Palestine, there is in it clearly an address to the Gentiles called to the Gospel. Thus it does not trace the genealogy of Jesus only to Abraham, the father of the Jews,

the reader to whom it is addressed, we observe first of all that the third Gospel, written at the same time as the first two, scarcely advances beyond the circle of events within which the others are comprised. While being an expression of the same Apostolic tradition, it gives us a sketch of Jesus much like the one already in existence.<sup>45</sup>

There are, in fact, but nine narratives found solely in St. Luke, while there are forty-two common to him and his two predecessors; five common to him and St. Mark only, and fourteen related by him and by St. Matthew.

When we consider that St. Matthew and St. Mark are still more closely related to each other,—for, besides the forty-two parallel passages which have gained for them and for St. Luke the name of *Synoptics*, they have twelve others wholly common to them, so that there remain but five

but to Adam, the father of the human race: it is not content to point out the mission of the twelve Apostles, corresponding with the twelve tribes of Israel, but it recalls the mission of the seventy disciples, who represented the seventy peoples of the earth. Moreover, as the indications given in the book of the *Acts* prevent the supposition that Theophilus was a Macedonian (*Acts* xvi, 12), or an Athenian (*Acts* xvii, 21), or a Cretan (*Acts* xxviii, 8-12), we may naturally expect to find him in Italy and even at Rome, since the author describes minutely places which a Roman might not know (*Acts* xxvii, 8-12-16) and names as familiar such obscure places as Puteoli, Forum Appii, and the Three Taverns. But the Clementine *Recognitions* appear to furnish more exact information. They relate (L. x, 71) that at Antioch St. Peter converted a nobleman named Theophilus. This man transformed his palace into the very church in which the Prince of the Apostles established the first seat of his authority. If this document be of any historical value, we can see why St. Luke, a native of that city, should have dedicated his book to this powerful protector of nascent Christianity. It may be, as the termination of his name would seem to indicate, that Luke was a simple freedman of this Theophilus and, in his work, addressed to him an expression of his gratitude and devotion. In the book of the *Acts* St. Luke, suppressing the title of "Excellence" which he had given to Theophilus, gives us to understand that he was living with him on more familiar terms.

<sup>45</sup> There is a large number of recent commentaries on St. Luke. The most remarkable among Catholic works are those of Schanz, Tübingen (1883), and of Schegg, Munich (1880), Knabenbauer (Paris, Lethielleux, 1895). There is a long list of Protestant commentaries. Among them it will be sufficient to mention those of James Thomson (Edinburgh, 1851, 3 vols.); Godet, Neuchâtel (third ed., 1888, 2 vols.); Meyer, revised by B. Weiss (1878); Keil (1879).

narratives peculiar to St. Matthew and two to St. Mark,—we feel impelled to inquire into the causes of this evident relationship.

This resemblance exists not only in the substance of what is related, but also in the form, in the turn of the sentence, and even in the expressions. Striking as it is in the recital of events, it is even more surprising in the repetition of the various discourses, and is absolutely scrupulous when these discourses are those of the Master. Why is this? Can it be that God Himself marked out for the Evangelists in proper terms what they should write, and was the immediate author of their compositions? That certainly cannot be; for either He would have dictated to them a single biography, complete and perfect and consequently at one in all points, or, if He dictated four, instead of showing differences, and difficulties created by apparent divergences, they would harmonise easily, and each would form without repetitions a complement to the others, and contribute without difficulty to the logical purpose for which they were composed. But this is not the case.

We must, then, look for a human and altogether natural reason for this resemblance, this identity, more or less constant, between the Synoptics.

Two general alternatives present themselves: either they are copies, or they have been drawn from a common source. For instance, St. Augustine supposes that St. Mark made use of St. Matthew, and St. Luke of both of them.

Since his time, six possible suppositions<sup>46</sup> have been tried, granting absolute or relative priority now to one and now to another, but no satisfactory conclusion has been reached; the most undeniable fact in all the mass of arguments brought forward is that they ruthlessly serve for

<sup>46</sup>Their development may be found in Bleek's *Introduction* I, 93-99, and in Godet, *Commentaire sur St. Luc* (third ed., p. 42 *et seq.*).

their own mutual destruction. At first sight each system infallibly encounters an insuperable difficulty. For, grant to any one of the Synoptics priority over the others, as each has certain narrations not found in the others, the question arises, whence is it that the second does not contain all that the first recounts, and the third all that is related by the two that preceded it? If we admit that the Gospel writers copied from one another, it is impossible to give a satisfactory answer to this question. For to imagine that they were sufficiently critical to cut out certain narratives in order to introduce more authorised accounts, is not only to mistake the simplicity of character that marked the Apostolic age, but above all to lose sight of the fact that a mind so independently critical is absolutely incompatible with that servility of the copyist which has been taken for granted. The same man cannot logically limit himself to a transcription of the expressions and phrases of an author at the very time that he devotes himself to an inconsiderate correction of his account. And then, how explain so many capricious inversions committed in copying without any gain to historical order? In phrases copied from another, why so many unexpected and useless divergences? This explanation, which is as inadequate as it is improbable, would certainly lead us to believe that the Evangelists did not have that lofty conception of exactness and veracity with which we credit them.<sup>47</sup>

We must look, then, for a common source, to account for their resemblance. Some have proposed a first Gospel, whence our three biographers drew their identical stories. This book, written in Syro-Chaldaic by St. Matthew,

<sup>47</sup> How admit, for example, that, if Luke and Matthew knew each other, the former has said nothing of the flight into Egypt, or has even excluded it in bringing the Holy Family to Nazareth after the Purification, and that the latter appeared to take it for granted that Joseph and Mary dwelt in Bethlehem when Jesus was born there?



according to some, according to others by St. Mark, or, according to Ewald, by Philip, the deacon, was successively translated, revised, and enlarged by several persons of the Apostolic age. From these different revisions and numerous editions the narrative portions of our present Synoptics are derived. As for the discourses, they were taken from the *Logia* of St. Matthew,<sup>48</sup> and diversely inserted in the narrations.

But these ingenious hypotheses are as hazardous as they are unsatisfactory.

If the *Logia* of St. Matthew, for instance, be the source of the discourses preserved in our Gospels, how admit that these discourses are neither absolutely identical, nor divided in the same manner, nor placed in the same circumstances? Discourses are always copied, if the sources are considered trustworthy, or else recourse is had to invention, and in that case there is no such concordance as there is in our three Synoptics. If a Protevangelium be the original and common document whence the Synoptics have drawn, how explain the particular plan of each, the arbitrary transposition of certain events, and the frequent variations found in the details of each narration?<sup>49</sup> How account for the altogether different style of the Synoptics? That a Greek scholar like St. Paul should have derived his Aramæanisms, a Jew like St. Matthew borrowed his Greek, frequently very pure, and St. Mark his Hellenised Latin expressions from one and the same source were indeed a strange literary phenomenon; but stranger yet is the fact that there remains not a trace of this Protevangelium, which indeed would be worthy of some respect if it had been the

<sup>48</sup> On the testimony of Papias (Euseb., *H. E.*, iii, 39) many believed that St. Matthew wrote first the discourses of the Lord, *Λόγια*, and afterwards recast the work in the final compilation of his Gospel.

<sup>49</sup> The stories of the possessed of Gadara, of the blind man of Jericho, and of the baptism of Jesus.

source of the Synoptics. Nor do we find a trace of the numerous versions which at an early date must have propagated it among all peoples, and of which not one has survived the ravages of time. St. Luke, it is true, speaks, in his prologue, of frequent attempts at a narration of the Gospel story; but he says nothing of any specially authorised source, and he supposes that his personal work will be more correct than any that preceded it. This shows clearly that he as yet knew nothing of any Gospel of Apostolic origin and of undenied authority. All that had been undertaken, if we rightly comprehend the meaning of his words, was to consign to writing the oral Gospel, but with only imperfect success. He hopes to take up the same work with better results. Almost simultaneously, unconscious of their respective intentions, the two other Synoptics direct their efforts to similar collections, for the need of such a compilation was felt everywhere in the growing Church. Thus it happens that all three, drawing from a single source, bear resemblance to one another; but inasmuch as this source was oral, and hence less exact than if it were written, there may be frequent variations.

This oral Gospel is no fiction. It was the first of all Gospels in the Church, and was formed in this way:

After the Ascension of our Lord, the disciples remained a long time in Jerusalem and in Galilee, constantly occupied, in their pious assemblies, with the works and words of the Saviour. Each one therefore brought his Gospel story into the midst of a most attentive audience, and never tired of repeating what he had often related, because the faithful never wearied of hearing it. Hence came forms of expression, on the part of the speaker, which later became, as it were, sacramental, a general arrangement which use made invariable, and finally an entire narrative whose form was determined irrevocably by its frequent

repetition. The same thing occurs even to-day, in the case of preachers who, in the pulpit, tell stories originally only improvised, but in time repeated with absolutely the same details and phrases.

In these assemblies, the more worthy among the Apostles, ordinarily St. Peter, and at times the actors in the scenes recounted, were the speakers. This was called evangelising. When the time came to proclaim Jesus Christ to the world, and to go forth from that inmost circle which was not sufficiently extensive for the expanding force of the Holy Ghost, certain intelligent and zealous men were chosen especially to preach the history of the Saviour. These were called Evangelists; <sup>50</sup> they were distinguished from the Apostles who had the plenitude of the priesthood, as well as from the prophets, the deacons, and other workers in the kingdom of God. Their greatest merit was in knowing, in its entirety, the Good-Tidings, in the form sanctioned by the preaching of the Apostles. The Jewish rabbis had already given examples of this great patience, in their endeavours scrupulously to retain the discourses of their masters, and in their pride in repeating them with the most astonishing exactitude.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, it is almost certain that the disciples of the Apostles, in order to aid their memory and also to hasten on more rapidly to the conquest of the Gentiles, applied themselves at an early date to put in writing the sum of the teaching of the Apostles which they had heard. Hence the numerous fragmentary compilations that served as a transition between the oral and the written Gospel, the *Logia* of which Papias speaks, and, perhaps, even that which modern critics call the Hebrew Gospel or Proto-Matthew. Put together without sufficient unity of plan, they were lost to sight as

<sup>50</sup> *Acts* xxi, 8; *Eph.* iv, 11; *II Tim.* iv, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Waehner, *Antiq. Hebr.*, t. i, p. 253.

soon as the Gospels, properly so called, came to absorb them in their historic scope. It is to these feeble attempts that St. Luke alludes in his prologue, and he made use of them in his work.

St. Mark must have gathered this spoken Gospel directly from the mouth of Peter. The chief of the Apostles had very probably determined by his discourses its primitive and almost literally consecrated form. Nevertheless the work of St. Mark was not accomplished at one stroke, and its fragmentary origin is easily perceived. Its lively colouring supposes, it is true, that the Apostle's words were committed to parchment immediately after their utterance; but the frequent breaches without natural transitions that have been remarked, prove that the work was produced only intermittently. It was a subsequent effort that united all the various fragments according to a fixed plan.

St. Matthew may have completed his work in two redactions. If we may believe Papias, his first writing was simply a collection of the discourses of Our Lord. Only at a later date did he seek to classify them with the aid of the historical narratives preserved by tradition. Thus, while these discourses betray an Aramean origin, their arrangement was plainly made under Greek influence. Therefore, for him, too, the oral Gospel, gathered in fragments, seems to have been of some utility.

Whatever may be thought of the written sources used by the Synoptics, it remains certain that the hypothesis of an oral Gospel, together with fragmentary documents, best explains their surprising resemblance and their accidental divergences.<sup>52</sup> The preacher's or the compiler's

<sup>52</sup> This thesis was sustained by the author in his *Préparation Exégétique à la Vie de N. S.*, published in 1869, and since that time it has gained much favour. Cf. Cornely, p. 184; de Pressensé, *Jésus-Christ* (1884, pp. 197-207); Godet, *Sur Saint Luc*, Introd.; Schegg; Hase, *Geschichte Jesu* (1876, p. 23, etc.).

memory went so far, stopped, and then went on again. Here it transposed, there it omitted entirely. When relating a well-known parable, a great miracle of Jesus Christ, it proceeded with wonderful accuracy; if, on the other hand, it summed up a long discourse, it appeared more timid and less certain. Words failed it at times, even though the thought followed its course; hence the synonyms, the comparisons, or the divergences, which we must attribute not to the caprice of the Gospel writer, but to the uncertainty of his memory, or to the inaccurate term employed by the evangelising preachers. The very phrasemaking, which is uniformly cadenced, indicates the oral origin of the composition. One feels that the stories of the Synoptics were spoken before they were written. Not only the phrasing, but the verbal juxtaposition, everything is there modelled, rounded in uniform style, like pebbles rolled about in the bed of a great river. This phenomenon is not reproduced in St. John.

Therefore, a single oral Gospel, gathered here and there on scraps of paper and finally taking three principal forms in writing, is the solution of the difficulty. St. Peter and the Apostolic group give rise to this Gospel by their preaching in Jerusalem; St. Peter brings it to Antioch; St. Peter proclaims it in Rome, while faithful disciples preserve it, with certain variations, either in their memory or in pious written memorials; such, very probably, is the cause of their resemblance. St. Matthew, in the name of the twelve,<sup>53</sup> in order to gratify the faithful, compiles the Gospel in Palestine, St. Luke in Antioch, and St. Mark in Rome; such is their respective origin, and the cause of their divergences.

<sup>53</sup> The Gospel of St. Matthew, in its primitive edition, was entitled also *Secundum XII Apostolos*. (Cf. St. Jerome, *Contra Pelag.*, iii, 1; and Epiphan., *Hæres.*, xxx, 13.)

As the history of Our Lord's ministry in Galilee was especially suitable for the evangelisation of the people, primitive tradition was filled with it by preference. Thus it was that His journeys to Jerusalem found no place among the narratives that constitute the oral Gospel; they would recall, for the most part, hostilities painful, perhaps, to recent converts, and, in nearly every case, would call forth an exposition of doctrine with difficulties quite different from those of the story of His familiar conversations with the peasants of Galilee. Hence they are not found in the Synoptics, where, nevertheless, they are taken for granted. Their absence was a profound hiatus in Our Lord's biography. Happily for us, St. John filled it up some few years later on.

St. John was a biographer who followed not the data of the oral Gospel, but his own personal inspiration. He thus composed a work altogether original, and, turning a new light upon the divine physiognomy of the Master, he presents Him above all as God.

The superior character of his work arises at once from the character of his disposition, from his intimate relations with Jesus, and, finally, from the needs of the epoch at which he published his book.

John belonged to a family of fishermen who, though not rich, yet lived in respectability and comfort; his father, Zebedee, kept servants to assist him in his labours;<sup>54</sup> and his mother, Salome, devoted her resources and her life to the service of Jesus.<sup>55</sup> An ardent soul, teeming with holy ambition, this woman had formed her son in her own mould; it was she who had taught him to look eagerly for the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah. She must have been indeed happy when she beheld her two sons, whom she had long be-

<sup>54</sup> *St. Mark* i, 20.

<sup>55</sup> *St. Matthew* xvii, 55.

fore given as disciples to the Precursor, attach themselves to Him Whom the Baptist declared to be the Messiah. John, who, because of his fiery character, had been surnamed the "Son of Thunder," by his contact with Jesus most happily transformed the native impetuosity of his temperament into a tender and merciful charity.<sup>56</sup> He was the beloved disciple of the Master, and this place of privilege permitted him to look deeply into the soul of Him Who honoured him with intimacy.

It was there he drew the sublime inspirations with which his writings are replete, and which are the glory of his Apostolic life.<sup>57</sup> After Jesus's death, and because of his fidelity to the last, he had the happiness of receiving Mary, as his most precious inheritance. At first he remained with her in Jerusalem,<sup>58</sup> occupied doubtless with the duties of his apostolate, but above all giving his contemplative soul time to find again, complete and living, the cherished image of Him Who had quitted the earth. Mary must

<sup>56</sup> John, indeed, became the Apostle of love, and when his failing hand ceased to write his sweet lessons of love for God and man, he had himself carried into the Christian assembly in order to utter there invariably the same discourse: "My little children, love one another." (Cf. St. Jerome, in *Gal.* vi.) The great love he had for the Master inspired him with a hatred of heresy; and in this light we can explain his advice in his second Epistle, v. 10, and his repugnance at finding himself under the same roof with Cerinthus (*Iren.*, iii, 3; *Euseb.*, *H. E.*, iii, 28, and iv, 14) or Ebion (*Epiph.*, *Hæres.*, xxx, 24), while nothing, neither age nor danger, can withhold him from pursuing the young pervert and from leading back to the fold the lost sheep or, rather, the wolf become a lamb, thanks to his charity. (*Clem. Alex.*, *τίς ὁ σωζόμενος πλούσιος*, 37; *Euseb.*, *H. E.*, iii, 42.)

<sup>57</sup> A poet of the Middle Ages, Adam of Saint-Victor, admirably said of him:

Volat avis sine meta  
Quo nec vates nec propheta  
Evolavit altius.

Tam implenda quam impleta  
Numquam vidit tot secreta  
Purus homo purius.

<sup>58</sup> According to an old tradition (*Clem. Alex.*, *Strom.*, vi, 5), John departed from Jerusalem twelve years after the resurrection of Jesus.

have shared with the beloved disciple this pious work of love which revives old memories, and of admiration which preserves them.

Thus, while the other Apostles are making their way over all the world to propagate the Good-Tidings, John dwells in silence and almost in oblivion. Paul does not find him at Jerusalem,<sup>59</sup> either on his first or on his last journey to that city, nor does he say in his Epistles that he had, at that date, found traces of his having passed among the Christians of Asia Minor.

It is probable that St. John came to these countries only after the year 60 or 62, to live there to extreme old age. Tradition presents him to us as visiting the Churches founded by the others, and laying the foundation of that powerful ecclesiastical organisation which, even at the end of the first century, made of the Christian society, as yet in its inception, a veritable commonwealth. The glory of persecution and of martyrdom was not wanting in his long life. After a hard exile on the island of Patmos under the reign of Domitian, and having made a noble confession of faith before the gates of Rome, he died at Ephesus in the reign of Trajan at the end of the first century or at the beginning of the second.

It was at Patmos according to some,<sup>60</sup> at Ephesus according to others,<sup>61</sup> after Peter had suffered martyrdom, and when the Apostolic generation had almost passed away,

<sup>59</sup> *Gal.* i, 18; *Acts* xxi, 18. We know, on the contrary, that he was there with Peter until *Acts* viii, then at the second journey of St. Paul, *Gal.* ii, and at the Council of Jerusalem, *Acts* xv.

<sup>60</sup> Theophylact, Nicephorus, etc.

<sup>61</sup> St. Irenæus, *Adv. Hæres.*, iii, 1; Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, etc. The *Synopsis* of Holy Scripture, classed among the works of St. Athanasius, reconciles these two opinions. According to it the Gospel of St. John was dictated at *Patmos* and published at *Ephesus* by the beloved Gaius, the host of the Apostles. According to the *Chron. Pasch.*, p. xi, 411, ed. Dind., the original was long preserved at Ephesus, where it was the object of pious veneration.



long after Jerusalem had been sacked, and probably about the year 80, that he wrote or dictated his Gospel.

One's first impression, in reading this book,<sup>62</sup> is that it is the spontaneous outpouring of a soul filled with its subject. One feels that the author has only to open his lips to send forth, in sublime simplicity, inimitable narrations in which the physiognomy of Jesus shines out in divinest light. It is indeed peculiar to contemplative minds that, when they break silence, they astonish by the abundance of light and the loftiness of the thoughts which they sow unknown, as it were, to themselves. So does the storm-cloud, long silent, suddenly send forth a thunder-peal. St. John expounds the most profound mysteries in simple terms, as he would tell of a trait or impression of common life. A true Semite in mind and education, he sees, but does not demonstrate. He knows not the more mildly affirmative phrases of the peoples of the Occident; he cannot deduce, he declares and advances like one in perfect light, with no fear of darkness.

The bold lucidity of his theology is due, then, first of all, to his exaltation of soul; but it is explained also by the circumstances as well as the time in which this fourth Gospel was published. In the Synoptics, Christian dogma was put forth in simple statements, in facts rather than in formulas. With St. Paul it begins to free itself from sensible forms, and to mount up into more metaphysical regions, where the strict logic of the Apostle strives to bear it. St. John completes this great work, as Clement of Alexandria has well said,<sup>63</sup> by the writing of his *spiritual*

<sup>62</sup> Cf. among Catholic authors, Corluy, *Comm. in Ev. Sti. Joannis*, Gandavi (1878); S. Knabenbauer, *Comment. in Evan. St. Joan.* (Paris, Lethiel-leux, 1898); among Protestants, as regards authenticity and general criticism, chs. vi, vii, etc., of B. Weiss's *Vie du Christ*, liv. I, *les Sources*; Bleek, *Introd.*, Nos. 36-63, 71-90. As commentators of the text, Hengstenberg, Lüke, Godet, etc., have done much remarkable work.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi, 14.

Gospel, while his predecessors gave to the Church the *corporal* Gospel. The latter devoted themselves to an account of the events of Our Lord's life; the former sought to demonstrate the very spirit of Jesus Christ. They wrote down for us His human birth; he is absorbed with His divine generation. Thus, in the first lines of his work, he gives the very mark that distinguishes him from his predecessors.

Toward the end of the first century, a twofold danger threatened the nascent Church, Ebionitism with its positivist theories, and the Gnosticism of Cerinthus with its Platonic dreams. The former was popular with the mass of Christians who had been Jews; the latter gained credit among the learned. St. John rendered great service to Christianity in defining what in Jesus was human and what divine. Those who were with him perceived the need of a book such as his to refute their adversaries and for their own edification. The most ancient tradition<sup>64</sup> represents them as begging of the beloved disciple this decisive work. They claimed that the time had come to draw aside the veil entirely and to show forth the mysteries of Heaven. Why not lay the philosophical basis of faith by going back even to the Word? In this way the cultured mind of Jew or Gentile would find real satisfaction in contemplating the divine existence and in the perfect knowledge of Jesus the Man-God.

St. John, yielding to their desires, wrote, therefore, an exposition of doctrine, rather than an historical work. Still one perceives that, in his work, however theological it may be, he is careful to fix the exact order of the various narratives; so that, from a chronological point of view, he really supplements his predecessors. Frequently, even without any apparent effort, he completes and ex-

<sup>64</sup> St. Jerome, *In Matt.*, t. iv, p. 2.

plains them, pushing forward his account with a master's strength, without fear of error, through the various incidents told in the Synoptics.

He is one who has seen and has not forgotten, and who, at the decline of life, retains in all their freshness the memories of his youth. Hence the simplicity with which he narrates, the liberty with which he proceeds, the authority with which he speaks, incontestable signs of authenticity which the most recent criticism has at last perceived and of which it has sought to demonstrate the real importance. In his book there is a single flowing movement, strong but restrained, in which one feels that the author gives only a part of what he knows and of what is in his soul. The other Evangelists grouped together or laboriously set forth diverse materials; he drew a certain plan and followed it, gleaning in the memory of the heart or in the permanent inspiration of the Spirit whatever was capable of setting in relief his theology of the Word or the Incarnation.

Whatever certain critics may have written, the idea of the Saviour begotten of these sublime reminiscences differs in no wise from that presented by the Synoptics.<sup>65</sup> The Jesus of St. John is like the Jesus of his predecessors: Messiah, Redeemer, Thaumaturgus, and Doctor. He has the same sweet, firm, simple, heroic character. After a life of devotion and struggle, through the same sufferings, He comes into possession of the same glory. If He does not speak the same language, it is because He does not address the same auditors. The evangelisation of the people, of which the Synoptics are the echo, brought Him before the mountaineers of Galilee; St. John portrays Him in the centre of Jewish civilisation and disputing with the

<sup>65</sup> In the happy phrase of St. Irenæus, there is but one Gospel in quadruple form: *τετραμόρφον εὐαγγέλιον*.

learned in the capital. If the aspect of a landscape, ever the same, undergoes great change when looked at from different points of view, the historic physiognomy of a man varies even more when considered in different circumstances and in a light more or less clear. What, then, will the change not be, if the brush be not the same that is used to portray him, and if the artists seek in their work to produce different results? Does the Socrates of Xenophon bear much resemblance to Plato's? No, and yet it is generally acknowledged that the two disciples did not depart from historical truth. Moreover, the richer and the more harmonious the personality to be revived, the more readily does variety creep in, and the more profound the differences appear to be.

But even were the phenomenon presented by our Gospels stranger yet, we must make the same admission; for, after sufficient reflection, one cannot doubt that they all have equally the best proofs of historical veracity and of perfect fidelity.

They were written, in fact, in the midst of a generation which had witnessed the events recounted. Can they then be false, as a direct expression of the testimony of that generation? When such assertions have been subject to so universal and so immediate a verification how grant that there still remains any error? To be sure, those who gave this testimony were not learned men, trained in the school of modern criticism; but was not their common-sense sufficient to ascertain the most simple facts, the most ordinary incidents of every-day life, the most evident transformations however wonderful? They were calm, disinterested witnesses, and that is enough to guarantee the truth of their testimony. Nothing in their conduct proclaims that they were visionaries. In the presence of the greatest miracles, their deposition is always one of reserve and

almost free from admiration, as if they beheld only what was natural. They know neither exaggeration<sup>66</sup> nor bombast, and their restrained enthusiasm is but a warmth of soul born of deep conviction and expressed in loyal terms. No self-interest moves them to relate their astonishing tales; on the contrary, they are aware that their utterances

<sup>66</sup> What a difference between their writings and the Apocryphal Gospels! The latter, full of ridiculous miracles, of puerile details, are the fruit of diseased imaginations. See in Thilo or Tischendorf: *Evangelia Apocrypha*. That one, fragments of which were discovered (1886-87) in a tomb at Akhmin (Upper Egypt), and which is the Gospel of Peter mentioned by Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi, 12, 2; Origen, *In Matt.*, t. x, 17; St. Justin, *c. Tryph.*, 106, has only a probable advantage over the others in its greater antiquity. It is supposed to have been written about the year 120. As a matter of fact, in what we have of it, nine pages, recounting the Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus, the author, who claims to be Peter himself, and speaks in the first person, ventures, every time he abandons the Synoptics, into fantastic inventions in which his taste for the marvellous attains the most outlandish proportions. Yet, as Harnack and others have judiciously remarked, he shows that he has known the Synoptics and even St. John, which is important for apologetic criticism. (See Hastings's *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Peter (Simon)*, iii, 10.) As for the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, which St. Jerome found at Beroë (the present Alep), written in Aramean, but transcribed in Hebrew characters, and which he translated into Greek and Latin, it added nothing of importance to the account of our authentic Gospels. St. Ignatius, *Smyrn.*, iii, 2; Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *H. E.*, iv, 22, 7; Clement of Alex., Origen, etc., mention it. Although it seems to have had two editions quite different, one in Greek for the sect of the Ebionites, and the other in Aramean for the sect of the Nazarenes, and although, as a whole, it contained, according to the catalogue of Nicephorus, 2,200 *στίχες* or normal lines, there remain of it only unimportant fragments. If these were sufficient to give an exact idea of the book, we should have to conclude that the *Gospel of the Hebrews* was only a very dull and uninteresting paraphrase of words or facts more soberly given in the Synoptics. Of the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, known to Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the *Philosophoumena*, v, 2, Epiphanius, *Hæres.*, lxxii, 2, the pretended *Second Epistle of Clement*, we have still only three very short citations, but enough to reveal to us the general note of the book, which is indeed that of the Apocrypha. Harnack makes it date from the year 120. When our valiant searchers shall have found the *Gospel* or the *Traditions of St. Matthias*, of which Clement of Alex., Origen, and the Gelasian catalogue speak: the *Gospel of St. Philip*, quoted by St. Epiphanius, *Hæres.*, xxvi, 13, and finally that of St. Thomas, mentioned in the *Philosophoumena*, v, 7, perhaps also in St. Justin, *Dial. Tryph.*, lxxxviii, inscribed in the Gelasian catalogue and in that of Nicephorus, we shall have at hand all the elements of value to determine once and for all the distance that separates the work of fiction from the simple and loyal testimony of the truth.

will draw upon them persecution, chains, disgrace. One feels that they are honest, modest, free from all pretence; they say nothing in praise of themselves. Writing down simply that which they know, they put aside whatever seems to them uncertain. With no thought of biasing the judgment of the reader, or of composing a plea, they give us to understand that their cause will suffice for its own defence. Above all they are religious, and, practising the sublime morality they teach, they furnish us an example of the most heroic virtue. Such men can be neither dupes nor impostors, and certainly never did book give to critics more respectable human guarantees of historical exactitude.

We must add also that it has the most decisive divine guarantees to insure its dogmatic correctness.

He indeed who admits the reality of the Gospel story and the manifestation of the Son of God in Jesus Christ, is logically bound to acknowledge that the pen of the Evangelists was guided by supernatural aid and preserved from error in the exposition of dogma and of morals. The Gospel being nothing less than the authentic portraiture of Jesus Christ and the code of His teaching, how suppose that this divine work could have been vitiated from the first by the unskilfulness of the Gospel writers? Either God did not speak to man, or He must have provided for the faithful transmission of His word. If His doctrine is not contained exactly in the Gospel, where shall we find it? Was, then, the truth proclaimed to the world by the Son of God during the brief space of His public life, only to appear here below, but not to remain, like a flying meteor sought in the heavens but no longer found? This is impossible. An incorrect report of His discourses would be for us a misfortune rather than a benefit. Could God, we ask, have permitted mankind to sacrifice part of its lawful joys and sometimes even life itself in obedience to

precepts falsely transmitted, perhaps imaginary, the work of faithless evangelists? Could He have suffered incapable writers to do over again the work of His Son, the disciples to supplant the Master? It is incredible.

The Incarnation of the Word would be for man but bitter derision, if Jesus Christ did not remain Himself, living and speaking in the Sacred Books and in the Church. But, if the Evangelists or the Church could have been deceived in placing His teaching before us, Jesus Christ is no longer among us.

Therefore the Son of God must have guided the pen of His biographers with such assistance, such enlightenment, such grace of inspiration as to prevent any error of importance. It was His promise to His Apostles: "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete that He may abide with you for ever. . . . But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, . . . will teach you all things and . . . bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you."<sup>67</sup> In the midst of a privileged generation, when miracle-workers and prophets were numerous, we find nothing beyond what is natural in this intervention of the Holy Ghost to direct the pen as well as the tongue of the ministers of the Gospel. Our sacred writers were conscious of this divine inspiration by which they were transformed on the day of Pentecost and sustained throughout their apostolate. St. Peter speaks of "them that have preached the Gospel to you, the Holy Ghost being sent down from heaven . . .;"<sup>68</sup> and St. Paul<sup>69</sup> declares that he has this Gospel not from man, but from the Master Who speaks in his soul.

If God guarded the Word from error while it was being preached throughout the world, for far greater reason ought He preserve the Written Word, which was to endure

<sup>67</sup> *St. John* xiv, 16-26.

<sup>68</sup> *I St. Peter* i, 12.

<sup>69</sup> *Eph.* iii, 5.

and to be throughout the ages the authentic record of revelation.

We have, then, to aid us in writing the Life of Jesus, documents which are exceptionally safe, though incomplete.<sup>70</sup> We shall have to follow them exclusively, since

<sup>70</sup> Let us remark, not to neglect any useful information, that among the Church writers of the first century 177 words of Our Lord, not contained in our Gospels, have been gathered together, and A. Resch published them in 1889 in *Texte und Untersuchungen* by Gebhardt and Harnack. What is their respective value? Another German savant, H. Ropes, has just put them to a severe test: *Die Sprüche Jesu*, etc. (Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1896). Dividing them into categories, he eliminates 108 as not being clearly attributed to Our Lord, and of those that are really attributed to Him forty-two appear to him not historical and thirteen doubtful. So that there would remain only fourteen whose authenticity can be sustained with any probability. Assuredly this critic shows but little indulgence; but it must be acknowledged, even though we extend the scope of the authentic *Agrapha*, that in reality there remains for the biographer of Jesus but little to glean outside of the Canonical Gospels.

The recent discovery, in the winter of 1897, of the papyrus of Behnesa, the ancient Pahnasit, at first excited enthusiastic hopes. They spoke of Papias's book, *Explanations of the Discourses of the Lord*, *Λογίων Κυριακῶν Εξηγήσεις*, which was going to be restored to us at last. When Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt published the discovery made by them in Egypt, the entire MS. was limited to a leaf measuring about 6 x 4 inches, with twenty-one legible lines on one page and as many on the other, but with omissions, the lines averaging eighteen letters, in all six sentences and the beginning of a seventh. This is but little, and it is to be regretted that we have received only this leaf of a codex, whereas we expected the book itself. It formed very probably part of a collection of the maxims of the Saviour. Where were these maxims taken from? It is supposed that they were extracted from the so-called *Gospel of the Egyptians*, mentioned above, which was not, perhaps, at first an heretical document. According to the quotations from it which we find in the Fathers of the second and third centuries, in particular in the so-called second *Epistle of St. Clement* of Rome and in Clement of Alexandria, one may see that in its aphorisms it resembles St. Matthew and St. Luke, and in its Christology St. John. Certain it is that the mystico-ascetic character borrowed by this Gospel from the theosophy of Philo, which predominates in Jesus's replies to Salome (cf. Clement Rom., *II Ep.*, ch. xii, and Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, iii, 6, 9, 13), is found again in the sentences of this Behnesa folio, which it will, perhaps, be agreeable to the reader to read again with its omissions, without commentaries and in verses:

1. . . . And then thou shalt see to remove the straw that is in thy brother's eye.

2. Jesus said: If ye do not fast from the world, ye shall not find the Kingdom of God; and if ye keep not the Sabbath, ye shall not see the Father.



elsewhere we find no information, neither in the Judaism of the rabbis, nor in the Greco-Jewish authors,<sup>71</sup> nor in

3. Jesus said: I have been in the midst of the world and in the flesh, I have been seen by them, and I have found them all filled with wine, and I found no one of them who was thirsty, and my soul is troubled because of the sons of men for that they are blind in their heart, and . . . (line 22 is altered as well as 23; at the end we read): . . . poverty.

4. Jesus said: Wheresoever they may be (half of twenty-four and twenty-five are illegible, but we can perceive the sense which we propose in italics) *they are not without God; if any one is alone, I also am with him; raise up the stone and there thou shalt find me; cleave the tree, there am I again.*

5. Jesus said: A prophet is without welcome in his own country, and a physician heals not among those who know him.

6. Jesus said: A city built on the crest of a high mountain and solidly based can neither fall nor be concealed.

7. Jesus said: Thou hearest . . .

<sup>71</sup> If the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus wrote anything of Him, the documents have perished, together with all the literary products of that time, in the great catastrophe that annihilated city, temple, and nation. One may say that from that lamentable epoch Judaism has been incapable of any consistent, reasonable utterance with regard even to the purely political events which had preceded it. The writers of the Talmud have preserved for us only puerile legends and incoherent narratives of no historic value. It is not difficult to conclude from the dialogûe of Justin and Tryphon (10, 17, 108) and Origen's discussion with Celsus (1, 28) that the Pharisaic hatred from which Jesus had to suffer so much did not end with the Pharisees. After the death of Christ, they continued to mar His work by pretending even to the pagans that He had been but an instrument of Satan. The unworthy calumnies tardily compiled from the third to the fifth centuries in the two Gemaras, those extravagant commentaries on the *Mischna*, the work of Judas the Holy, tell plainly the disposition with which this abandoned people regarded their unacknowledged Messiah. (Cf. especially *Sanhedrim* and *Schabbat*.)

To Josephus we must do this justice that if, for political or religious reasons, he withheld from giving to Jesus and to His influence for reform the capital importance which impresses every faithful and impartial historian, he has at least the decency to respect the author of the Christian religion. He names Jesus twice in his *History of the Jews*, in ch. xviii, 3, 3, and in ch. xx, 9, 1. This second passage, whose authenticity is more generally acknowledged, evidently supposes the first, since in it Jesus is indicated as someone who has already been mentioned. Josephus there deems it a regrettable abuse of power that the High-Priest Ananos, proud and overbearing in character as well as harsh and cruel, true Sadducean that he was, should take advantage of the interregnum between Festus, the deceased procurator, and Albinus, his successor, not yet arrived from Rome, to bring before the Sanhedrim James, "the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ." With James there were others also accused. He had them stoned on the spot, as transgressors of the law of Moses. This act of violence was most unfavourably regarded by those in Jerusalem who were

the most moderate and at the same time the most attached to the Mosaic observance. To suppress in this passage the three words that refer to Jesus, would make it not only incomplete, but also unintelligible. Indeed, it cannot be seen how James and his companions were transgressors of the law, unless the name of Jesus the Christ be connected with the affair. Moreover, the divergence we find as to chronology (six or seven years) and as to the manner of James's death, as told here and as told in the account of Hegesippus, a church historian of the second century cited by Eusebius (*H. E.*, ii, 23) (in the one James is stoned, in the other he is thrown from the top of the Temple), is a proof that no Christian hand interfered to re-touch this text. Had it been so, a Christian would have kept better account of ecclesiastical tradition as to the martyrdom of the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

The other passage, which certainly is hinted at here, presents more difficulties. We reproduce it in its full tenor, as it is found in *all* the manuscripts of Josephus's work, and in Eusebius, who as early as 320 or 340 transcribed it twice in its entirety (*H. E.*, i, 11, and *Demonst. Evang.*, iii, 5): "Now about this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man, if we may call him a man, for he was seen to perform wonderful works and to teach such men as were eager to receive the truth. Many Jews and many Greeks became followers of him. For them he was the Christ. At the instigation of the principal men amongst us, Pilate condemned him to the ignominious punishment of the cross. However, nothing daunted, his followers of the preceding day remained his followers on the morrow. Three days after he reappeared to them living. The divine prophets had foretold of him both this and a thousand other wonderful things. Even to-day the tribe of Christians, who took their name from him, are not extinct."

Even supposing that a falsifier had intended to introduce into the works of the Jewish historian a thing the absence of which Christian faith could easily endure, would he not have more to do than to add a few words to a brief paragraph or even interpolate an entire passage? Admitting the possibility and the wish to commit fraud, it must be granted that it was but a feeble attempt and that its success is far from satisfactory. The little here said of Christianity and of its Author is less favourable to its cause than absolute silence. Silence could easily have been explained by the hatred of the Jews; an insignificant paragraph gives us to understand that Jesus occupied the attention and the life of His contemporaries no more than to merit a passing mention in the great history of the Jews. This seems the more embarrassing.

As a matter of fact, negative criticism, in order to suppress or to mutilate this passage, invokes, against the most conclusive philological proofs and extrinsic testimony of authenticity, only the anomaly of a Jew, a Pharisee, and of sacerdotal race, speaking the language of Christians. But if, perchance, this Jew does intend to write down the convictions of the Christians and not his own belief, where is the difficulty? But such is the case. Closely examined, the text gives expression to the sentiments of the followers of Jesus. Only in the last line does Josephus betray his own belief, where, with less benevolent tone, he declares that the sect of Christians is not yet extinct, *οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φύλον*. All the rest is a summing-up of the impressions of those who remain faithful to Jesus, impressions whose influence is felt by the historian, but of which he does not accept the responsibility. Men

the historians of paganism, of sufficient importance to aid us in our work.<sup>72</sup> We can at the most only glean here and there in the different authors a few statements relating to our subject, and in the Talmud certain interesting explanations of material details or of the customs of the Jews which otherwise would be to us unintelligible.

After all, as a whole, their help is of no account. It would seem as if God were unwilling to permit Jewish science to touch upon the great personality of His Son, but reserved rather to poor and ignorant men the glorious privilege of transmitting to us a portrait so inimitable. It needed artless souls, without literary artifice or philosophical or religious systems, to relate with all simplicity just what they had seen and heard. A litterateur would, willy-nilly, have sought to compose a book; the Gospel writers wished only to hand down to us truthful, modest

whose character and virtues he admires have told him that Jesus performed wonderful works, taught true wisdom, and fulfilled the prophecies, and he repeats it; they say He had been seen living again on the third day, and he does not dispute it. His character, fickle in religion as well as in politics, evades the difficulties instead of sounding them. Even if he is obliged to call Jesus the Christ, he does so with less reluctance since history seems already to have sanctioned the custom by naming His followers Christians. Josephus's testimony, which is simply an echo of what he had heard, is of as little value to us as the trouble it cost his indifferent, frivolous nature. Whether authentic or apocryphal, it appears to be of no use to Christian Apologetics.

<sup>72</sup> Among pagan writers we may cite only Tacitus, *Annales*, xv, 44; Suetonius, *Vita Claudii*, 25, and *Neronis*, 16; Pliny, *Epist.* x, 97, 98 (see above chap. I, 34, 35); Lucian, *De Morte Peregrini*, ch. ii; Lampridius, *Vita Alexand. Sever.*, ch. 29, 43. We may perhaps also add to this testimony the Syriac letter of Mara-bar-Serapion, written about the year 74, and published in London by Cureton in 1855, in the *Spicilegium Syriacum*. Jesus is there compared with Socrates and Pythagoras, and is qualified as the "wise king of the Jews," who because of the laws he had promulgated should never have died and whose murder drew down just punishment upon His people. The odd simplicity of this document proves its antiquity. It is not at all certain that Mara was in reality a pagan. It is not impossible that Christianity had made the conquest of this soul so brave in its eagerness for true wisdom. The letter was written in prison. It is supposed by some that Mara was of Persian origin.

testimony. We may regret, however, that by their neglect of co-operation in the writing of their narratives, they have forced future biographers to seek, under great difficulties in the classification of materials, an order which may be, not incontestable—that were to waste one's time—but at least probable.

St. John presents, it is true, a chronological order which is very precious. Hence his Gospel at once forces itself upon us as the regular framework in which the narratives of the Synoptics ought to be arranged; but at the same time a twofold difficulty arises. First we must unite these narratives so as to form one whole, and then apportion the whole so that its many parts may supply the omissions of St. John. In this twofold task the clearest minds have made most laudable efforts. But not having any precise data to aid them in the problem, their success has been most varied. For how can one find a strict order in St. Matthew or in St. Mark if they themselves did not seek to maintain one? St. Luke, perhaps, gives more certain information, for he promised at the outset to essay a classification of events. It is doubtful, however, whether the methodical order which he manifests at the beginning of his book, is maintained to the end.

Happily an unquestionable classification of certain incidents and certain discourses is not required for the decisive effect that the biography of Jesus will produce in souls. Be it soon or be it late, the light shines with powerful rays on this grand figure, and shows forth, in glowing colours, the ideal before which every pure and unprejudiced heart bends low in love and reverence.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS MANIFESTATION

PALESTINE AND ITS PEOPLE—THE LAND BEYOND THE JORDAN AND ITS DIVISIONS—SAMARIA AND ITS DISTINCT LOCATION—GALILEE AND THE CHARACTER OF THE GALILEANS—JUDEA AND THE JEWISH RELIGION—JERUSALEM—THE TEMPLE—THE SECTS—THE POLITICAL CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY—HEROD'S SONS—THE ROMANS.

THE history we are about to write was made in the midst of surroundings topographical, religious, and political, with which we ought to be acquainted; otherwise we would be capable of grasping only partially the image of Him Who is its hero. It is no longer in a nimbus of glory, vaguely floating between heaven and earth, that we must point out Jesus to the minds of our contemporaries. He would be too far away to produce upon minds dominated by positivism the salutary and decisive impression for which we venture to hope.

When the memory of the places where He lived, struggled, and died has been rendered more accurate, He Himself will be recognised as truer, more real, more attainable, more a man among men, and less out of proportion with whosoever seeks to imitate Him. The deeper we go into the life of the religious and political society which was His,

the greater becomes our admiration of the moral grandeur that distinguishes Him from all His fellow-citizens. For, logically, His personality must rise in our eyes, in proportion to the lowliness of the level from which He emerged.

It seems, then, that a rapid review of the geography of Palestine, and of the social conditions of the Jews, at the time of the Messiah, is indispensable in an introduction to this biography.<sup>1</sup>

At the point where the three great divisions of the Old World touch, between the most civilised peoples of Asia, Africa, and Europe, is situated the little province which was the scene of the divine manifestation. If we consider its influence on the destiny of mankind, we may say that it has been the heart of the universe. Originally known by the name of Canaan, Israel, Judea, more recently it has been called Palestine and the Holy Land.

It lies between the 31st and 33d degree north latitude, and the 32d and 35th east longitude. Two mountain chains, which begin at the junction of Libanus and Anti-Libanus, and extend parallel from north to south, very nearly cover with their ramifications this space of 10,000 square miles, and in reality make of Palestine a plateau rising nearly 2,500 feet above the level of the sea. By their adjacency they form the double wall enclosing the long, picturesque valley through which flows the Jordan, the sole water-course of importance that irrigates this country.

Taking its source with the Banias in the Lake of Phiala, or with the Dan at the foot of great Hermon, this sacred

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, with the additions of St. Jerome (Berlin, 1862, Larsow and Parthey); *Descriptiones Terræ Sanctæ*, according to the travellers of the eighth, ninth, twelfth, and fifteenth centuries, published by Tobler, in Leipzig, 1874; Robinson, *Biblical Researches* (London, 1841); Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, Thomson, *The Land and the Book*; Ritter, *Geogr. Palest.*; Victor Guérin, *La Terre Sainte*; the important researches of the Exploration fund; Le Camus's *Voyages aux pays bibliques*, etc.

river, so celebrated in the annals of the Jews, flows in a straight line to the south. It passes through the Lake of Merom with its muddy, unhealthy waters, flows on beneath the old basalt bridge of the Daughters of Jacob, and, gradually developing to a width of thirty-five feet, on to the Lake of Tiberias, where, for a time, it seems to be lost. There is no more beautiful landscape in Palestine than here. The limpid waters of the broad lake reflect the azure of the skies. Like the frame of a great mirror, the verdant hills enclose it with picturesque festoons. These hillsides were formerly the site of smiling hamlets. The climate is delightful, and the temperature as mild as in the tropics.

A valley which widens gradually to a breadth of two leagues, and which seems to have been once the bed of a sea now dried up, unites the Lake of Tiberias with the Asphaltic Lake, and a glowing picture of life is thus joined to the realm of death. Nothing can grow or even live in this sea of bitumen, and its very shores, replete with a saltness as bitter as it is abundant, exclude all vegetable life. There stood the cities once famous for their debauchery: Sodom, Gomorrha, Adama, Seboïm. A fearful catastrophe overwhelmed them, and the volumes of smoke that at times rise from the surface of these black, pestiferous waters would seem to bear witness that the flames of the volcano once ignited by the wrath of God still endure, and will proclaim to the end of time their ardour in punishing the wicked.

Through this valley, called in Scripture "the plain," in the midst of its moving sands, beneath the shade of weeping willows, and in among the reeds, the Jordan, sad and colourless, sweeps on with numberless windings into the Dead Sea, and there drops down as if regretfully into a tomb. It was in the neighbourhood of this stream and

these two lakes, as around a great, vital artery, that God had grouped an exceptional and privileged people.

Without political or military genius, reduced to the number of three or four millions of citizens at the time of their greatest prosperity, having no exterior relations of importance, this was a nation of nations. History, indeed, tells us that other nations were formed, grew, and triumphed, only to prepare the way for the influence of the Jew. When they, having essayed his humiliation, his massacre, his destruction, had already fallen into decay, he still stood upright, bearing in the ark the sacred deposit of religious truth, and awaiting his triumph in the future. He alone in the universe preserved, at all times, the idea and the worship of the true God. The most civilised nations adored idols; he, with no philosophical culture, always adored a God, one, sovereign, and eternal, free, all-powerful, most holy, the Father and Judge of mankind. He adored Him in spirit; he had no need of images or statues to make Him present to his conscience. For all the rest of the human race, everything was God except God Himself; for the Jew, nothing was God but the true God, and with this God he had most intimate communion. While the rest of the world, forgetful of the moral law, confounded good and evil and gave itself up to the caprices of the most barbarous and most degrading passions, Israel, despite his hard head and ungenerous heart, proved that man by means of sanctity can unite his life with the life of God, that there is a law written by the Creator in the depths of the human heart, and that virtue is more than an empty word.

This people, through Jacob and Isaac, was descended from Abraham, the illustrious Chaldean, the father of the faithful. God had raised them up in Egypt, where, transplanted by accident and reduced to slavery, they were in



danger of forgetting the religion of their fathers, and of abandoning themselves to the superstitious idolatry of their oppressors. Throughout the sufferings in the desert, during forty years of wandering life, Israel heard the voice of Heaven, teaching him through Moses; and at last he entered into the land of Canaan which Jehovah had prepared for him. There, for the sake of his material interests, which, to him, were not matters of indifference, he was to remain, and his daily needs were to be the constant guarantee of his fidelity. Very different was the land now given him from that which he had just left. Whereas, in Egypt, the husbandman irrigated his fields as one vast garden, Palestine, cut up, as it was, by the mountains into small vales, furrowed by the dry beds of streams, was to be watered by heaven's rain. Thus God reserved to Himself the right to reward the fidelity of His people by sending to the earth fertilising rains and dews, and to punish their prevarications by closing up the heavens and sending the sun's rays to prey upon a barren soil that would deny its nourishment to the wicked.<sup>2</sup>

Through the blessing of Jehovah, this land gave to its inhabitants milk and honey; for there were pasture for the herds, and flowers and sunlight for the bees.<sup>3</sup> But, at the breath of the anger of God, the desert winds scorched the plants, withered the vines, and dried up the springs; the locusts came in swarms to devour what vegetation remained,

<sup>2</sup> *Deut. xi, 10, etc.*

<sup>3</sup> We must not judge of ancient Palestine by the spectacle presented in the Palestine of to-day. The clearing away of the forests on the mountains, the destruction of the terraces that held the fertile earth on the hill-sides, the fearful hurricanes, the earthquakes, the volcanic phenomena, and, more than all, the successive invasions of armies that have made their passage through the land, the wars, the domination of the Turks, have transformed into a veritable desert what must have been once a pleasant, fertile country. Certain districts of Lebanon, the preservation and culture of which we have admired, may give an idea of Palestine in the time of Jesus Christ.

and the earth, shaken to its depths, recalled the nation to her forgotten duty. In a word, nature had so disposed all things, that Israel, subject at all times to the guardianship and the immediate authority of Jehovah, his Master, might keep alive and glowing the spark which, later on, was to inflame the world.

That Israel's perseverance in the future might be the better insured, he had received a social law that tended to alienate him from all other peoples. Physical difficulties were to complete his isolation. For on the west was a maritime coast offering but poor anchorage to ships; south, east, and north was a circle of deserts and mountains impeding international relations. Finally, the constant hostility of the neighbouring peoples had served, from an early date and for centuries, to withhold him from the pernicious influence which the great civilisations of the ancient world would inevitably have had upon him. For a long time, indeed, no foreigners trod the soil of Palestine, except in times of war, when they either made that land the scene of their battles with each other, or were sent by the wrath of God to chastise His wayward people. Thus it was that this small nation of the Jews preserved its thoroughly original physiognomy and with it its ancient traditions.

From the beginning this people was distributed into twelve tribes. Each tribe had received its portion of land, and had occupied it. This was the first geographical division of the country, and, even after the upheavals caused by foreign invasions, the memory of the people maintained it.

Under Saul, David, and Solomon the twelve cantons form a kingdom of constantly advancing prosperity. Then suddenly they break their fraternal union and establish two separate states: to the south the kingdom of

Juda, which remains in the hands of the royal heir, Roboam, consisting of only two of the tribes, Juda and Benjamin; in the north and centre, the kingdom of Israel, composed of the ten remaining tribes, who choose for their king Jeroboam, the astute instigator of the revolt. The Assyrian exile, the Babylonian captivity, the Greco-Macedonian domination, the wars of independence, bring about successive political and geographical transformations of the country.

At the time at which we are to study it, it is dependent upon Rome, and is divided into four provinces: the one east of the sacred river is the land beyond the Jordan, or Peræa; <sup>4</sup> the three others in the west, named in order from north to south, are Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Of these the one most frequented by foreigners is the land beyond the Jordan; Samaria is the least Jewish, Galilee the most vigorous, Judea the most famous. Around the last-named the others are grouped, as around their centre of government.

The land beyond the Jordan, extending from the foothills of Hermon down to the Dead Sea, was a vast country, as Josephus says, but to a great extent covered with mountains of limestone and basalt, and in general but poorly peopled.<sup>5</sup>

Of the five districts which it included in the north we may say they were united to Palestine by merely superficial bonds, and for reasons simply political. Neither the eminently religious spirit nor the fierce patriotism that were

<sup>4</sup> These two names designate the same country. For the sake of greater clearness we shall call the land beyond the Jordan all the countries united beyond that river, and Peræa the particular country that bore that name.

<sup>5</sup> The exploration of these countries has recently been commenced; they are to-day almost desert lands, and it is with danger that one enters upon their exploration. See Warren, *Expedition to the East of the Jordan*, and Selah Merrill, *East of the Jordan* (London, 1881), and the interesting works of M. Schumacher, especially *Across the Jordan* (London, 1886).

characteristic of the Jewish nation animated these uncivilised hordes.

Gaulanitis, however, bore some resemblance to Galilee, from which it was separated only by the Lake of Genesareth.<sup>6</sup> But of its principal cities Julius, Gamala, Hippos, in this order along the lake from north to south, the last-named, at least, must have been almost pagan. It formed a part of Decapolis, the confederation of the richest cities from Damascus down to the Desert of Arabia in a defensive and offensive alliance against the pillaging of the Bedouins and more especially of the population of Ituræa.

This latter province, situated north of Gaulanitis, lived almost wholly by plundering. The inhabitants, abetted, as it were, by the narrow, rugged ravines with which their country was furrowed, could attack with impunity the caravans of merchants coming from Damascus, and, when they had plundered them, could flee into the numerous inaccessible caverns of their mountains. Skilful archers and daring horsemen, they spread terror over the entire country, and seemed to fear neither God nor man.

Trachonitis, with its rocks of black basalt extending almost to Damascus, was no better peopled. For a protection against the assaults of its own subjects, it had been necessary to erect lofty fortifications about its principal city, Kanatha. In this city, which belonged to the federation of Decapolis, caravans found shelter, and their presence there excited the avarice of brigands. Herod, after having cruelly devastated the entire country in order to extirpate this brigandage, without success, was obliged to establish there permanently a division of troops who kept watchful guard over all roads where travellers had to pass.

Auranitis and Batanea lay to the south of the two preceding countries. The former, spreading its vast grain

<sup>6</sup> *Antiq.*, viii, 2, 3; *B. J.*, iii, 3, 1; iv, 1, 1.

fields over all the plains of Hauran, was watered by the many tributaries of the Hieromax. Its chief city was Astharoth, a name that recalls the most ancient memories of paganism. The latter country comprised the mountains of Hauran and stretched south to the deserts. Herod had established here an important military post on the north at Bathyra to guard against the brigands of Trachonitis, and the Romans, in order to hold the Arabs in check, erected Bostra on the southern frontier.

To these districts must be added Abilene. This country, from the time of Aristobulus,<sup>7</sup> had been obliged by force, like the rest of conquered Ituræa, to embrace the Jewish religion and its practices. Situated on the eastern slope of Anti-Libanus, it was watered by the Barada. Its capital city, Abila, was eighteen miles from Damascus and thirty-two from Heliopolis, on the road that joined these two cities. About the year 39 B.C. it was governed by a Jewish prince, who was also Asmonean on his mother's side, Lysanias, son of Ptolemy-Mennæus,<sup>8</sup> who bore the title of king. He reigned only five years, and was put to death by Antony, who desired to give his states to Cleopatra. So short a reign cannot explain the name *Abilene of Lysanias*, consecrated by history,<sup>9</sup> unless this prince had successors bearing his name and constituting a dynasty of Lysanias in this country. We know that after the death of Cleopatra, Augustus farmed out this country to a certain Zenodoras,<sup>10</sup> and then gave it, perhaps with other possessions, to Herod the Great. According to many, this is most uncertain, for the historian Josephus in enumerating the districts comprised in this donation is silent concerning Abi-

<sup>7</sup> *Antiq.*, xiii, 11, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Antiq.*, xiv, 13, 3; *B. J.*, i, 13, 1.

<sup>9</sup> This name continues for eighty-six years after the death of this petty king. *Antiq.*, xix, 5, 1; Ptolemæus, *Geogr.*, v, 14, call it Abila of Lysanias.

<sup>10</sup> *B. J.*, i, 20, 4.

lene.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, inscriptions<sup>12</sup> and medals<sup>13</sup> prove that there were, under Herod even, and at any rate after him, princes of the name of Lysanias, who with the title of Tetrarch High Priest governed Abilene. It is of one of these and not of their ancestor, dead sixty years, that St. Luke<sup>14</sup> speaks when he seeks to determine the date of the preaching of John the Baptist.

These countries, in reality, formed only an accidental appendage of Palestine. They counted, indeed, many thousands of Jews among their Syrian or Arabian inhabitants, but these representatives of the people of God were lost in the vast multitude of heterogeneous populations which Herod had attached to his crown. In fact, all these peoples were to have no connection with the religious movement of which Israel was to be the scene and the source of propagation. They were but the rough and bitter shell

<sup>11</sup> *Antiq.*, xv, 10, 1. This was judiciously remarked by Suskind, *Symb. ad illust. Evang.*, part i, p. 21; part iii, p. 23 *et seq.*

<sup>12</sup> As far back as 1737, Pococke had read on the ruins of Abila an inscription reproduced in Bockh and Franz, *Corp. Inscr. Græc.*, t. iii, Berlin, 1853, No. 4521, wherein a certain Nympheus, a freedman of the tetrarch Lysanias, recalled that he had erected the Temple and laid out the neighbouring gardens in honour of the two Lords Augustus and of their house. The formula τῶν Κυρίων Σεβαστῶν can date back no farther than the epoch when Tiberius was associated in the Empire, the year 12 A.D., and very probably the tetrarch mentioned in the inscription was the Lysanias of St. Luke. In 1851 M. de Saulcy discovered at Baalbek the fourth fragment of another inscription, two parts of which had been read by Pococke and a third by Brocchi, then later studied by Hogg and Renan. It treats of a "monument erected by the daughter of . . . to Zenodoras (successor or predecessor) of Lys(anias), the tetrarch, and to Lys(anias) and to the sons . . ." In whatever way we may restore this text, it is evident that it supposes a line or dynasty of Lysanias.

<sup>13</sup> We have coins bearing on the one side a crowned head and on the reverse Minerva standing with the inscription: ΛΥΣΑΝΕΙΟΥ [ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ] ΚΑΙ ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΩΣ. Cf. Sestini, *Lettere and dissert. Numism.*, t. vi, pl. 2, fig. 8; Lenormant, *Trésor de Numism.*, Paris, 1849, p. 116-117, pl. lvi.

<sup>14</sup> Thus, after long reproaching this Evangelist with having made a man reign sixty years after his death, certain ill-disposed critics have been obliged to acknowledge with Renan, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscript.*, 1870, part ii, p. 80, not only that St. Luke is absolutely correct, but also that Josephus, quoted against him, needs him to explain his contradictory texts.

that enclosed the privileged fruit whose heavenly savour was to gladden all mankind.

It was otherwise with Peræa, which, extending from the Hieromax to the Arnon, and from the Jordan to the desert, had always belonged to Palestine. Although, on its eastern confines, Gerasa <sup>15</sup> and Philadelphia, the ancient capital of the sons of Ammon, have preserved for us, in their ruins, which have withstood the storms of eighteen centuries, testimony of their idolatrous habits and pagan customs, there is no doubt that the country remained at all times profoundly Jewish. Gadara, with its hot springs and its hillsides dotted with tombs; Pella, the refuge of the primitive Christians during the wars of the Jews; Hesebon, prettily situated amid its beautiful fountains; Betharam or Livias, which Antipas wished to make the capital of the land beyond the Jordan; Machærus, the stern fortress whence Herod surveyed the ever-threatening Arabs, may, indeed, have sheltered some few pagans, but the law of Moses still flourished there in all its vigour and even, as we shall see, with all its susceptibilities. The influence of the Holy City was too immediate for it to be otherwise, and, moreover, all things served to remind the people of Peræa that they were sons of Israel and members of the beloved people of God.

For, the land of Galaad, with its forests of green oak, pine, and wild pistachio-tree, had been the fatherland of Elias the Thesbite, the most wonderful man, in the energy of his character and the power of his miracles, that Israel had produced. The twelve tribes had of old passed through the Amorrhæan defiles when they were advancing to the conquest of the promised land. Mount Phogor had heard Balaam, in spite of himself, blessing the armies he had

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Selah Merrill's picturesque description of Gerasa, p. 281-284.

meant to curse; and finally from the summit of Nebo, where he died, Moses seemed yet to be overlooking his people and to be promising his protection to the faithful observers of his law. The sons of Ruben and of Gad, as in the times of the patriarchs, always continued to raise their numerous flocks, and willingly seized arms to defend themselves against an enemy, or to appropriate the rich pasture lands that nature placed in their way. Then, those Bedouins, of fierce passions and contemplative souls, came back to their tents, and with their families devoted themselves to a faithful observance of the religion of their fathers, in obedience to the prescriptions which Jehovah, through Moses and the prophets, had sent down to Israel.

On the other side of the Jordan, between Galilee on the north and Judea on the south, was a small, distinct nation which took its name from the country it inhabited. Entirely closed in, as it was, by its geographical position and its political bonds in the midst of the most ardent Judaism, Samaria was completely beyond the pale of the religion of the Israelites.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the distinction between Jew and Samaritan was more pronounced than between Jew and pagan. To a Jew a Samaritan, full of impurities, falsehood, and infamy, was incapable of testifying in matters of justice, unworthy to adore Jehovah, and so deeply corrupt that, by contact with him, all things became as filthy even as the flesh of swine. He was the official and living representative of Satan, and to say of any man that he was a Samaritan was equivalent to accusing him of being the agent of the evil spirit. In revenge, the Samaritans let pass no opportunity to make themselves disagreeable to the Jews. Such was the abusive treatment

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Juynboll, *Comment. in Hist. Gent. Samarit.* (1846), Lugd. Batav.; Gesenius, *Theolog. Samarit.*, Halae (1822); Langen, *Das Judenthum in Palest.*, Freib. (1866).



that they heaped upon pilgrims passing through their country that intercourse between Galilee and Judea could be had only by the longer and more difficult route through Peræa. Not content with the erection of a temple on Mount Garizim to rival that of Jerusalem, and the establishment of a schismatic priesthood, they boldly disputed the authority of the Sacred Books which Israel revered. They accepted only the Pentateuch, and claimed sole possession of the only true edition. As frequently as possible they stirred up trouble on Jewish solemnities. At times they would scatter human bones in the Temple of Jerusalem to desecrate it; at other times they kindled false signals on their mountain-tops to deceive the Jews of the Dispersion as to the precise moment when the paschal moon commenced. In a word, they neglected no occasion on which they could exact revenge for the deep contempt their neighbours manifested for them.

The reason for this contempt must be sought in the very origin of this little nation. The Samaritans were for the greater part descendants of an idolatrous, usurping race. If there yet flowed in their veins any drop of Israelite blood, it was the blood of wretched apostates. After the tribes of the kingdom of Israel had been dragged into captivity, the Assyrian monarch, Salmanasar, or more probably his successor, Sargon, resolved to repopulate the rich mountains of Ephraim. Thither came to establish themselves successive colonies from Babylon, with their pagan customs and their false gods. At first they inspired horror; but, gradually, the few, scattered children of Israel who had escaped the snares of the conquerors by concealment in the mountains, became accustomed to the presence of these usurpers, and finally allied themselves and mingled with them. Hence there arose a mixed race which instituted a religion as hybrid as itself. They adored Jehovah,

but they surrounded Him with idols brought from abroad. Nothing more was needed to make them an abomination in the sight of true Jews. Through the establishment, by Manasses, an excommunicated priest, of a worship on Mount Garizim to rival that of Jerusalem, the estrangement became complete. Enemies may embrace each other sometimes, rivals never. They continued to live implacable adversaries, often slaves of the same master, but at no time brothers in the same fatherland.

And yet they were nearer to God than the pagans. Jesus has clearly defined their moral situation with regard to truth and to the kingdom of heaven. He places them between the Jews and the Gentiles. As He said, the good tidings were to come first to the children of Israel, thence to Samaria, and finally to the Gentiles. The Samaritans, a mingling of two races and of two ideas, seem to Him to be a middle term between Judaism and paganism. At once Israelites and strangers, He nevertheless declares them to be strangers<sup>17</sup> rather than Israelites.

However, on more than one occasion, the Samaritans did not hesitate to pass for true sons of Israel.<sup>18</sup> It may be that they were moved to claim this glorious privilege by the great biblical memories in the midst of which they lived.

On Ebal and Garizim, the two central mountains of Samaria, the twelve tribes, in olden times, divided into two choirs, had in alternate verses cursed the transgressors and blessed the observers of the law of God. Since those times rugged Ebal seemed to have remained barren, as if it bore the marks of the imprecations that went down from its summit. Garizim, on the contrary, the Mountain of

<sup>17</sup> Jesus, speaking of the grateful leper, calls him a stranger, ἀλλογενής. He was a Samaritan.

<sup>18</sup> *St. John* iv, 12; *Ant.*, xi, 8, and ix, 14.

Benediction, has retained a most smiling and picturesque appearance. Between these two mountains Sichem was built, as ancient as the patriarchs. There stood Moreh, Abraham's forest of turpentine-trees; and there even yet was Jacob's well. In this place the ancients of the people had assembled to receive the last counsel of the dying Josue. Beneath these walls was organised, in national assembly, the schism of the ten tribes. Before the captivity it had been a Levitical city; after the return from Babylon it became the centre of the Samaritan worship. A short distance to the north, Samaria, built by Amri, recalled the glories and the woes of the kings of Israel, for whom it had long been a place of residence. Twice razed and rebuilt, it was quite flourishing under Herod, who called it Sebaste (Augusta) to please Augustus, his protector. To the extreme south below Siloh, which had sheltered the tabernacle, Bethel had become in turn the house of God, under Jacob, and the house of crime with Jeroboam and his golden calf. Finally, in the north, on the harmonious, wooded ridges of Carmel, which seems to repose majestically amid the waves of the Mediterranean, there still survive all the memories of Elias, the dreaded censor of the faithless kings, the prophet of Israel. Here, for a long time, lived this man of God, coming forth, or remaining in concealment, inflicting lightning-like blows of most terrible and most unexpected force. They wondered if he were not to rise again ere long, and to come down once more to re-establish the rights of their unheeded Jehovah.

Higher up began the famous plain of Esdraelon, and with it Galilee. The latter comprised the four ancient cantons, Issachar and Zabulon in the lower part, Aser and Nephthali in the upper. Its name, Galil, signifying circle, was applied at first only to the circle of the twenty northern cities ceded by Solomon to Hiram, king of Tyre, in

requital of the timber given by him for the construction of the Temple. The Israelite monarch yielded this country the more readily, since it was peopled almost solely by Gentiles. Hence its ordinary designation: Galilee of the nations.<sup>19</sup> During the captivity these Gentiles, who dwelt about Cedes, speedily invaded the cantons of Issachar and Zabulon, which were richer than the other two, and, the circle of pagans thus becoming more extended, the whole country took the name of Galilee. Later on, the Machabees,<sup>20</sup> in their patriotic mission of beating back these invaders within their original confines and of restoring the weight of power to the Jewish race, made no change in this name. Besides, even after their victory, Cedes, Thabor, Gabbata, Scythopolis were for a long time in the possession of the Phœnicians, the Syrians, and the Arabs. Hence the many foreign influences brought to bear on the customs and even on the language of this country.

Sephoris, Zabulon, Ptolemaïs, in their buildings and in the life of their inhabitants, bore great resemblance to Tyre, Sidon, and Berytus. Tiberias, the capital of all Galilee, was an absolutely Greek city.<sup>21</sup> This promiscuous intercourse caused the Jews of Galilee to be looked upon as mongrels by their brethren of Judea. Their language replete with barbarous neologisms, their vitiated accent—for they confounded the gutturals by a faulty conformation of the mouth—their minds but poorly educated, gave them an appearance of real inferiority. Those in Jerusalem treated them as good, simple peasants, a ready object of their ridicule. And yet they were a fine, strong race, faithful to God and to their masters, brave in war and industrious in peace.

The country they dwelt in was beautiful and rich. It

<sup>19</sup> *Is.* ix, 1; *I Mach.* v, 15; *St. Matt.* iv, 15.

<sup>20</sup> *I Mach.* v, 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ant.*, xiii, 5, 4.

was divided into two quite different belts. The first, called Upper Galilee, covered with rocky mountains, but green and well wooded, was the less fertile and the more poorly peopled. Brigands and outlawed rebels readily sought a refuge there in the many caves cut out by nature. The other belt, called Lower Galilee, was ribbed with alternate hills and valleys. It was like those graceful country-sides seen within the embrace of the outer chains of the Alps. The pastures, the grain-fields, and the vineyards, the plantations of olive, fig, and pomegranate trees diversified these places the more as they were limned out harmoniously beneath a radiant sky and amid the softest shades of colour. One felt that nature had been pleased to fulfil the blessings that Jacob and Moses had pronounced on Aser and Zabulon.<sup>22</sup> The region about the Lake of Genesareth was one of extreme fertility; there all the fruits of the most torrid countries could grow to maturity.

Moreover, the Galilean worked his lands intelligently, and all needless commodities were transported to Phœnicia. The highway from the sea traversed the country. From Damascus it stretched on to Ptolemaïs, passing through Capharnaum, Tiberias, Nazareth, and Sephoris. The easy outlet it afforded for commerce increased the wealth of the country manifold. Hence resulted the extreme prosperity of some of the cities on the shores of Lake Genesareth,<sup>23</sup> and the great population of this small country. If we can trust Josephus, there were in Galilee no less than three millions of people.<sup>24</sup>

There was some reason, then, for our saying that this province was the most flourishing of all Palestine, and especially so when we consider the patriotism and the religious sentiment that filled the depths of these brave,

<sup>22</sup> *Gen.* xlix; *Deut.* xxxiii.

<sup>23</sup> *St. Matt.* xi, 21; *St. Luke* x, 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Bell. Jud.*, iii, 3.

peasant natures. Accustomed to fatigue from childhood, they readily left the plough to take up the sword; and Josephus, as well as Tacitus, attests that they were incomparable soldiers. Indeed the ground beneath their feet told only of the glorious struggles of the past. This famous plain of Esdraelon and of Jezrael had been the scene of the combats of Gedeon against the Madianites, of Saul against the Philistines, and of Achab against the Syrians. It was there that King Josias had fallen beneath the shafts of the bowmen of Pharaoh Nechao. The Cison, which traverses the plain on the west, had often had its waters reddened with human blood:<sup>25</sup> it was the river of battles; while to the east, Bethsan, Harod, Bethsetta, Thenac, Mageddo, Jezrael formed at Gelboe a circle of bloody memorials. The north, too, bore traces of glorious contests, and Hasor, Haroseth, Cedec recalled the exploits of the sons of Israel. Little, then, was required to excite this people whose courage was sustained by fifteen strong places, and to transform it into a valiant army to vindicate its national independence. In consequence its ardent patriotism had often been abused by being led into most disastrous enterprises.

The Galilean was attached to the religion of Moses from the very depths of his being. He allowed no great feast to pass without going up to Jerusalem with his caravans to offer up his devotions. He frequented the synagogues and listened to the doctors with most profound respect. He was less narrow than the inhabitants of Jerusalem. His intercourse with the Gentiles had somewhat broadened his piety and his ideas. His upright, generous nature had not been corrupted either by excessive civilisation or by religious superstition, the usual danger of a restless and

<sup>25</sup> *Judges v, 21.*

diseased generation. Content to follow Moses and the prophets, he instinctively rejected all that an absurd casuistry might seek to subjoin thereto.

Judea, properly so called, was a land moved by theological discussions in a quite different manner. Its people, extremely jealous in the practice of their religion, were, in reality, farther from the ancient faith of the patriarchs than were the peasants of Galilee. True moral and supernatural life is quickly lost when closed up within an exaggerated and overwhelming ritualism. We shall see how few favourable elements this eminently Jewish centre afforded for the work of the divine manifestation; and yet to it was consigned not only the guarding of the grandest memorials of Judaism, but also the special function of official instruction. In this country were located the Holy City, the Temple, the High-Priesthood.

It would require too much space to recount the many celebrated names connected with this principal province, on which the three others all depended. In the north, as you go from east to west, is Jericho, the city of palms and roses. It had once been destroyed by the victorious tribes, and then rebuilt; and later on beautified by Herod, it was now the splendid rival of the most beautiful cities of the Orient. The caravans which passed through the city, and the balsam cultivated there, augmented its prosperity. Maspha, Gabaon had witnessed the prayers of the great servants of God. To the west the beautiful plain of Sephela had been the scene of the heroic struggle of the people of God against the Philistines. 'There lay the valley of Aïalon, where Josue bade the sun to stay its course, that Israel might have time to complete the destruction of the Amorrheans. To the south of Zara were the vineyards of Thamnatha and the ravines where Samson displayed his strength and executed his terrible stratagems against the

Philistines. In the valley of the turpentine-trees, David, the youthful, red-haired shepherd, had vanquished the giant Goliath; and, later, at Modin, Mathathias had sounded in the ears of his sons the cry of independence, when he wrote out the rights of conscience and of the God of Israel in the blood of renegades and tyrants. Farther to the south, in the midst of barren, rugged mountains, like an oasis in the desert, stood Bethlehem-Ephrata, with its memories and its hopes. Near by, Rachel, the mother of the favoured tribe, had died in giving to the world her second son, Benjamin. The stone monument that Jacob had raised above her grave recalled it to passers-by. Its vales had seen Ruth the Moabitess, grandmother of David, gleaning the wheat and barley after Booz's reapers; and, finally, within its walls, the Virgin of the prophecy was to give birth to the promised Son. The patriarchs, whose bones reposed but a few leagues away in the caves of Hebron, had often hailed His time; Amos, the Shepherd of Thecue, had foretold Him with all the other prophets, and the whole nation awaited Him.

One sect here encountered alone and almost discouraged, which deserves to be ranked among the social and religious elements of this epoch, seemed to be a stranger to these hopes; it was the sect of the Essenians. Seeking within themselves the principle of the moral restoration of mankind, they withdrew from the world and located in the barren, desolate mountains of Juda, near the western shore of the Dead Sea. "A nation," says Pliny the naturalist, "solitary and remarkable among all others, they lived without women, without love, without money, with no companionship save that of the palm-trees. Each day they multiplied and were reproduced; for there were many received who, weary of life and borne away on the winds of adversity, came and sought to share their existence. Thus



a nation can subsist quite long, even when there is no generation. The regret that men have of their past life is a moral principle as prolific as marriage, and suffices to produce a people.”<sup>26</sup> Following closely the disciples of Pythagoras and the Stoics, these devout men demonstrate what Judaism was capable of producing in lofty spirituality and in heroic virtues, if we may still ascribe to the Israelite religion a sect which suppressed the greater part of the prescriptions of the law, and appeared to have withdrawn from the official religion of Moses. The Essenians rejected all bloody sacrifices, and, as they never visited the Temple in Jerusalem, they established a religion which had nothing in common with that of Israel. Their religious system seemed to be inspired by the dualism which we find in all the theogonies of the East. For them matter was a principle of evil. They therefore had a horror of all coarse pleasures and particularly of marriage. They hoped that, having avoided all contact with the impure, their souls, after bearing the burden of the body, might return to that subtile ether whence they had first emanated. Beyond the ocean were the blessed islands, the dwelling-place of the just. In the meantime they softened the hardships of the present life by prayer, by manual labour, and by the most cordial fraternity. Each one, at his initiation

<sup>26</sup> *Hist. Nat.*, v, 17. Besides this passage in Pliny, we must look for more exact information in Josephus, *Bella Jud.*, ii, 8, 12, 13; *Antiq.*, xiii, 5, 9; xv, 10, 4-5; xviii, 1, 2-6; in Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber*, § 22 and 13; *Apologia Ind.*, a fragment transcribed by Eusebius, *Prep. Evang.*, viii, ii; in St. Epiphanius, *Hæres.*, xix, 1, 2; in St. Hippolytus, *Omn. Hær. Repet.*, liv, ix, § 18-28. Among the moderns see Clemens, *De Essenorum Moribus*, and Keim, *Hist. de Jésus de Nazara*, vol. i, p. 365, of the English edition; Lucius, *Der Essenismus* (1881); Friedlander, *Zur Entstehungsgesch. des Christentums* (1894). It is very remarkable that Jesus, so often at issue with Pharisees and Sadducees, never mentioned the Essenians, who were, however, on many dogmatic and moral points, opposed to the Gospel. The reason is, perhaps, because the Essenians, shut up in their solitude, never mingled in the popular movement provoked by John the Baptist and the Messiah.

into this religious association, gave up his fortune, and pledged in advance the product of his daily work. The community of goods was perfect. They refused all communion with the common Jews, but willingly brought up the children confided to their care. All distinction of birth, fortune, or rank was suppressed and the most absolute equality observed. Strict oaths bound them in a kind of powerful fraternity or secret society with an initiation in three degrees. Notwithstanding their piety and their virtues, they might easily bring into social life an element of trouble and discord, but happily they rarely quitted their solitude, and readily left to the Holy City the work of effecting the religious progress of the entire nation.

Jerusalem, in fact, was the central point not only of the province, but also of all Judaism, both in Palestine and throughout the world. To this city the hearts of all Israelites converged. Happy was he who could visit Sion, the City of God; yet happier he who dwelt there. It was there that Jehovah appeared to His people and gave ear to suppliants. From its walls, according to the prophets, the religious revolution was to advance to encompass the world. Providentially named, from its etymology, the *City of Peace*, its destiny was to achieve, as the Romans feared, but without violence and with the most inexplicable success, the conquest of the universe.

At the end of a neck of land detached from the mountains of Judea, toward the east, Jerusalem (perhaps the ancient Salem of Melchisedech) was built, as it were, on an isthmus surrounded by ravines.<sup>27</sup> The site itself, sheltered by the neighbouring heights, was a mountain divided into three hills of unequal elevation. The highest was Mount Sion to the southwest. David had captured it from the

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Olshausen, *Zur Topogr. d. A. Jerusalem* (Kiel, 1883); Spiess, *Das Jerusalem des Josephus* (Berlin, 1881).

Jebusites. The most populated, since it served as the chief portion of the city, was Acra,<sup>28</sup> to the northeast of Sion; it lay in the form of a crescent. The most famous, because of the Temple which almost wholly occupied it, was Moriah. Simon Machabees razed the citadel of Antiochus and filled in the valley which separated Acra from Moriah, so that these two heights now formed but one,<sup>29</sup> and the Temple thus commanded the city proper. Except on the north, the side toward Bezetha, *the new town*, Jerusalem had the appearance of an impregnable city. Two deep ravines,<sup>30</sup> the valley of the Cedron on the east and that of Hinnon on the west, enclosed it with a girth of natural fortifications, which the hand of man had considerably augmented. The ramparts, built in zigzag form on precipitous cliffs, overhung abysses, while immense square or octagonal towers, provided with parapets and embattled, protected the more accessible points.

Numerous gates, which took their names ordinarily from their situation or from their respective uses, furnished passage to the hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants<sup>31</sup> who peopled the city, and to the many pilgrims who came to visit it. Thus, as Josephus says, Jerusalem, at the epoch of which we speak, still presented the aspect of a great and beautiful city. Doubtless it had no longer the splendour in which the Babylonian invasion had found it, but, if less majestic, the monuments that Grecian architecture had everywhere erected were still most remarkable.

<sup>28</sup> It received this name from the citadel built there by Antiochus Epiphanes.

<sup>29</sup> Hence the expression of Tacitus: "Duos colles immensum editos claudabant muri." (*Hist.*, v, 11.)

<sup>30</sup> A third, the Tyropœon, or valley of the cheesemakers, separated Moriah from Sion, from the fountain of Siloe, in the Cedron, as far as the rampart Millo on the northeast corner of Sion and near the platform named Xystus.

<sup>31</sup> Hecateus of Abdera supposes that, in the time of Alexander the Great, Jerusalem had 120,000 inhabitants. (Cf. Josephus, *Contra Apion*, l., i, ch. 22.)

The palaces of Helena of Adiabene, of the Magistrates, of the Sanhedrim, in the lower city,<sup>32</sup> were second in magnificence only to Herod's palace, built on the northern slope of Mount Sion. Josephus tells wonderful things of this latter palace. The most precious marbles, gold, silver, all were scattered there in profusion. The gardens, the graceful colonnades, the bronze fountains with delightful jets of water, recalled the luxury of the Orient in its full development. This royal dwelling, enclosed by walls thirty cubits high, was overtopped by the first surrounding wall, and protected by three towers of prodigious size and admirable form. Herod had built them of immense blocks of white marble. They bore the names of the three persons whom the monarch had most dearly loved: a friend Hippius, a brother Phasael, both of whom had perished gloriously in war, and a wife Mariamne, whom he had killed through his excess of love. The tower of Psephinos, built more to the north and outside of the second enclosure, alone could rival them. The Asmonean princes, too, had left to the Holy City their magnificent palace as a memorial of their glory and of their virtues; but the dwelling of these great patriots had been transformed by Herod into a stronghold, and had become the guard-house of their foreign conquerors. It bore the name of Marcus Antonius. Herod's base flattery had thus gone so far as to substitute a memorial of tyrants for that of liberators, and from the heights of its battlements Rome could overlook the Temple and place her iron hand on the very heart of Israel to regulate its beatings.

To look upon this group of fortified towers, of formidable ramparts, of palaces guarded like citadels, one might have taken Jerusalem for a city of war. But this war-

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Josephus, *B. J.*, i., vi, 6-3.

like preparation, the result of untoward events, was the prudent work of oppressors. In reality Jerusalem was still the Holy City where by tradition and by instinct the thoughts of religion must naturally take precedence over all the rest. The Temple, royal and majestic, soared above its head as Jehovah reigned over its ideas. To it were turned all eyes and all hearts, and this people, who on its own account suffered patiently the humiliation of a foreign yoke, was ungovernable and capable of any martyrdom when insult was offered to the house or to the worship of God.

Seated on Moriah, in resplendent beauty like an immense block of snow, says Josephus,<sup>33</sup> the Temple was the visible sign of the lasting alliance that bound God to His people.<sup>34</sup> There Heaven seemed to reach down to earth, and believers came with eagerness to pray and to offer sacrifice. From the Holy of Holies (*Debîr* or *Kodesh Hakkodashim*), the thrice-holy sanctuary where the High Priest alone entered at rare intervals, down to the Court of the Nations, where the uncircumcised might penetrate, it was easy to discern the regular series of cycles open to the various degrees of religious perfection. Thus, the proselytes from the nations were free to enter the lower court beneath the rich colonnade, and the royal portico of the first enclosure; but they could advance no farther. A barrier with inscriptions in Greek and in Latin cut in the marble held them at a distance, as if they were an unclean brood. Notwithstanding

<sup>33</sup> The construction of the courts formed a square 180 metres on each side. The Temple proper was covered outside with slabs of marble and inside with plates of gold. The details with regard to its beauty, given by Josephus and the rabbis, prove that, if it was far from equalling the work of Solomon, it was nevertheless a wonder.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. for a description of the Temple: Tobler, *Topographie de Jérusalem*, p. 459 *et seq.*; Edersheim, *The Temple*, etc. (London, 1874); Ferguson, *The Temple of the Jews* (London, 1878); an interesting article by the Père Aucler, S. J., in the *Revue Biblique*, 1er Avril, 1898; *le Temple de Jérusalem*, by M. de Vogüé, 1864.

his most lofty aspirations, unless he were a son of Abraham, no one could come near to God. The second court or platform was open to Jews alone, and here again was made another distinction. As woman seemed incapable of advancing beyond a low degree of the religious life, she was relegated to a special enclosure. Then man in turn was kept at a distance and could behold the sacred ceremonies only from afar. He was forbidden the interior parvis or upper court, which was reserved to the priests and Levites. And, finally, even the latter were deemed unworthy of admission within the Holy of Holies. So great an honour was the sole right of the High Priest.

These various classifications, the solemnity of the worship, the incredible magnificence of the edifice, the scrupulous regularity in the ceremonial rites, the pious education of the children, the antique national traditions, the fear of Jehovah, everything contributed to sustain a constant current of religious fervour in Israel. In spite of all that had been done to destroy it, the great authority, living and unresisted, among the people, was yet the religious authority, and the conquerors saw that to keep this nation beneath the yoke they must needs lay hands on the High Priest and select in their own interests the heads of the sacerdotal hierarchy.

Not only in the synagogues did the Jew discuss the religious question. All the livelong day, in the public squares, where old men sat at rest, and at evening on the terrace of his home, in the midst of the noisy banquets where relatives and friends were joined together, he loved to lose sight of his material affairs and of the misfortunes of the times, and, as a moralist, to discuss the law of Jehovah. Indeed, the law of Jehovah was all in all for him, since it regulated not only his religious life, but even his whole physical life, and, by strange innovations, had come to entwine his

body itself in a most confining network of ceremonial prescriptions.

At this epoch, in fact, exterior religion had greatly developed. A sect of extreme rigourists, the Pharisees,<sup>35</sup> were making a deep impression on the multitude by imposing new and most complicated observances. Begotten during the sanguinary persecutions of Antiochus, this sect, later on, modified its rôle, which from the beginning had been so devotedly patriotic. When its chiefs no longer held first place in the popular assemblies, they exaggerated their religion in order to retrieve that which events and public opinion had taken from them. In their opinion, there was, in this world, only the Jewish people, and in the Jewish people nothing but the law of Moses. He who was not circumcised, nor a child of Abraham, was not a man, and beyond the confines of Palestine there stretched a degraded world whose atmosphere was enough to contaminate a true Israelite. Everything was bad that was not in the law of Moses, and to the revelation of Sinai even God Himself could make no addition; and this law—they expounded it, they interpreted it with a subtlety that encouraged every superstition and concealed a boundless hypocrisy. They multiplied their additions, as useless as they were ridiculous, until they completely transformed the divine law. Thus was the great principle of charity toward God and toward men supplanted in practice by a series of tyrannical and puerile observances, such as frequent ablutions, fasts, tithes, strained attitudes, amulets, and divers kinds of vestments.

<sup>35</sup> From *Pharusch*, commentator, or *Parusch*, separated, sectary. This was the name commonly given them, but they called themselves *Haberim*, companions, or members of a fraternity especially devoted to a strict observance of the law. Cf. Wellhausen, *Die Pharasäer und die Sadducäer* (Greifswald, 1874), and Hausrath, *Le Temps de Jésus*, vol. i, 3me partie; Cohen, *Les Pharisiens* (Paris, 1877).

To this sect of Pharisees belonged, in general, the Scribes, Sopherim, "men of Scripture" or "the Book," whose lives were spent in translating and expounding the Bible.<sup>36</sup> It was after Esdras or Nehemias, when the prophets were disappearing, that the class of the Scribes, open to whoever desired to busy himself with the study and observance of the law in its slightest details, assumed considerable importance. They were not always of the tribe of Levi, but they formed the complement of the priesthood which, confined to the Temple, did not enter directly enough into the private life of the people to insure full respect for the law. Therefore the people showed themselves desirous of hearing and of questioning them. But they responded ill to the devout confidence thus offered them. Instead of rousing again among the masses, by means of serious and substantial instruction, the strong religion of the ancient Israelites, they wasted their time in a barren discussion of rabbinical traditions.

The most celebrated among them, Hillel,<sup>37</sup> to whom, of late by fits and starts, attempts have been made to grant the halo of initiator, which would overwhelm him, did little more than his masters, Shemaja and Abtalion, called

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Vitringa, *Le Synagog. Vet.*; Keil, *Archäologie*, § 132 *et seq.*; Gfrörer, *Jahrhundert des Heils.*; Schürer, *Gesch. d. Jud.*, ii, p. 298.

<sup>37</sup> It must be observed for the sake of those who are astonished at the little space devoted to Jesus in the writings of Josephus, that Hillel receives even less, since he is not even mentioned. Ewald, in his *History of Israel*, vol. vi, pp. 9-36; Farrar, in his *Life of Christ*, vol. ii, pp. 453-460, have collected the principal details of his life contained in the Talmud. We must admit that even the virtuous traits attributed to this illustrious rabbi are somewhat puerile, and from one point of view are not at variance with the general tone of the Talmud. As for the maxims, some indeed bear a great resemblance to the Gospel; but compiled, as they were, long after, at a time when our Sacred Books were already widely spread, they certainly might have been more Christian than Jewish. Delitzsch, in a short but quite interesting work (*Jesus und Hillel*, Erlangen, third edition, 1879), has come to the following conclusion: "The tendencies of the one are as different from the tendencies of the other as Heaven is from earth. Hillel prepares casuistry for his people; Christ founds a religion for mankind."



“Sameas” and “Pollio” in Josephus.<sup>38</sup> His mild disposition, his love of knowledge, the simplicity of his morals, and his other virtues insured him the consideration of his contemporaries; it may be, even, that he succeeded in discovering more than once deep in his soul some few moral utterances that do him honour; as a final result, however, his teaching effected no change in the current that was hurrying on the rabbinism of his time to the extinction of every true religious emotion.

Beside him, Shammai, his adversary, Simon, his son, and Gamaliel, his grandson, employed their authority in enforcing more than ever the narrowest theological opinions, maintaining and developing the prescriptions of an absurd ritualism. All together, and as if to demonstrate once more that the Sacred Books of Israel were indeed the product of divine inspiration and not of national genius, they ended by giving forth that poor result of human thought, the *Talmud*,<sup>39</sup> which so few men have since had the courage to peruse, relegating to the Jews alone the work of admiring it. It would seem that Providence suffered the late compilation of this monstrous work only the better to impress upon mankind in what pitiable surround-

<sup>38</sup> *Ant.*, xiv, 9, 4; xv, 1, 10, 4.

<sup>39</sup> The *Talmud*—the word comes from *lamad*, to learn—or rather the *Talmuds*, since there are two of them—are commentaries of the *Mischna*, written under the name of *Ghemara*, Complement, the one at Sura and called the *Talmud* of Babylon, the other at Tiberias and called the *Talmud* of Jerusalem. The *Mischna* itself was the code of oral traditions defining and developing the law of Moses. Compiled by Akiba at first and later by Judas the Holy, toward the end of the second century of our era, it was called the *Second Law*. The two *Talmuds*, that of Babylon about 525 and that of Jerusalem about 350, were the *Third Law*. The six books of the *Mischna*, written in Hebrew, treat: (1) of agriculture; (2) of the feasts; (3) of women; (4) of damages; (5) of holy things; (6) of purifications. The *Talmud* or *Ghemara* of Babylon is a commentary of these in 60 vols., in 8vo, written in Aramean. That of Jerusalem, composed in the same language, has only 12 vols. They were printed for the first time in Venice, in 1520. The most recent editions are those of Berlin (1860-67).

ings, how unprovided for, with no master to prepare Him, Jesus had appeared.

Thus, then, to this unfortunate people who asked for bread, the Doctors of Israel offered stones. It were easy, however, to cite before the eyes of the multitude the examples of the patriarchs and of the great servants of God, or to send resounding into their ears the ever-powerful words of the prophets. The rabbis, though, preferred, with self-satisfying vanity, to prove that they knew how many words, or even letters, were contained in each book of the Bible. Mercilessly suppressing the living, moral, sublime side of Scripture, they put forth only useless commentaries or feeble observations.<sup>40</sup> However, as tradition swayed the people with supreme authority, they ended by according capital importance to the glossaries of the ancients; and in this way the innovations of the Pharisees were enforced with the authority of the Decalogue itself. They were so numerous that they regulated the entire social life of the individual and of the family. A man's life was scarcely long enough for him to learn them, which is equivalent to saying that no human force was capable of observing them.

By a violent reaction, therefore, one party, that of the Sadducees, had thrown off all these superstitions, and with them even the old ritualism of the law.<sup>41</sup> These recalctrants suppressed, together with the abuse of the law, the law itself. Examples of this excess on the part of religious reformers are not rare. The human mind is so constituted that it knows no moderation in victory, and quite readily flies out by the gate of error from the place it legitimately

<sup>40</sup> Cf. the *Pirke Aboth*, or The Sayings of the Fathers, and, in general, the entire teaching of the *Talmud*.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ed. Montet, *Essai sur les origines des partis Sadducéen et Pharisien*, etc. (Paris, 1883).

held in the name of truth. The observances of external cult ought not, certainly, to be placed on the footing of the moral law; for they would insensibly supplant it, and man would, in the end, believe that he can be holy through the works with which he surrounds himself, and, at the same time, give himself up to the most detestable passions. But, taking human nature into account, these observances are of real importance, and pride and false theories of philosophy have not suppressed them with impunity.

The Sadducees, ridiculing the prescriptions and the separatist spirit of the Pharisees, became sceptical, worldly, and recalcitrant. They mingled freely with the pagans, fell into their ways of life, and frequented their public amusements. Under these circumstances, their moral sense vanished as speedily as their piety. They lived a soft life, with no rule to restrict them; they denied the immortality of the soul, the existence of spirits, and, in fine, admitted only a God who was Himself subject to chance. Their founder, Sadoc, had said: "Do not separate thyself from the majority." They accepted without a scruple any government that assured them well-being, instead of looking to the preservation of the religion of their fathers. Thus they abandoned the most noble sentiments of true Israelites, a glowing patriotism and confidence in the future of their nation. The majority had identified their interests with those of Herod. They had shamelessly applauded the usurper's success, and after his death, by their flattery they begged the favour of his sons.

Ordinarily they belonged to the wealthy and influential class, for it was not in vain that they approached the representatives of the public power. The Pharisees and Scribes constituted the middle class, though many of them had sprung from the oldest and best families of Israel. Through their hostility to those who governed the coun-

try, they had been unable to find in their intercourse with the supreme authority any means of regaining the fortunes compromised by political events. On this account the people preferred them to the Sadducees, who were disdainful, as are all upstarts, and selfish, like all voluptuaries. Moreover, the Pharisees composed the majority of the party of radicals, who are always the most in favour with the multitude. Again, they carried proselytism to extreme limits. Their emissaries were everywhere from Judea to Galilee, expounding their doctrines in order to attract universal admiration and to recruit new followers.

The synagogues favoured the religious action of zealots in Israel. From the time of the captivity these places of assembly, intended for prayer in common and for religious instruction, had multiplied, and at the time of Jesus Christ they were to be found in almost every place where there were Jews. A college of ancients (Zekenim) administered them, of which a head-master (Rosch-Hakeneset), an officiating priest (Scheliach Cibbour), and an usher (Hazzan) were the regular functionaries. Through these many representatives of its authority the central power of the religious party at Jerusalem passed its instructions to the people,<sup>42</sup> and marked out the stand to be taken on a ground where religion and politics were almost always made identical.

This central power was represented by the Sanhedrim<sup>43</sup> and by the high priest, who ordinarily presided over it. Composed of seventy-one members chosen from the chief priests or the chiefs of the twenty-four sacerdotal classes, from the ancients of the people, and, finally, from the

<sup>42</sup> *Acts ix, 12.* Cf. Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums*, 1, 168; Hausrath, *Zeitgeschichte*, 1, 71-75; Schürer, *Handb. d. Neues., Zeitg.*, p. 464.

<sup>43</sup> *Treatise Sanhedrim*, in Ugolino, *Thes.*, xxv, 1, 302, 339-1312; Derenbourg, *Hist. de la Palestine*, pp. 83-94, 465-468 (Paris, 1867).

Scribes or men of the law, this superior council represented all that survived of truly Jewish and national authority in Israel. After having exercised simultaneously the administrative and the judiciary power, the Sanhedrim, through its own fault, lost its grasp on all. It was the Sanhedrim itself, in fact, that had encouraged the Romans to seize the control of Jewish affairs. These were the circumstances:

We know that the Romans had formerly been implicated in the history of Palestine, on the occasion of the fratricidal struggle which arose between Aristobulus and Hyrcanus. When Rome, who thought herself destined for the conquest of the world, stretched out a helping hand to an ally, she never after quitted his side, and, in the embrace of her dread friendship, she soon stifled him, as a chastisement for having insisted on her intervention. In this way, when Pompey had taken Jerusalem and had invaded the Temple, massacred the priests, and desecrated the Holy of Holies, he stipulated that Hyrcanus, his captive, should never again don a crown, but should bear the title of ethnarch and not of king; that he should pay tribute to the Governor of Syria, and that Palestine should remain under the high protection of the armies of Rome.

Two men, not long after, contributed to the complete subjection of the nation. These were Antipater and his son Herod. Ambitious, crafty, and enterprising, they bought, at the cost of all baseness, the favour of the different masters of Rome, and, relying on the foreigner, with the assurance of their own elevation, they brought about the fall of the Asmonean princes. Herod, more particularly, beheld his efforts crowned with success. At the very moment when his star seemed on the wane, by one of those turns of fortune which an astute politician never lets slip, he caused to fall on his own head the crown he was about to demand from Rome for the young Aristobulus, "for whom," he

said, "he desired only to be prime minister." The armies of the republic came to inaugurate the new king, in the midst of carnage.<sup>44</sup> The massacre was so horrible that Herod himself asked of the Roman general if it was his intention to make him king of a desert. Thus did the foreigner exhaust, little by little, the vital energy of this small but proud and indomitable people. Herod applied himself to the destruction of the two forces which yet remained intact, the royal stock and the Sanhedrim. He therefore, with impunity, poured out to the very last drop all that was left of Asmonean blood, cruelly pursuing it into the bosom of his own family. Finally he massacred the Sanhedrim, after having previously disgraced it. He then re-established it according to his own personal preferences and autocratic designs. He appointed as high priest Hananeel, an obscure Jew, brought back from Babylon. Then having built up his own greatness upon the ruin of every one else, he had but one political rôle to play, and that was to be for Rome and her various rulers the most obsequious of vassals. In honour of those who were his protectors, he built cities and even temples. In their behalf he crushed the people beneath the weight of taxes. At his death he submitted his last will to the approbation of Augustus, as if to declare publicly that he never thought to be more than the foremost subject of Rome in his own kingdom.

His sons judged of their situation in like manner. At the death of their father, Archelaus hastened to Rome to procure ratification of the last will and testament which gave him the throne. Antipas followed him, and Philip arrived there soon after. It was at this time that, by a fatal lack of forethought, the principal chiefs of the true

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Hausrath, par. v, pp. 3-52.

Jewish people interposed between the competitors. They demanded from the Senate the suppression of this Idumæan family, which assumed the useless mission of intermediary between protector and protected. Judea, according to them, was well able to govern itself under the supreme patronage of Rome. Augustus lent a ready ear to all these incriminations, and, in this way, prepared his direct and decisive intervention in the affairs of this country. He was the accepted master of all. It was not among the traditions of the Roman people to refuse provinces which surrendered themselves, since its life was spent in enslaving those that resisted. He therefore awaited, or rather by his manœuvres he hastened the propitious moment when he was to confiscate to his own profit the small nation which, in its inability to govern itself, called for a master; and that moment soon arrived.

Augustus sustained the will of Herod almost wholly; he suppressed only the title of king claimed by Archelaus and replaced it with the qualification of ethnarch.

On their return to their country Philip and Antipas peaceably installed themselves in their tetrarchies.<sup>45</sup> The former furnished an example of moderation in government and of kindness toward his subjects. He reigned for thirty-seven years without trouble, in tranquil obscurity. As he left no family, his provinces of Batania, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Paneas, and Abilene were reunited with Syria, in the year 34 A.D. The latter (Antipas), cruel, impious, and voluptuous, proved himself a worthy son of his father. Peræa and Galilee, which, indeed, he adorned with sumptuous buildings, had much to suffer from his caprices. Caligula requited these injustices by banishing him into Gaul. As for Archelaus, who had possession of Judea,

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Ewald, *Hist. of Israel*, vol. vi, pp. 71-80.

Idumæa, and Samaria, he was in a situation too difficult for him to retain long the place bequeathed him. His father had had to bring into requisition astonishing craftiness and audacity in order to cope with the obstacles constantly thrown up by an uneasy and exasperated people. Archelaus had inherited only his faults. A proud despot, wanting in real value, deep in vice and impiety, he promptly fell before the accusations with which his subjects pursued him. Rome, with a pretence of doing tardy justice to the Jewish people, dispossessed the ethnarch, exiled him to Vienne, in Gaul, and reduced his principality to the state of a Roman province dependent on Syria.<sup>46</sup>

The Jews soon began to suspect that their demands had gained them, not protectors, but oppressors. The census, which was taken under the first governor of Judea, Coponius, while Sulpicius Quirinius was proconsul of Syria, completely destroyed their last illusions.<sup>47</sup> There was no longer any doubt that their autonomy was forever suppressed. The rebellions of the zealots, headed by Judas the Gaulanite and Sadoc the Pharisee, vainly beat against

<sup>46</sup> From the time of Augustus the provinces were divided into *imperial* provinces and *senatorial* provinces. In charge of the former were placed *proprætors* and of the latter *proconsuls*. Both administered justice with the same authority. On the *proprætors* alone devolved the right to command armies and to wage war, to the prejudice of the *proconsuls*, who, under the republic, held this privilege exclusively. These principal governors were chosen from the patrician order. After them came the *procurators*, men of lower extraction. At first they had no other mission in the imperial provinces than to deduct Cæsar's impost, to pay the legions that guarded their district, and to send to their master the surplus of the revenues. Later they gained the rights of *proconsuls*, for, in administering justice, they could condemn to death. This was a somewhat natural consequence of the situation more than once brought about by events. In fact, in a country as yet unsubdued, where the Roman domination was only in part accepted, the executive power must have fallen into the hands of the *procurator*. Thus, while subordinate himself to the imperial legate of Syria, the *procurator* of Judea had power to repress seditions and to terrorise the conspirators by a prompt execution of the guilty.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Hausrath, par. vi, 72-93; Ewald, vol. vi, p. 36 *et seq.*



the Roman Colossus, which laid its sceptre yet more heavily on this new province incorporated in the empire. It is true that Ambivius, Anius Rufus, and Valerius Gratus exercised their authority with moderation, and the country enjoyed a comparative tranquillity; but Pontius Pilate, their successor, in the year 25 A.D., disdained all this caution. Through the storms provoked by his haughty character, and of which he, in the end, became a victim, he accustomed the Jews to bear the Roman yoke, and to look upon themselves as a conquered people.

So that, at the time when the history of the divine manifestation was to commence, not only in Cæsarea, but in the Holy City itself, Roman soldiers were seen parading as masters. Their standards floated from all the strong places in the land. At the entrance of every city tax-gatherers were seated in the name of Rome. Justice was dealt out by the Roman Procurator. He, alone, exercised in Palestine the power of life and death over his wards. The political dissolution of the Jewish people was then complete. Of the three portions that Herod had made of his kingdom, each had a separate master, and there was no bond of union between them, except a humiliating vassalage to Rome, who held directly beneath her hand Judea, the central point of the ancient theocracy. The High-Priesthood was now no more than a spectre, appearing and disappearing at the beck of the procurators. In the year 14, Valerius Gratus had deposed Annas, and within three years had given him four successors, the last of whom, Joseph Caiphas, was of a character sufficiently despicable to merit retention in office for nineteen years. To be sure the people protested against this arbitrary tyranny of the foreigners, and retained for the oldest deposed High Priest all their devotion and respect. Indeed, Annas was for believers always the true pontiff; for, in the Mosaic law, the High-

Priesthood was a life-duty, and if usurpers became high priests in fact, they were not so by right.<sup>48</sup> This disorder, however, was none the less officially sanctioned.

This was the last degree of annihilation to which the unfortunate nation could descend. In the political sphere there were three governors, as St. Luke observes: Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas, and Philip; in the religious sphere, two high priests, one really so in the name of divine law, the other falsely in the name of Roman authority. A more thorough disintegration is hardly conceivable.

And yet, low as he had fallen, Israel still hoped for a glorious resurrection. It is true that if, as the prophets say, good was to result from the very intensity of the evil, he had not much longer to wait; the divine manifestation was fully prepared.

<sup>48</sup> This is probably the simplest explanation of the passage in St. Luke (iii, 2), where two High Priests are named at the same time: Annas and Caiphas.

## DIVISION OF THE WORK

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As seen in the Gospel, the life of the Saviour, brief, brilliant, and eventful, is a sublime drama. Quite naturally then we seek in it the three stages of dramatic action: the introduction, the development of the plot, and the climax. For this reason we divide our work into three principal parts—the early life of Jesus, His public life, and His last days on earth.

In *the early life of Jesus*, following the example of St. Mark and of St. John, we plunge at once into the midst of things. The voice of the Baptist resounds in the desert, and the *Messiah appears in Israel*: this is the subject matter of the first book of the first part.

After thirty years one has a past, and to the narrative of the *retrospective history of the Messiah* we shall devote the second book.

Again, no one undertakes a great work without that *immediate preparation* which may insure success. The third book of the *early life* of Jesus will portray the Messiah in the midst of this moral preparation, and finally introduced to His people by the solemn testimony of John the Baptist.

*The public life*, the second part, the most prolific and the most important in the history of the Saviour, is subdivided also into three books, as it comprises three distinct periods: the period of *general exploration*, the period of *creation in Galilee*, and the period of *struggle in Judea*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This division, which has the advantage of being less superficial than the division by years, follows more scrupulously than the others the order

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In the first book, the period of *general exploration*, we shall see Jesus filled with the sacred fire He has come to enkindle in the world, and, with no fear of human malice, manifesting His Messianic authority by His discourses and His works simultaneously in Galilee, in Judea, and even in Samaria, up to the time when the imprisonment of John the Baptist warned Him of the jealous hate of the Pharisees. This rapid investigation of the general state of minds which He undertakes, not for His own instruction, but to make known the wickedness of some and the comparative justice of others, proves that Galilee is peculiarly worthy of witnessing the birth of the Kingdom of God.

The second book of the *public life* will present Jesus in the period of *creation* establishing His Church in Galilee. In that country the despotism of the Pharisees and of the priests had less influence. Souls there were, moreover, more generous and better disposed. New wine is put into new bottles. During this longest part of His public life, Jesus is to organise, instruct, discipline the new society.

of the Synoptics, preserving at the same time all the order of St. John. In the Synoptics indeed the public ministry of Jesus seems to have only two phases: the first wholly in Galilee, the second wholly in Judea. Some few expressions which have dropped from the pens of the writers of the Synoptics permit us, though hardly if at all, to conclude that they were aware of other visits to Jerusalem which Jesus made besides the last and fatal one. They simply saw, as we see, that Jesus had founded His Church in Galilee, and had afterward solemnly led her to the good fight in Judea. We derive the notion of these two clearly defined periods from their Gospels. The idea of the preliminary period of investigation would be suggested to us by the logic of facts, and we might reasonably have inferred it, even if St. John had not recounted it with all its details. Jesus, on commencing His great work, must have seen, with one general and rapid glance, the ground on which He was to labour. This was natural. The Synoptics lost sight of this, absorbed as they were in the idea of the twofold portrayal in which their pen sought to circumscribe Our Lord's activity. St. John happily supplies the deficiency. We therefore borrow from him exclusively the history of the first period. He will unite again with the Synoptics to complete the history of the remaining periods.

## DIVISION OF THE WORK

He conducts this work with the wisdom of a God, and, exacting from His Church a definite profession of faith, He finds her capable of discovering His glory and of bearing the announcement of His coming ignominy and death.

The third book is devoted to the period of *struggle in Judea*. Since His enemies pursue Him into the mountains of Galilee, He will harden His countenance, according to the expression of St. Luke, and, henceforth relying on His young Church, He will transfer the field of battle into Judea and into the very midst of Jerusalem. He appears in the Holy City on three different occasions. First, unexpectedly during the Feast of the Tabernacles; leaving His adversaries no time to lay their snares, He solemnly proclaims His mission. The second time, He appears with less precaution on the Feast of the Dedication; He then confirms what He had announced on the first occasion. Finally, His third appearance occurs during the Feasts of the last Passover, and takes the form of a solemn entrance into the Holy City. But each one of His public demonstrations is preceded by a journey and followed by a retreat, with the exception of the last, which leads up to the final catastrophe. During these journeys or these days of recollection, Jesus evangelises the country of Northern and Eastern Judea, the frontiers of Samaria, and the villages of Peræa. So that in struggle or in victory the Word of God shall have been heard everywhere throughout the country before the time be come for the supreme expiation and salvation by the Cross.

The third part of the work (Vol. III) tells of the last days of Jesus on earth. It is naturally the most affecting part, since it recounts the threefold event which terminates this wonderful life. The Divine Victim in the hands of His enemies seems to fall asleep in *death*, but He arises again to *life*, and goes to take His place forever in *glory*.

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The first book, *death*, presents to us the beginning of the end, the trial of Jesus, the final catastrophe. The second, *life*, recounts the resurrection, and the several appearances of the risen Jesus. The third, *glory*, perpetuates His eternal triumph in Heaven and on earth.

Such is the general idea of this work.

Once more before I undertake it, I lay down my pen at the feet of my Saviour. I beseech Him to accept my efforts and, while He remembers my good will, to be gracious to my insufficiency.





**PART FIRST**  
**THE EARLIER LIFE OF JESUS**

## BOOK I

### *The Messiah Appears in Israel*

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE PRECURSOR

A NEW PROPHET IN THE DESERT OF JUDEA—THE MIRACULOUS HISTORY OF HIS CHILDHOOD—ZACHARY THE PRIEST AND ELIZABETH HIS WIFE—JOHN, THE PRECURSOR OF THE MESSIAH-KING—THE BENEDICTUS—THE EDUCATION OF THE NEW ELIAS—HIS CHARACTER. (St. Matthew iii, 9; St. Mark i, 4; St. Luke iii, 1, and i, 5-25, 57-80; St. John i, 6-9.)

IN the year 15 of Tiberius Cæsar, and consequently about 780 A.U.C.,<sup>1</sup> a great religious agitation suddenly arose in Palestine. A man from the desert of Judea, whose preaching was as stern as his garb, had sounded the first note of the movement. Like the prophets of old, he wore upon his

<sup>1</sup> We date the reign of Tiberius from the time of his association with the Empire (January, 765), and not from the death of Augustus (August 19, 767). This method of reckoning, the most usual in the East, was followed particularly at Antioch, as is proved by the inscription and the medals mentioned by Wieseler, *Synopse der vier Evangelien*. (See Andrews, *Life of Our Lord*, p. 25, and following.) It makes the ministry of John and the baptism of Jesus coincide with the year 26 A.D. The commentators who date the reign of Tiberius from the death of Augustus suppose that the Evangelist, by this chronological indication, means the beginning of the Baptist's preaching and not the baptism of Jesus.

shoulders a garment of camel's hair, and about his loins a leathern girdle. He drank no wine, for he had taken the Nazarite's vow; and when he did not fast, he was content to live upon locusts and wild honey.<sup>2</sup> His hair and beard had grown unchecked. He might have been about the age of thirty; but solitude had matured him and had rendered singularly powerful a soul filled with the breath of God and certain of its prophetic mission in Israel. The man himself was alone a sermon, and he was right in calling himself a "voice of one crying." His voice shook the desert like the roaring of a lion; crowds hastened to behold this latest prophet, and Josephus<sup>3</sup> agrees with the Evangelists in testifying to the deep and speedy revolution which he worked among the Jewish people.

His name was John. All that we know of his birth and of his first years St. Luke has set down in his Gospel, deriving it, no doubt, from pious family traditions which he gives with their original Aramean colouring.

In the days of King Herod, he says, there was a "priest named Zachary, of the course of Abia."<sup>4</sup> His wife, chosen from the daughters of Aaron, was called Elizabeth. Both were just before God, for they observed faithfully His precepts and ordinances. Yet Elizabeth had always been barren, and both, now advanced in years, had given up all hope of increase around their domestic hearth.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> We still find in the East poor people who live on a particular species of locust. Wild honey is that which the bees deposit in the hollows of the trees or in the fissures of the rocks. It has been wrongly thought that this was the gum that oozes through the bark of certain trees of the desert.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.*, xviii, 5, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Exodus* xxx, 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> According to the Book of *Numbers* viii, 23, the Levites ceased the exercise of their solemn functions when they had completed their fiftieth year. Thereafter they thought it enough to take part in the Temple service in a subordinate capacity. Zachary, therefore, was not altogether an old man. The text of the Gospel means that, having been married a long time, they no longer hoped, as they were growing old, for the children whom they had failed to beget in their youth.

This was a cause of deep chagrin for this pious family; for every Jew looked upon the sterility of his wife as an evidence of Heaven's displeasure. The devoted couple, like Israel, abandoned of God, advanced into old age without consolation and looked forward to a future full of sadness.

Weighed down by these melancholy thoughts, Zachary, with the other priests of the course of Abia,<sup>6</sup> went up one day to Jerusalem to fulfil his weekly service in the Temple. To him fell by lot the most honourable function of the sacrifice, that of offering the sweet-smelling incense in the holy place. This offering, in the law of Moses, was made twice each day, morning and evening, coinciding with the public prayer of which it was the official symbol. Providence, in directing the choice by lot, desired, no doubt, to reward the devotion of a faithful servant, but meant, in particular, to prepare for him a most consoling and miraculous surprise.

The pious sentiments and patriarchal virtues of Zachary had withheld him from having anything in common with the impotent and hypocritical priesthood which at that time encumbered the Temple. His soul, full of faith, like that of a true Israelite, lived in touch with God, wonderfully well disposed for the reception of a sign from Heaven. To come into direct relation with the upper world, it is of no little importance that man should separate himself from earth in his customary aspirations. It is for him

<sup>6</sup> David had distributed the priests into twenty-four classes, which in turn performed the service from one Sabbath to another. The class of Abia was the eighth. (*I Par.*, xxiv, 10; Josephus, *Ant.*, vii, 15, etc.) Since we know that on the ninth of the fifth month of the year of Rome 823, or on the fourth of August of the year 70 of our era, the day on which the Temple was destroyed, the first class was in service, some have endeavoured to reckon back to the year in which Jesus was probably born, in order to find the month wherein John was conceived. But the result of this calculation varies according as they admit for the date of Our Saviour's birth the year 749 or 750 of Rome. We ought to know not only the time from which to date back, but also the point at which to cease our calculations.

by recollection and by piety to enter into this spiritual commerce which at the proper moment will take on a sensible form and be transformed into a visible though supernatural communication.

While the people, prostrate in the sacred parvis, prayed with pious fervour, Zachary advanced, censer in hand, thinking only of the priestly function he was about to fulfil. When the soul of the priest thus becomes the sympathetic interpreter of a suppliant assembly, it really dilates and assumes the proportions of the public needs. The pontiff is raised aloft, and, oblivious of his own personal unworthiness, he feels himself almost worthy to touch and to bend down the heavens. As Zachary entered the holy place, the loaves of proposition were on his right; on his left stood the candelabrum with seven branches, and in front the altar of the incense. The latter, covered with sheets of gold, was outlined against the purple veil which concealed the entrance of the Holy of Holies. Suddenly, standing at the right of the altar—which was of good omen—and near the table of the sacred loaves, an Angel appeared to him. The priest was startled. The manifestations of the higher world terrify us, because they put us in the presence of unknown forces, and conscience, by a moral phenomenon that is quite natural, then suggests more than ever our weakness and our misery. “Fear not,” said the heavenly messenger, “for thy prayer has been heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John; and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity; for he shall be great before the Lord; and shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother’s womb, and he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God; and he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, that

he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people.”<sup>7</sup>

The Angel, therefore, is not a messenger of justice or of wrath, but of grace and benediction. Zachary, instead of trembling, must rejoice and give thanks. The wish of his heart, so long vain, is to be realised beyond all hope. He shall have a son; and in his name, John (*Jehochanan*, Jehovah grants favour), this son will bear the happy omen of the religious influence he is to exercise. Thus his birth will be not only a family joy, but a national event that will stir up in Israel a deep-felt movement of enthusiasm. John, indeed, will be great before God as before men through his virtue and his moral authority. Renouncing ease of life, and reviving, beneath his mortified and even forbidding exterior, the ancient types of theocratic piety, the young Nazarite will rouse again in the hearts of the children the sentiments of the patriarchs, their fathers. This, at least, is the ideal of his task. Human liberty may impede his efforts; but, with his energy for work, the new Elias will spare no effort to reawaken and transform the people whom God is about to visit.

The promise of the Angel fully responded to the strongest wishes of Zachary's heart, and even went beyond them.

Yet, by an inconsistency common enough to our moral constitution, the priest is slow to believe what he so eagerly solicits. “Whereby shall I know this?” says he, “for I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” How many other believers had already called for signs, as a guarantee of God's word, without guilt in the sight of

<sup>7</sup>The Angel's words recall successively, *Judges* xiii; *Jeremias* i, 5; and especially the prophecy of *Malachias* iii, 1: iv, 5, 6. It is remarkable that for the Angel as for the prophet, God and He whom John is to precede are one and the same. With reason does theology find here an indication of the Divinity of Jesus.

God! How often Heaven had been pleased to grant them in order to sustain the faith of those it tried! And yet the Angel severely reproveth the hesitation and doubt of Zachary. It belongs to the Lord alone, in searching hearts and reins, to know the moral dispositions of those He questions. Two men utter the same word, do the same action, and an abyss may separate their respective intentions, or even the intentions are the same and the responsibilities quite unlike. In a moral act there is always room for circumstances which extenuate or aggravate. For, is not doubt the more reprehensible when produced in a soul more enlightened, and after a more evident manifestation from Heaven? Abraham and Gedeon had been excused; Zachary was found guilty. "I am Gabriel, who stand before God," says the Angel, "and am sent to speak to thee and to bring thee these good tidings." There is the gravity of the fault. This is Gabriel, the servant of God; it is God, and not His envoy alone, whom the priest's doubt has offended; and this doubt is produced at the consoling news that God is about to manifest His goodness and His power. Instead of manifesting gratitude Zachary has shown only hesitation. "And behold," adds the messenger from Heaven, "thou shalt be dumb,<sup>8</sup> and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass; because thou hast not believed my words which shall be fulfilled in their time."

The people waited in the outside parvis, and were beginning to be surprised at Zachary's long delay in the holy place. Ordinarily the incense was burned with haste in honour of Jehovah, and the priest returned immediately to the people in order to proclaim that nothing untoward had

<sup>8</sup> As in several other passages in the Gospel, the word "dumb" signifies here deaf-mute. A proof of this is found in what happens when the name is given to the child.

marred the august ceremony. When the old man reappeared, they understood from his troubled exterior that something extraordinary had occurred. When he wished to give the people the final blessing, he had lost the power of speech; and yet his countenance betrayed a great interior joy. They concluded that he had beheld a vision and he, by his signs, strengthened this supposition. Nevertheless, he continued in the performance of his sacerdotal functions, since dumbness miraculously incurred did not constitute a legal irregularity. When the days of his service were completed, he returned to his home.

His vision was the fruit neither of illusion nor of ecstatic over-excitement. Hence it had most positive results. The chastisement and the promise were most fully realised. Zachary remained dumb for nine months, and Zachary became a father. Not long after this visitation, in fact, Elizabeth conceived a son. Whether through false shame, because of her age, or through prudence in order the better to insure the success of her pregnancy, she remained in retirement for five months, rendering to God, in her isolation, her humble thanks. But when, certain of her good fortune, she ventured to appear in public, "thus," she said, "hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He hath had regard to take away my reproach among men."

In the sixth month, the child, leaping in the womb of his mother, hailed in anticipation Him whose precursor he was to be. In the ninth he came forth into the world, and the neighbours and relatives hastened one after the other to congratulate the happy family on the mercy God had shown them.<sup>9</sup> Eight days later, with the customary rejoicings, they made ready to circumcise the infant. It seemed

<sup>9</sup> Mary must have been present since, according to the Gospel, she had come to visit her cousin in the sixth month after the conception of John and spent three months in Zachary's house.



to all as if they must call him Zachary, his father's name; but Elizabeth spoke up and said: "Not so, but he shall be called John." In vain they reminded her that no member of the family bore this name; she persisted in the choice, which, either by an interior light or through her husband, she knew had been that of Heaven. Then they appealed to the authority of the father, who, present no doubt during the discussion, heard nothing, being deaf as well as dumb. Zachary asked for a writing-tablet, and to the surprise of all he wrote these words: "John is his name." This proved that a higher will had imposed His choice above all human preferences. Directly the priest's mouth was opened and his tongue loosed he spoke, blessing God. The general astonishment was then merged in a holy fear. The intervention of God was manifest in the house of Zachary. At the report of these events, which spread rapidly into the mountains of Judea, and which each one fixed deep in his heart<sup>10</sup> that he might recount them to posterity, all exclaimed in amazement: "What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him." And Zachary, as if to make answer to this universal wonderment and anxiety, began to prophesy. Unburdening his soul of the canticle which had slowly developed there during the days of his dumbness, he exclaimed:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,<sup>11</sup>

Because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people:

And hath raised up an horn of salvation to us,

In the house of David His servant.

As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the beginning;

<sup>10</sup> The Evangelist here perhaps gives us a clue to the sources whence he derives his narrative.

<sup>11</sup> This canticle is entirely Hebrew; it is easier to retranslate it from Greek into its original language than to express it in our modern idioms.

Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us ;

To perform mercy to our fathers ;

And to remember His holy testament ;

The oath which He swore to Abraham, our father,

That He would grant to us that, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,

We may serve Him without fear,

In holiness and justice before Him all our days."

Here, indeed, was the voice of an Israelite's soul, nourished in the hope of the Messiah, and hailing with enthusiastic cry the coming of the Lord.

Then descending, but for a moment, from the heights where divine inspiration had borne him, the priest in brief parenthesis speaks a word of his own son, and indicates his work in the future :

"And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the highest ;

For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,

To give knowledge of salvation to His people,

Unto the remission of their sins."

Directly he resumes the hymn of thanksgiving, and completes the description of the happy days about to begin :

"Through the bowels of the mercy of our God,

In which the Orient<sup>12</sup> from on high hath visited us ;

To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death ;

To direct our feet into the way of peace."

Thus over this world groaning in its impotence and in the terror of dark night, a heavenly light is about to shine as before a caravan overtaken by a storm in the desert. The star comes down from the bosom of God ; it

<sup>12</sup> According to Zachary (vi, 12) this is one of the names of Jesus Christ, the true Zorobabel, who is to re-establish the worship of the Lord.

touches the earth, and, rising again directly, appears in the sky like a brilliant sun. Its light will illumine multitudes filled with despair; it will warm again hearts of ice; and, pointing out the way that leads to life, to peace, to the tranquillity of order, it will invite all wayfarers to fall again into line to achieve the conquest of their lost fatherland.

Thus did Zachary become the eloquent exponent of the hopes that filled the devoted hearts of the theocratic kingdom. In the name of Israel he hailed the dawn of the long-awaited day.

The child grew and became strong among the mountains of Juda, bound by the obligations of the sincere Nazarites; and when he was able to care for himself he retired into absolute solitude and dwelt in the desert.

There this extraordinary nature attained its full development. Solitude has ever been the great school of superior men. There the soul works out slowly her sublime ideas, heaven there is more transparent, and the invisible world seems to assume a more powerful reality. John there meditated the long succession of warnings which the prophets had uttered to the people of Israel; and the voices of nature united with the inspirations from on high to evoke in his conscience the prophetic ideal to be realised.

The desert of Juda is that barren land along the western side of the Dead Sea covering an area of several leagues. Lightning blasts from heaven have scorched its rocky mountains, and life seems utterly to have abandoned the place. With difficulty do the few trees here and there bear up nutriment to their languishing branches. Birds of prey and wild beasts alone disturb the silence of this awful solitude. A few torrents of water, dried up in summer, draw together the rains of winter and empty them into the vast asphaltic lake whose black, heavy waters emit

a deadly miasma. Among rocky ravines nature has cut deep grottoes; into these John withdrew. Even to-day everything speaks of an accursed land to the traveller who visits these mountains. To the young anchorite all was eloquent of the justice of Jehovah. From this long contemplation of woe and devastation, as well as from the habit of a severe and solitary life, he imbibed that spirit of austerity and of power which the Angel had called the spirit of the prophet Elias. John, in truth, is a man of the Old rather than of the New Testament. In his virtue there is a severity that has the true tone of Judaism. His exterior, his dress, his language seem the exact symbol of his temperament and of his soul. This man is to convert, for a certainty, but he will do so with thunderbolts. What a contrast between him and the Saviour he announces! And yet the type of the Precursor is perfect in its realisation. This virtue which impresses us, this strength which bruises, even while it declares that it is but a breath, this independence which nothing checks, either among the lowly, when he must needs strike down the passions of the people, or among the highest, when obliged to brand the crimes of the great, produce in the Baptist that attractive personality which is found nowhere else, if we except that Apostle of the Nations who, a few years later, will come forward, by his manly courage and by the vigour of his speech, as one of those exceptional men whom the race has ceased to produce. In St. John, indeed, we have Elias and Paul in one. He has the virtue and the irresistible eloquence of both; but, a link, as he is, between Judaism and Christianity, we cannot say that he is wholly either the one or the other. His knowledge is less than that of the latter, greater than that of the former. Like Elias, he announces divine vengeance: like Paul, he preaches the Saviour. As bravely as both he will be a martyr to duty, and, that his

merit may be the greater, he will die without having beheld the definitive establishment of the kingdom he proclaims. More than prophet, Messenger of God, Forerunner of the Messiah, his truest panegyric will still be that saying of the Master: "Of all that are born of woman there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

## CHAPTER II

# THE PREACHING AND BAPTISM OF JOHN

JOHN PREACHES PENANCE—CONFESSION OF SINS—PARTICULAR IDEA OF HIS BAPTISM—THE VEHEMENCE OF HIS PREACHING—THE CLASSES OF HIS HEARERS—DEEPLY FELT POPULAR MOVEMENT PROVOKED BY JOHN'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MESSIAH. (St. Matthew iii, 1-12; St. Mark i, 1-8; St. Luke iii, 3-18.)

WHEN he emerged from the desert, John set out for the Jordan banks where the river empties into the Dead Sea. As the Scripture phrase has it, "the Word of God was upon him," and he began to preach repentance and the baptismal rite which was its symbol.

Repentance is not a mere looking forward to the future with a resolution to do better, a determination to look at sin in a new light, as the word *μετάνοια*<sup>1</sup> would seem to indicate. The moral act of penance, in order to be complete, ought to include both regret for having done evil and the intention of making atonement in sorrow and pain for that which in a certain sense appears to us to be irrep-

<sup>1</sup> Etymologically this word signifies the very act of repentance; but it is usually employed to signify penance, as we understand it, in sackcloth and ashes (cf. *St. Matt.* xi and *St. Luke* x). Besides, these two Evangelists have no other terms in which to express the penance of the Ninevites, which certainly was not merely a simple resolution to do better in the future. (*St. Matt.* xii; *St. Luke* xi.)

arable. And so it was that John insisted on fruits worthy of penance.

The popular emotion stirred up by this solemn invitation was so profound that the chief men of the nation were themselves borne away in the movement. It is not a rare thing to find in the history of peoples times of salutary contagion when the most recalcitrant are forced to follow in the general wake and publicly to render to God the glory He deserves.

Pharisees and publicans, learned and unlearned, rich and poor together were seized upon, accused, overwhelmed by grace. Many publicly confessed their crimes.

There was nothing novel in this public confession. Ordinarily the Israelite was under this obligation before offering in the Temple the expiatory victim, whenever his secret faults would not draw down upon him the penalty of death.<sup>2</sup> Jewish theology went so far as to claim that to obtain pardon for one's sins, a generous avowal of them was necessary. Maimonides<sup>3</sup> says, "he who, through ignorance or presumption, has transgressed the positive or negative precepts of the law, if he desire to be freed from his sins and to do penance, must begin by confessing them. It is vain for him to offer a victim for the extinction of his wickedness, everything is futile for him without regular and oral confession. Moreover, the criminal who would have merited death or a whipping could not wash away his crime by his submission to punishment, if he should not join to it confession, the true sign of repentance. That is why the high priest makes a confession of the sins of the people over the head of the scapegoat charged with the expiation of all the iniquities of Israel."

Such an appreciation of confession is but natural, and

<sup>2</sup> *Levit.* v, 5; *Numbers* v, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Tesubhah*, ch. 1.

we meet with it again even in the writings of the pagan philosophers.<sup>4</sup> It is reasonable to expect to see the culprit who by his repentance has interiorly rejected his sin, advance a step further in the way of justice and confess it exteriorly. At first it is grief for the hurt received; then, the opening of the wound to extract therefrom all bad elements and to cure it.

John administered baptism as a sign of the remission of sin. The idea was not absolutely new. Long before, God, by the mouth of the prophets,<sup>5</sup> had decreed exterior ablution as a symbol of spiritual purification. But the new Elias was not content with these partial lustrations, customary under the law of Moses; he exacted a general immersion of the body as a sign of the radical cleansing of the soul. In this sense his baptism was an innovation, and he demanded of his followers sentiments of humility rare and difficult for a people all preoccupied with their religious prerogatives and deceived by the maxims of blind and senselessly presumptuous Pharisaism. To inform and to convince a Jew that he was deeply in sin, although a circumcised son of Abraham, was directly to attack his firmest convictions and to destroy his dearest hopes. "Ye offspring of vipers," exclaimed John, "who hath shown you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of penance and do not begin to say, we have Abraham for our father! For I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." In his holy indignation, John borrows his figures from whatever lies at hand. He sees

<sup>4</sup> "Vitia sua confiteri," says Seneca (*Ep.* 53), "sanitatis indicium est." Socrates develops the same theory in the *Gorgias*, ch. xxvi.

<sup>5</sup> *Ezech.* xxxvi, 25; *Isa.* i, 16; *Jer.* ii, 22.



nothing more hideous than the viper in the desert concealed beneath the grass, ready to cast his venom among the flowers and verdure; to it he compares the hypocrites who come, without repentance, to ask for baptism, its symbol. Nothing is more inanimate than the pebble of the stream or the rocks of the mountain; and yet were paganism as lifeless as this inert nature, the breath of God could raise up out of it children of Abraham and create a new people. Such teaching tended visibly to prepare a way for the Gospel. The national point of view gave way before the moral, which is the only religious point of view. In fact it seemed to the Precursor that natural descent from the father of the faithful is by no means essential for entrance into the kingdom of the Messiah: spiritual descent alone is required; and this is within the reach of all upright souls, even though they come from among the Gentiles. God is coming to acknowledge His own. Woe to the false children of Abraham! They shall not escape the severity of the judgment of the Messiah, and the axe will be buried pitilessly in the roots of every tree that does not bring forth good fruit.

As might have been foreseen, this new theory could not but scandalise the Pharisees, who considered themselves born members and indispensable citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Many withdrew in anger and severed all connection with the Baptist.<sup>6</sup> Others, as if chained by his words of fire that overwhelmed them, tremblingly asked of him, "What then shall we do?" John replied: "He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do in like manner." The great law of charity in its daily application was to be the best preparation for the kingdom of the Messiah, which was announced as the very kingdom of charity. He who is good is not far

<sup>6</sup> *St. Luke* vii, 30; *St. Matt.* xxi, 25.

from God. Light comes speedily into the heart where mercy reigns.

The publicans or tax-gatherers came in their turn to seek baptism and asked: "Master, what shall we do?" John replied: "Do nothing more than that which is appointed you."

The public functionary must not sacrifice the rights of the state in order to prove his charity; his virtue consists in not exaggerating these rights, in not abusing the authority he has received, and especially in not creating for himself any rights personal, imaginary, or dictated by cupidity and injustice.

The soldiers, probably Jews in the pay of Herod Antipas, or men of the national police, also questioned him: "And what shall we do?" He replied to them: "Do violence to no man, neither calumniate any man, and be content with your pay." For the soldier, the common danger of camp life at this epoch was the abuse, at times, of his strength in the despoiling of unarmed citizens; at other times, of his credit with his chiefs in the calumination of the innocent. Consciousness of duty performed, and pay for his sustenance must suffice for the soldier. This is the outline of the moral teaching of John. As the Hebrews of old, when they came up out of Egypt, were ready to receive the law of God, and to enter into the promised land, having washed away the last traces of their impurities in the waters of the Red Sea through which they had passed, so now the multitudes passed beneath the hands of John, eager to prepare themselves by adequate purification for the coming of the Messiah.

To the Israelites no event could be of greater importance than the coming of the Messiah; hence the announcement that it was near at hand set in vibration the strongest chord in every heart, roused again their most cherished hopes,

and gave birth to the most ardent desires. From the Messiah they expected not only all that prophetic inspiration since the time David had so magnificently promised, but even that which patriotism and the thoroughly human aspirations of worldly souls had superadded. The descendant of Jesse, the glorious monarch of the golden age, was, indeed, to effect the spiritual purification of his people, and at the same time, in the popular expectation, to break the oppressor's yoke, to exterminate the vanquished with most frightful tortures, and to establish on the ruins of the universe the supremacy of Israel. In this triumph the people of God were to find, together with the most complete temporal felicity, an entire satisfaction of all their longings.<sup>7</sup> Henceforth, every one wished to belong to this privileged people, and as the definitive enrolment was begun, it was time for each to come and take his place.

Amid this general excitement the authority of the Baptist grew each day. They wondered if he were not himself the Christ. Faithful to his mission, the Precursor laboured to direct every soul toward Him Who was to come, and for Whom he was preparing the way. "I, indeed," he said, "baptise you with water; but there shall come one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose, He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

This then is the difference between the work of the Precursor and that of the Messiah. John's mission, as the humble servant of Him Whom he announces, is to sow penance in all hearts and to cultivate souls by inviting them to sincere repentance. It is for the Messiah then to seize upon them by the communication of the Divine Spirit, and to consume in them by the fire of charity all that was left

<sup>7</sup> Berthold, *Christol.*, p. 26 *et seq.*

of coarse grain and unsuited to the kingdom of God. The one prepares sanctification, the other confers it. The former collects the sheep, the latter encloses them in the fold. "Make way for the Messiah-King," cries the herald; "let every valley be filled up and every height laid low." And when the pride of some shall have disappeared, when the indifference or the impiety of others shall have been overcome, when the vices of all shall have been corrected, the looked-for Prince shall make His solemn entrance among His people, and all flesh shall look upon the Salvation of God. "Whose fan is in His hand," said John, changing the figure, "and He will purge His floor; and He will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." It is always the Master Who comes to His lands to visit His people and to inspect the harvest. But, in the Jewish theocracy, the Master could be God alone. The Messiah then will be God-with-us, according to the preaching of the Baptist. Thus had the prophet Isaias<sup>8</sup> foretold it: "Get thee up on a high mountain thou that bringest good tidings to Sion; lift up thy voice with strength . . . say to the cities of Juda: Behold your God!"

It was on the left bank of the Jordan at the place called Bethany, or, in the opinion of some, Bethabara, that the Baptist<sup>9</sup> preached to the multitudes. The caravans that

<sup>8</sup> *Isa.* xl, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Which is the correct reading? It is difficult to say. Origen, in *Joan.*, hom. lxi, acknowledges that, in his time, it was Bethany in nearly all the manuscripts: *σχεδὸν ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἀντιγράφοις*, and even in the Gnostic Heracleon, who lived about the year 170. This does not prevent him, probably because he had seen it somewhere—in reality it is found in the Syriac version published by Cureton and in the one quite recently discovered on Sinai by Mrs. Lewis—from adopting the reading *Bethabara*. He gives several reasons for this, of which the most important is that on the banks of the Jordan there is no place called Bethany, while there is a spot pointed out as the place where John baptised, and which is called *Bethabara* or *Bethara*, or, again, *Betharba*. This uncertainty as to the orthography even of the name, which is found in the

passed by bore the great tidings afar. The rumour quickly spread throughout all the Jewish world, and there gathered an ever-increasing and almost tumultuous concourse of people.

Listening to the new prophet, each one felt himself forced to believe in a near fulfilment of his promises. Did not everything in the bed of this sacred river speak to

most ancient manuscripts of the works of the great exegete, is somewhat surprising. In reality, we find mentioned in the Old Testament *Bethabara* and *Betharaba*. The first of these localities has been discovered by Conder, one hour's distance north-east of Beisan. This is the spot where Gedeon (*Judges* vii, 24) ordered the Ephraimites to cut off the passage of the Madianite pillagers. The ford of Abara was, in fact, the one that was to be reached by those who fled through the valley of Jesrael. But is it probable that the Baptist began his ministry so far from Jerusalem? The desert where his voice cried out is not there, and we must seek elsewhere, nearer to Jericho, for the locality indicated by the tradition of which Origen speaks. The Book of *Josue* (xv, 6, 61; xviii, 22), in fact, mentions Betharaba, probably north of and near to Bethlagla. Here there is still a ford very frequently used, and the ruins excavated and restored at Qasr-el-Yaoud corresponding surely to the Church of St. John the Baptist, raised upon arches by the Emperor Anastasius, it seems beyond doubt that the grottoes inhabited by Greek monks in the ravine of Ain Kharrar, mark the place where, at a very early date, the Pilgrim of Bordeaux (333), St. Paula, and other pious travellers venerated the memory of the baptism of Jesus Christ. The very name of *Betharaba* seems to be preserved in that of Kirbt-Arabeih given to some neighbouring ruins. This spot is about four miles north of the Dead Sea. It is the nearest ford to Jerusalem, and we have seen several caravans cross there.

The reading Bethabara, adopted by Eusebius and St. Jerome, which, however, has not been maintained in the Vulgate, was declared the best by St. Epiphanius, St. John Chrysostom, Euthymius, Theophylact, etc.; but can all this outweigh the authority of the primitive manuscripts giving the name Bethany? These Fathers of the Church did not discuss the question, but confidently adopted Origen's opinion. It is evident, therefore, that at bottom the question lies between the authority of the Alexandrian Doctor and that of manuscripts more ancient than he. Hence it is not surprising that a large number of exegetes prefer to read Bethany. See the excellent discussion by P. Lagrange, *Revue Biblique* (1895), p. 502 *et seq.*

There may have been, in fact, several Bethanys, as there were several Bethlehems, Bethsaidas, etc. If the name signified not only the *Place of the Poor*, but also the *Ferry* or the *Place of the Ford*, it would naturally be applied to a locality on the banks of the Jordan. In the Roman wars Bethany may have disappeared. Moreover, since Bethany and Bethabara have almost the same etymology, may they not have been employed indiscriminately to designate the place where travellers crossed? This solution of the difficulty is as simple as it is satisfactory.

them of God's merciful relations with His people? There the Hebrews entering into the promised land had crossed dry-shod; the twelve stones, still standing, commemorated the visible protection of Jehovah and the first step toward the glorification of Israel. Between these waters miraculously held back had gone Elias and Eliseus.<sup>10</sup> Not far from the sacred river Moses had died saluting from afar the promised land; Elias had ascended into Heaven borne away in a chariot of fire: was it not there where these two illustrious guides of the people of God came to the end of their glorious career that the true Saviour of Israel should inaugurate His mission? There was every reason to believe so, and, hastening with enthusiasm to the banks of the Jordan, the nation there awaited salvation.

<sup>10</sup> *IV Kings* ii, 8.

## CHAPTER III

# THE DEPUTATION FROM THE SANHEDRIM<sup>1</sup>

THE ANXIETY OF THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES—THE  
EMISSARIES OF THE SANHEDRIM AND THEIR INTERVIEW—  
JOHN IS NEITHER THE MESSIAH NOR ELIAS, NOR THE  
PROPHET OF THE LEGEND—WHY, THEN, DOES HE  
BAPTISE?—HE IS PERMITTED TO CONTINUE. (St. John  
i, 19-28.)

SUCH excitement could not fail to attract the attention of the religious authority. From Jerusalem, therefore, as from the centre where this authority resided, watchful and attentive to all innovations, the Sanhedrim sent an embassy to the preacher. Everything seems to have been favourable

<sup>1</sup> The majority of modern exegetes, in view of the triple repetition by St. John of the expression *τῆ ἐπαύριον* in the series of testimonies which he puts upon the lips of the Baptist, believe that there was a regular succession of "next days," and that in the fragment of the Fourth Gospel from i, 29, to ii, 1, they can discover the history of an entire week; but this cannot be without perceptible violence to the natural succession of events. If Jesus had already been baptised and made known to John as the Messiah when the embassy from the Sanhedrim arrived, why did not the Precursor acknowledge Him to the deputies of the Council? By his vague talk of the Messiah would he not have failed in his duty of bearing Him witness? How can we believe that he was not bound to explain himself with regard to this personage if he knew him? Their supposition is that Jesus came to be baptised on the day after the embassy; that this occurred in the morning, and that in the evening John gave the testimony that alludes to this visit. But the terms of his testimony do not seem to point to an event of such recent occurrence. Moreover, how shall we account for the forty days of temptation that elapsed between this second testimony and the second "next day"? And since all the days of this first week are, according to

in this matter, and we know from Jesus Himself that the Council<sup>2</sup> looked with some satisfaction on the Baptist's growing influence over Israel. This influence was for them the signal of a grand religious and political resurrection, the inauguration of a new era and the ending of the long-continued faithlessness on the part of God's people. In any case, John's success could not but contribute to the increase of the prestige of religious authority, and the Sanhedrim would be the first to rejoice in it.

In this solemn business, the terms of the message were of necessity well pondered. The nation, as St. Luke remarks, was not far from believing John to be the Messiah; but it was natural that the representatives of the Sanhedrim should seem more prudent than the multitude. "Who art thou?" they said to the Baptist, intending to weigh well his response, and to hasten the people into his arms or to repel them, according as they approved or condemned his pretensions as an innovator. By the reserve manifested in their questioning, John perceives that they are anxious about the popular rumour that he himself is the Messiah. He responds, then, by telling, at first, not what he is, as they might expect, but what he is not, to put an end to all vain anxiety. Without hesitation and categorically he says:

this supposition, clearly indicated, we should have to place the retreat into the desert after the wedding in Cana; but in that case, we sacrifice St. Mark, who connects this retreat into the desert immediately with the baptism. Why, therefore, can we not take the expression τῇ ἐπαύριον in the sense of "later on"? The translation of the Septuagint has so rendered it in a number of passages (*Gen.* xxx, 33; *Jos.* iv, 6, and 22, 24, etc.). The Evangelist's intention is, moreover, quite apparent. He wishes to accumulate John's testimonies with regard to Jesus and to place them forth in luminous groups, without proving that they were rendered regularly from one day to another, especially since such a succession in itself would be scarcely natural. The formula he employs is equivalent to this: At one time John beholds Jesus come to him, etc.; at another time surrounded by his disciples, etc. The third time only, if at all (v. 14), does the Evangelist really mean the next day.

<sup>2</sup> *St. John* v, 33-35.



“I am not the Christ.” Nothing is more agreeable to a man naturally vain than to suffer reports that honour him to gain credit, and one of the most painful sacrifices for him is that of the popular favour that flatters him and of that glory, legitimate or unmerited, with which the public voice intoxicates him. For John the Baptist to say that he is Christ would be to deny Christ. His loyalty feels no hesitation; and to demonstrate to us how slight a hold the temptation of vainglory had upon this upright and energetic soul the Evangelist remarks that, far from suffering a doubt to exist, he hastens to proclaim spontaneously and resolutely that the people are mistaken, that he is not the Christ. “What, then!” resume the emissaries with the apparent impatience of men who have been deceived. “Art thou Elias?” He again replies: “I am not.” John, indeed, is not Elias, as his interrogators mean, not Elias in flesh and bone, personally living, descended from Heaven. He has, however, the spirit and virtue of Elias; and as these two things, the best in man, are the man himself, Jesus will be right in saying that he fulfils the prophecy of Malachias,<sup>3</sup> to which the Jews here allude. If John the Baptist had been less humble and less eager to belittle himself, he could have made answer that he bore the thought, the energy, the soul of Elias; that he was the prophet come again, not in a bodily, but in a spiritual sense; and he would have done no violence to the truth. Elias had been a figure, John was its realisation.

The emissaries continue their investigation, and they ask: “Art thou the prophet?”<sup>4</sup> Popular tradition had it that

<sup>3</sup> *Mal.* iv, 5. Cf. *St. Matt.* xi, 14.

<sup>4</sup> It cannot be translated “Art thou a prophet?” for two reasons: first, because the article *ὁ* indicates that there is question of a prophet well known and popular; secondly, because St. John would not have replied absolutely that he was not a prophet, since Jesus said of him that he was a prophet and more than a prophet (*St. Matt.* xi, 9), and moreover, by such a response he would have definitely ruined himself.

besides Elias there was another messenger from Heaven, Enoch, Josue, or, particularly, Jeremias, the greatest prophet since the woes of the captivity, who was to come to inaugurate the Messianic era. With greater reason than for the preceding question, John replied, "No." These conclusions of the multitude had no foundation.<sup>5</sup>

However, they were not content with merely negative replies; they must force the Baptist to declare his credentials and his mission. They said to him then: "Who art thou that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias." He is but a voice, a cry, a breath that is lost in the air. He belittles himself so far, as Bossuet says; but this voice was foretold; it is that of the herald who announces the Master. John declares it to those who question him, and in this way he means to prove the legitimacy of his mission.

The emissaries fail to grasp his idea, and they are amazed to see one who is neither the Messiah nor the prophet introducing new ideas. Extremely sensitive in the matter of religious reforms, since they are of the sect of the Pharisees, stern defenders of their paternal traditions and ever ready to summon and to judge whoever, by his works and words, offends their prejudices, these inquisitors determine to prove that they merit all the confidence of the Sanhedrim. "Why then dost thou baptise, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet?" For his lofty mission alone could authorise his baptism. Since he does not declare the former, how is he to justify the latter? "I baptise with water," re-

<sup>5</sup> Several have thought that reference was here made to the prophet announced by Moses (*Deut.* xviii, 15); but this prophet being the Messiah Himself, there is no need of putting a question that has already been answered. Besides it is evident that the inquiry proceeds from the greater to the lesser.

plies John, "but there hath stood one in the midst of you <sup>6</sup> whom you know not. The same is He that shall come after me, Who is preferred before me, the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose." Here then is the reason for his ministry: The Desired of nations is come; the Jews may not know it; John does, and that is why, as the prophets <sup>7</sup> had foretold it, he officially prepares His way.

The Evangelist does not relate the consequences of this mission, nor whether the Sanhedrim continued the inquiry it had undertaken. Probably, before forming any definite opinion, it deemed it necessary to see and to judge of Him Whose herald John declared himself. The authentic manifestation of the one will prove the legitimacy of the mission of the other. So that later on we shall see the Sanhedrim gradually withdrawing its confidence in the Baptist, in proportion as the Messiah becomes suspected in Israel. On the day when war shall be declared between Jesus and this organised body, the direct result of the conflict will be for the Sanhedrim to decide to denounce or even to surrender to Herod, him whom it shall judge to have insured the religious success of the Carpenter of Nazareth.

In the meantime John is permitted to continue his labour. In that labour there is nothing but what is favourable to the patriotic longings of the old Jewish party. A revolt prepared against the foreigner is at all times a good thing. In case the Messiah does not come, they themselves will direct the popular movement according to their aspirations, and, perhaps, they may succeed in shaking off with their own hands the yoke of their oppressors.

<sup>6</sup> In this passage we fail to see any proof that the Messiah had been already revealed to John. It expresses nothing more than faith in His existence and in His approaching manifestation (*Malach.* iii, 1). If John is the Precursor, He whom he precedes is come. As for pointing Him out more precisely, he cannot do so, since he does not know Him personally.

<sup>7</sup> *Is.* xl, 3; *Malach.* iii, 1, compared with *Malach.* iv, 5-6.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE MESSIAH IS MANIFESTED TO JOHN THE BAPTIST

IT IS WHILE BAPTISING THAT JOHN IS TO RECOGNISE THE MESSIAH—JESUS COMES TO DEMAND BAPTISM—ALL JUSTICE MUST BE FULFILLED—MANIFESTATION FROM HEAVEN—FOR JOHN THE BAPTIST, JESUS IS THE MESSIAH. (St. Matt. iii, 13-17; St. Mark i, 9-11; St. Luke iii, 21-22.)

MEANWHILE John the Baptist had received from God the assurance that the Messiah would be made known to him by a miraculous sign,<sup>1</sup> and it was while he was administering baptism that this sign was to appear. The divine plan was that the Ancient Covenant should come to an end there in the desert where it had begun, and that the New Covenant should be inaugurated solemnly by the authentic manifestation of the true Saviour of Israel.

According to the most probable opinion, the Baptist awaited this manifestation during almost six months. Vainly did his words stir up the souls of men, and vainly did his eye search their consciences: no one having the sign of the Redeemer had as yet presented himself.

But now in His own good time, which was that marked by Providence, a young man came down from the mountains of Galilee to ask for baptism, mingling with the

<sup>1</sup> *St. John i, 33.*

other sons of Israel. He was about thirty years of age; His name was Jesus. Up to that time, confined in the obscurity of a carpenter's shop, He had done nothing to distinguish Himself from the multitude. Not that by a close observance the eye of His fellow-citizens could not perceive in His words and in even the most ordinary relations of life certain luminous rays of a soul incomparably grand and religious. But who could imagine that the Saviour of the world<sup>2</sup> was to come out of Nazareth and that this Saviour would be a carpenter?

John declares that for his part he never even suspected the Messianic character of Jesus. It may be that, in affirming that he did not know his relative until the day of His baptism, he meant that their ways had been entirely separate since childhood, through the medium of events not mentioned in the Gospel. Besides, it would seem natural that Elizabeth and Zachary had kept Mary's secret of the miraculous conception of Jesus and thus, especially if they had died soon after,<sup>3</sup> had left their own son in ignorance of the heavenly manifestations that encircled the cradle of his cousin.

St. Luke appears not to be disturbed by this difficulty, and, after having closely compared the birth of these two children, he contents himself with telling us that one lived in the desert and the other at Nazareth. He gives us no hint that any relations had existed between them before this baptism. Jesus, indeed, had not been obliged to hasten His hour of coming by revealing to John His religious impressions, and John in the desert was entirely cut off from the family relations which would have made him acquainted with Jesus. If it were true, even, that one of the numerous

<sup>2</sup> *St. John* i, 46.

<sup>3</sup> They were already advanced in age, as we have seen, when John the Baptist was born.

Essenian communities, dwelling on the shores of the Dead Sea, had received the son of Zachary in his early age, the complete separation of the two cousins would be less difficult to understand. But the religious views of the Precursor are so unlike the Essene tendencies, that it is impossible to believe him to be a disciple of such masters, unless he had set himself the task of refuting them and of overthrowing the doctrines of those who had educated him. However that may be, at this moment in the Gospel history John knows that the Messiah is in Israel; that He is on the point of proclaiming Himself; that God, by a miracle, is to reveal Him to him in the waters of the Jordan; but he knows not who the Messiah is or whence He shall come.

Jesus, then, came to the Precursor asking to be baptised. A preliminary conversation between the penitent and the Baptist naturally ensued. They piously exchanged their thoughts, and as Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of the Messiah, of the moral woes of the Jewish people and of humanity, John felt himself urged to salute in Him the prophetic ideal of the Messiah. He listened respectfully to His attractive discourse, and, gradually turning his inspired eye into the soul that was revealing itself to him so astounding in its grandeur, he knew he was in the presence of the awaited Master of Israel. How the heart of this Neophyte, quite differently from his own, was the enemy of all sin and free from all stain! How Heaven, with its purity, its harmony, its charity, was reflected in this beautiful and transparent conscience! What enthusiasm! what aspirations! what generosity! Jesus speaks, and in spite of His modesty, He impresses Himself on him who hears Him. His views of reparation, of mercy, of penance for the guilty world, His penetration of the most profound truths, His knowledge of the divine plan, reveal the superior mission He has received; and when, having checked

this escaping flow of religious life that fills His heart, He wishes to bend down to receive the cleansing waters, He finds the Baptist at His feet, trembling with emotion and submission, crying out to Him: "I ought to be baptised by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" To ask to be purified was, in fact, to seek to raise one's life up to the moral level of him who purified, to be associated with his religious perfection, and to be made a sharer in his sanctity. But John deemed himself too base to be able to communicate anything to this eminent Proselyte, and he declared that he had nothing to give, but everything to receive. "Suffer it to be so now," said Jesus. "For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice."

In the case of John, justice meant that he, destined to remain the last representative of the law of Moses, should not become the first-born of the Gospel. Like Moses, he had as his mission to point out to his people the promised land into which he was not to enter. His lot was to die at the very gate of the blessed kingdom, without sharing in its glorious benefits. He was to be saved by faith in the Messiah Who was to come, and not by the sacraments instituted by the Messiah when He had come. For Jesus, justice was that, born under the law, as St. Paul says,<sup>4</sup> He should obey the law, that He should fulfil the law until He had changed it. A son of Israel, a member by birth and circumcision of that Judaism that looked forward to the Christ, He strictly follows the religious movement of His people, with them He advances toward the king who comes, until the moment when His Father shall command Him to check all this agitation with these words: "Go no farther; the Christ, the King you seek; I am He." Until this command is given Him, He will find that for Him justice consists in

<sup>4</sup>Gal. iv, 4.

submission to all the demands of the law of Moses: circumcision, presentation in the Temple, baptism by John, and so on. In justice He intends to participate in the ritualism that sustains religious life in Israel, until that day when He shall have made all sacrifices and all symbols useless by consummating them in His own offering on the cross. Hence, when John desires to bend before the New Covenant, in which he is to have no part, he is guilty of a pious impatience forbidden him by his character; but that Jesus should wish to honour the Old Testament before He brings it to an end, that He should publicly ratify the Precursor's mission and do homage to his authority, is an act of justice commanded by His wisdom.

Moreover, another lofty inspiration guides His conduct. It is less for Himself than for all mankind, whose official representative He is, that He comes to ask baptism. In cleansing humanity now in figure in the waters of the Jordan He prepares its future purification in the bloody ablution of the cross. In His eyes baptism is the figure and even the prelude of His death, and by His conduct with St. John, He officially accepts His mission as Redeemer, a mission replete with woe as with glory. The unknown of Nazareth bids farewell to His calm and happy existence; He enters now upon the long and generous martyrdom of His public life. In this way does He intend to fulfil all justice.

The Baptist suffered himself to be persuaded and baptised Him. What transpired then in the soul of Jesus so deeply conscious of the solemnity of that present moment, the pen of the Evangelist has not essayed to tell. St. Luke alone remarks that after His baptism the Neophyte, falling on His knees, opened His heart in most ardent and filial prayer. John was admiring Him in an ecstasy of adoration. Suddenly the heavens seemed torn apart; the Spirit



of God, descending like a dove of light, paused and rested on the head of the Baptised. At the same time a voice spoke from on high: "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased."

Jesus<sup>5</sup> and John<sup>6</sup> seem to have been the only witnesses of this heavenly manifestation. John speaks of it as of a sign granted to him personally;<sup>7</sup> and on the other hand, if the people had witnessed it, the Evangelists would not have failed to chronicle the enthusiasm produced by an event so strange. Whether it is that the Precursor and the Messiah were alone at this time, or that God once again<sup>8</sup> reserved the faculty of beholding His sign for those alone who were worthy to contemplate it, matters not. Two witnesses perceived it distinctly: it was, then, not a moral impression, but a physical reality with a definite spiritual signification. From the heavens, opened to their very depths, there came a ray of light that proved the intimate union of God with Jesus. This ray is the Holy Spirit, the bond of union from all eternity between the Father and the Son in Their heavenly life, and continuing this intimate and substantial relation between the Father in Heaven and the Incarnate Son on earth. The Spirit, in His manifestation, takes the form of a dove, because He is the spirit of purity, of peace, and of love, and because the dove is the symbol of these virtues; He alights upon Jesus, not so much for the purpose of producing a new condition, as to indicate and make clear that which existed already, the union of the Father and the Son. Jesus, the Son of God, has indeed nothing to receive; He has everything from the

<sup>5</sup> *St. Mark* i, 10, and very probably *St. Matt.* iii, 16, say that Jesus beheld this prodigy.

<sup>6</sup> *St. John* i, 32.

<sup>7</sup> *St. John* i, 33.

<sup>8</sup> It is not a rare thing to learn from Scripture that all witnesses do not equally perceive the prodigies that are brought about. (*Acts* ix, 7; *St. John* xi.)

beginning, and the voice of heaven confirms this by saying, not: "This is He who is become my Son, in Whom I shall be well pleased," but, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom [since long ago] I am well pleased."

But do these considerations exhaust the meaning of the baptism of Jesus? Probably not, for, from the point of view of the Baptised and of His Mission, the rite practised seems to have been an event of capital importance. The Evangelists plainly attach to it a prominence which theology and exegesis have perhaps too readily overlooked. The prayer of Jesus, like all that precedes or follows it, seems to indicate in Him a life, not more perfect, but different. But different in what sense? Exteriorly only, or within? It is not easy to say; for, here again we touch upon the mystery of the hypostatic union. In reality the Spirit Who descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove, seems to complete a creative work which He had begun, thirty years before, in the womb of Mary. The Messiah, by the intervention of Heaven, is officially named, and Peter in after years is right in saying that Jesus "was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power."<sup>9</sup>

John, for whose sake this heavenly sign was given, no longer doubts. He proclaims it publicly: for him the Messiah is no longer to be awaited or to be looked for; He is come, and John has seen Him; He is Jesus of Nazareth. The last days of his apostolate will be spent in announcing Him to Israel.

Jesus was then about thirty years old. That was the age at which, in the prescriptions of Moses,<sup>10</sup> the Levite was admitted to the exercise of his ministry, and the age at which, among civilised peoples, the young man, mature enough to be of real service to his country, could busy him-

<sup>9</sup> *Acts* x, 38.

<sup>10</sup> *Numbers* iv, 3, 47. However, in ch. viii, 24, the Levite begins at 25.

self with public matters.<sup>11</sup> Since the law permits it, and God's allotted hour summons Him, He goes then to inaugurate His work; but first we must know more exactly who He is, what was His origin, what is the history of His earliest years.

If there be real interest in clearing up the obscurity that surrounds the origin of a great man, how much greater the joy we shall feel in gathering the details that reveal to us the first years of the Son of God! The few pages that form the basis of the following book are incomparable for their poetry, their freshness, and their innocent simplicity. It has been said that it is a mother's privilege to relate with delight the history of her children. It is certainly a mother that tells us what we know of Jesus' first years; it is her memory, or rather her heart, that has preserved in the story of His childhood the lively colouring, the touching grace, and the pious tone that make it an inimitable composition. After Pentecost, Mary, who, like the Apostles, had received the Holy Ghost, must have been urged more than once to break, for the edification of the nascent Church, a silence she had religiously kept until then.<sup>12</sup> She spoke; and her stories, carefully collected, enriched the first oral Gospel. St. Luke and St. Matthew profited by them later on.

<sup>11</sup> Xenophon, *Memor.* 1; Dionys. of Halicar., *Hist.*, iv, 6.

<sup>12</sup> *St. Luke* ii, 19.

## BOOK II

### *The History of the Messiah in Retrospect*

#### CHAPTER I

### THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

BECAUSE OF THE TWO NATURES IN JESUS, THE EVANGELISTS GIVE HIM A TWOFOLD DESCENT—AS THE LOGOS OR WORD INCARNATE, HE IS DESCENDED FROM GOD THE FATHER, WHOSE EQUAL HE IS—AS MAN, HE IS DESCENDED FROM DAVID BY JOSEPH, HIS FATHER, ACCORDING TO THE LAW, AND BY MARY, HIS MOTHER, BY BLOOD—COMPARISON OF THE GENEALOGY IN ST. MATTHEW WITH THAT IN ST. LUKE—THEIR RESPECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS. (St. John i, 1-18; St. Matthew i, 1-17; St. Luke iii, 23-38.)

THE first questions that arise with regard to a man who attracts public attention are these: Whence does he come? Who is he?

The Evangelists assign to Jesus a twofold origin—the one divine and eternal, the other human and earthly—inasmuch as they distinguish in Him two natures, two different elements, divinity and humanity. He has one genealogy as the Son of God, and another as the Son of Man.

St. John has given us the first;<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew and St. Luke have compiled the second. We shall study them separately.

It is in the very bosom of God, above and beyond all creatures, that the fourth Evangelist seeks the divine origin of Christ. "In the beginning was the Word,"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Many difficulties have been raised about the doctrine of St. John concerning the *Logos*. Neither the idea of the divine Being nor the name by which He is designated should surprise us. All that is affirmed of the Word in the prologue, all that is said of His pre-existence before the creation, of the identity of His Nature with that of the Father, of His activity in the world previous to His Incarnation, is clearly developed in the discourses of the Fourth Gospel, in which Jesus speaks of Himself. The name *Logos* is borrowed, not from Philo, with whom the doctrine of St. John has nothing in common, but from the language of the Old Testament (cf. Dorner, *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, vol. i, Introd. B). The sacred writers often speak of a divine envoy, *Mal'ach*, distinct from Jehovah, but ordinarily identified with Him (cf. *Gen.* xvi, 7, with xvi, 13; *Exod.* xxiii, 21; *Os.* xii, 4-5; *Zach.* xii, 10, etc.), and who was to be the final Mediator. They personify divine Wisdom (*Prov.* viii) and represent It as participating in the work of creation. Finally the *Memra*, or the *Word* of the Eternal, appears to them to be a particular agent of divine activity in the world (*Ps.* cvii, 20; cxlvii, 15; *Isa.* lv, 11). God says to His Wisdom (*Ps.* cix, 1): "Sit thou on my right hand." As the Word, the organ of divine revelation, possesses in an eminent degree the Wisdom of God, and as It is also His personal agent, Its part in the Jewish theology is predominant. St. John, wishing to characterise the Messianic action of Jesus, could find nothing better than to identify the Saviour with the Angel of the Covenant, the Wisdom and the Word of Jehovah, all three being the personal, external manifestation of God. It may be that he gave Him the name *Logos* or Word in order to point out to the Jews of Greece, who were disciples of the Alexandrine philosophy, that they must seek in Jesus alone the personification of the necessary mediator between God and the world. The *Logos* they dreamed of in their philosophical speculations was an intangible abstraction; that which St. John announces is a reality which the disciples have seen and touched in the person of Jesus. (Cf., concerning St. John's theory of the "Word," B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, vol. ii, p. 337, etc.) Since St. John's time theologians have taken the *Logos* in a triple sense; for it signifies, at the same time, the interior Word or Reason, the exterior or enunciated Word of God, and finally the revealing Word of the Father, because He is the Person Who enunciates and proclaims it. Hence in generating His Word or His Son, God the Father expresses all that He is Himself, tells to Him all that He wishes done or what He is doing, and through Him communicates to His creatures what He wishes. (Cf. Ginoulhiac, *Hist. du dogme Cath.*, 1<sup>re</sup> part., livre ix, ch. 1.)

<sup>2</sup> A series of ten propositions of almost equal rhythm, and divided into

and in this first assertion, he establishes the eternity of Him Whom he wishes to make known to us. For if the Word was before the beginning, the truth is that He had no beginning. If he already existed before all things were created, it must be that He was not created Himself. It is vain to trace back in imagination the series of possible ages; wherever our calculations cease, we find that the Word already existed, and whatever we do, we can find nothing anterior to Him; for if He was in the beginning of all things, He has always existed. He then is before all time, He belongs to eternity. Therefore many theologians by "the beginning" understand eternity as the rational beginning of time. For eternity alone can serve as an absolute starting-point for our thought which, if it remains in time, always conceives a moment anterior to that in which it actually is placed.

"And the Word was with God." Hence the Word is personally distinct from God the Father, with Whom, however, we shall soon behold Him united in community of essence. To be with some one: does not this signify a rela-

three strophes in which each proposition has for its first word the last and most important word of the preceding one,

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος,  
Καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν,  
Καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος, κ. τ. λ.,

defines what the Word is in Himself and with relation to God, with relation to the universe, and with relation to man. It ends with eight other verses which, arranged according to the same method of repetition and rhythmical cadence, set forth a dogmatic affirmation of the Incarnation:

"And the Word was made flesh,  
And dwelt among us,  
And we saw His glory,  
The glory as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father,  
Full of grace and truth."

With his customary clearness of vision, M. l'Abbé Loisy has made a remarkable study of the Prologue of St. John, with regard to substance as well as form, in the *Revue d'Hist. et de Littér. Relig.*, 1897, pp. 43, 141, 249.

tion between two persons? Is not he who is with another distinct from him with whom he is? The Word, a real Person and not a divine mode, has therefore always been with God; this permanent union is essential to Him. An eternal movement of love bears Him toward His Father; He is in Him, in perpetual and active relation with Him. This is what the Evangelist has told us with a boldness of diction impossible to render in a translation of the text.<sup>3</sup>

“And the Word was God,” he continues. Hence the Word, though distinct from the Father, is no less one with God in essence, and the Son, as well as the Father, is God; for though He is another Person, He is not another being beside Him with Whom He is. Without being the Father, He is consubstantial with Him. While He is, indeed, the Word, He is perfectly God.

Such, then, is the gradation followed by the Evangelist: the Word, or Logos, is before all creation, and, consequently, He is eternal; He is with God, constituting in Him a distinct person; but, as nothing is eternally in God, unless it is God, St. John concludes, constructing his phrase so as to place in relief<sup>4</sup> the word that expresses his chief thought—“And the Word was God—*Deus erat Verbum.*”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> He employs the verb ἦν (*He or It was*) with a preposition signifying motion and taking the accusative, πρὸς τὸν θεόν. These words mean not only in God, in the presence of God, with God, but also in substantial, active communion with Him.

<sup>4</sup> He puts first the predicate of the proposition Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. There can be no mistaking the true meaning. The Word has been the subject of the two preceding propositions; It remains so in the third, as It does also in the phrase following. The question here is not who God is, but who the Word is.

<sup>5</sup> Theology has thrown a clear light on the very nature of the Word of God. As the sun is not without its splendour, it says, so God is not without His Word. This Word is the perfect and substantial image of His divine being, an image perpetually produced in an indivisible and eternally real manner, since God never for an instant ceases to know Himself, and in knowing Himself He generates His Word. (Cf. the magnificent work of Thomas-sin, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei.*)

Here, then, is "the Word who in the beginning was with God," fully characterised and known in the very mystery of His eternity in the bosom of the Father; He belongs to the divine essence, being to God what the Word is to the thought. He lives by Him interiorly, and He reveals Him to the world, to us in two chief works: the Creation of the world and the Redemption.

"All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made."

The fundamental power over life, the primal source, is the Father from Whom all things proceed; but nothing comes into existence without the intervention of the Word, Who gives form, order, beauty, life.<sup>6</sup> The great craftsman of the Father is, therefore, the Son. Through Him, as through eternal reason and wisdom, passes the activity of the Father, and all things, whether spiritual or material, are born of His breath, bear His impress, and follow His governing. For, it is He Who, by His unceasing action, creates all that subsists. He is the universal life of visible and invisible beings.<sup>7</sup> "In Him was life," not meaning His own life, which was manifest enough, but ours, "and the life was the light of man"; life so plentiful that all may draw therefrom without lessening it. In that life all beings find nutriment, as well the beings of the lower and material order as those of the superior and spiritual. The Word is, indeed, the sun of understandings, and as the sun manifests objects to the eyes of the body, so does the Word show the truth to the eyes of the intellect. "Reasonable souls," says St. Augustine, and with him all Catholic

<sup>6</sup> The Son is inseparable from the Father in the creative act; He is His hand, His arm, His counsellor, His strength, His energy, and hence He is equal to the Father in the work of creation.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the teachings of the Fathers on this point, particularly St. Athanasius, *Oratio contra Gentes*, 40-45; St. Greg. of Naz., *Oratio* xxxii, chs. vii, viii.



theology repeats it, "have no true light other than the Word of God Himself. He it is that ever gives them nourishment."<sup>8</sup> However, it is vain for the sun to shine for him who does not desire to see it; bad faith ever guards its right to close the eyes. Such has been the lot of mankind ever since the fall of the first man. Vainly had the Word projected His life and His light into the darkness of the world; the darkness withstood this divine illumination. He was forced to prepare a more startling revelation. The Word resolved to speak directly, face to face with mankind, so that man, entering into communication with the Word, might himself become a son of God. In this, blood, birth, human achievement were of no avail; it was by faith that entrance could be gained into the family of God.

Therefore "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The Evangelist asserts that He has been seen, contemplated—he himself is an immediate witness—in His glory, which was that of the only-begotten Son, descended from the Father, and full of grace and truth. John, the man sent from God to give testimony of the light, the Precursor authorised by heaven, has publicly testified to the divine generation of Jesus. He has proclaimed Him the only-begotten Son of God, Who has come down from heaven to earth to reveal the secrets He has read in the bosom of the Father, and in virtue of this to distribute grace and truth.

Such is the first genealogy of Jesus. He is essentially the Son of God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, and not created; God of God, light of light, true God born of the true God before all ages. His divine nature is loudly proclaimed, and this is what the fourth Evangelist will especially set forth in his biography of the Saviour.

<sup>8</sup> *De Gen. ad Litt.* 1, v, 30. (Cf. St. Thomas, *contra Gentes*, 1, iv, ch. xiii.)

His three predecessors do not contradict him. They, too, call Jesus God-with-us, Emmanuel, Son of God, absolutely and without restriction.<sup>9</sup> They recognise that this is His true name, a reality,<sup>10</sup> and that God decreed it for Him on two solemn occasions, with special complacency; and yet they do not seek to know the eternal and mysterious history of this Divine Person Who is incarnate in Jesus. The epoch at which the oral Gospel was formed did not require the clear exposition of sublime theology that we find in St. John. Judaism was still the great religious power, whose transformation was sought. Care had to be taken neither to startle it by the deeper mysteries of Christian teaching nor to disturb its most cherished convictions by the open preaching of a doctrine that seemed to be in opposition to the national monotheism. Therefore, seeking above all to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah, the Synoptic writers apply themselves in preference to establish that all the prophecies have found their perfect realisation in Him.

Among these prophecies, His descent from David was one of the most important. The prophet had said: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root."<sup>11</sup> They looked, therefore, to find growing up from this mutilated trunk that still remained in the soil after the great royal tree had been thrown down, from this root, trodden under foot and lifeless, the Restorer of Israel. That is why the Evangelists, by their genealogical tree, undertake to prove, each in his own way, that Jesus, the Son of the great King, is, indeed, the rod of salvation foretold by the prophets.

As a general proposition, we may say that His contemporaries never denied Him that honour. From the woman

<sup>9</sup> *St. Mark* i, 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Isa.* xi, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *St. Luke* i, 33-35.

of Chanaan, and the blind men of Jericho, and the people of Jerusalem to the Apostles, who make this assertion the basis of their apologetic demonstrations, every one acknowledges that the blood of kings coursed in His veins. "He comes, as the Angel said, to raise up and to sit on the throne of David, his grandfather."

In order to obtain legal confirmation of His descent, St. Matthew and St. Luke prepared two genealogies, which do not agree, but which both plainly depend upon historical data worthy of confidence.

Genealogy of Jesus according to St. Matthew :

Abraham	Solomon	Salathiel
Isaac	Roboam	Zorobabel
Jacob	Abia	Abiud
Judas and his brothers	Asa	Eliacim
Phares and Zara of Thamar	Josaphat	Azor
Esrom	Joram	Sadoc
Aram	Ozias	Achim
Aminadab	Joatham	Eliud
Naasson	Achaz	Eleazar
Salmon	Ezechias	Mathan
Booz of Rahab	Manasses	Jacob
Obed of Ruth	Amos	Joseph
Jesse	Josias	(Mary?)
14 David	28 Jechonias and his brothers	42 Jesus

Genealogy of Jesus according to St. Luke :

Joseph	Semei	Eliezer	Jesse
Heli	Joseph	Jorim	Obed
Mathat	Juda	Mathat	Booz
Levi	Joanna	Levi	Salmon
Melchi	Reza	Simeon	Naasson
Janne	Zorobabel	Judas	Aminadab
Joseph	Salathiel	Joseph	Aram
Mathathias	Neri	Jona	Esron
Amos	Melchi	Eliakim	Phares
Nahum	Addi	Melea	Judas
Hesli	Cosan	Menna	Jacob
Nagge	Helmadan	Mathatha	Isaac
Mahath	Her	Nathan	Abraham
Mathathias	Jesus	David	Thare

Nachor	Sale	Lamech	Cainan
Sarug	Cainan	Mathusale	Henos
Ragau	Arphaxed	Henoch	Seth
Phaleg	Sem	Jared	Adam
Heber	Noe	Malaleel	God

These lists were taken probably from the official records of the nation.<sup>12</sup> It is known that the Israelites carefully preserved the genealogy of the sacerdotal family, and particularly that of the royal family which was to produce the Messiah.<sup>13</sup>

At first glance, the two genealogies present a strange anomaly. Both Evangelists seem to make His descent from David pass through Joseph; but both expressly declare that Joseph counted for nothing in the miraculous and supernatural conception of Jesus. Can it be that both admit that simple adoption is sufficient to justify all that the prophets foretold of His royal Sonship? It is not probable; at any rate, it is easy to see that these two genealogical trees arrive at a result that is apparently contradictory. From David they follow different lines and assign to Jesus different grandfathers; St. Matthew gives Jacob, and St. Luke Heli. True, many ingenious explanations have been invented to show how Joseph could at the same time be the son of Jacob and of Heli. According to some, Jacob represents the direct descent from the kings and the immediate right to the throne of David; Heli rep-

<sup>12</sup> Josephus, in his *Life*, ch. i, mentions the *δημόσια δέλτοι*, and declares that he found his genealogy there. Hillel also made use of them to prove his descent from David. See *Bereschit rabba*, 98; also Hegesippus's account in Eusebius, *Hist. Ec.*, iii, 29, of the grandsons of Juda, brother of our Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Whatever Julius Africanus may say in Eusebius, i, 6, it is scarcely probable that Herod burned the genealogical records in order to escape the humiliating comparison of his descent with that of his principal subjects. But, even had he committed this criminal act, we know that the Jews of later than his time were acquainted with their line of ancestors. Paul knows quite well that he is of the tribe of Benjamin and by what genealogical ties he is connected with it. (*Rom.* xi, 1; *Phil.* iii, 5.)

resents only the descent collateral with the royal line. Joseph was thus the son of Heli by the collateral branch and heir of Jacob by the direct branch; and this would justify the Evangelists in calling him, at the same time, the son of Jacob and the son of Heli, the legal son, or, better, the heir of the one and the real son of the other. With the Jews, as with us, when the direct line becomes extinct, the inheritance passes to the collateral branch; hence the frequent coincidences that occur in the two genealogies. Thus, after Jechonias or Joachim, who dies without children, Salathiel of the collateral branch assumes the royal succession in the family of David. Three generations later the descent separates again; Eliacim, the eldest son of Juda (Abiud), represents the direct inheritance, and Joseph, the second son, the collateral descent. It is probable that the lines reunite in Mathat or Mathan, the grandfather of Joseph. He has two sons; the elder, Jacob, inherits the right to the throne of the descendants of David; but he dies without male issue,<sup>14</sup> and Joseph, the son of his brother Heli, falls into the succession of the nobility to transmit it to his adopted son Jesus.

According to many others, Jacob and Heli were half-brothers, sons of the same mother. The former died without children, and the other, following the Jewish law, took his sister-in-law in order to perpetuate the name and family of his brother. Thus Joseph was placed upon one list as the son of him who had really begotten him, and on the other as the son of him to whom the Leviratic precept ascribed him.

But all these hypotheses leave us dissatisfied; they are

<sup>14</sup> Some think he was the father of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thus the royal succession would come directly to the Messiah through His mother, who would thus be the heiress in direct descent, and indirectly through His adopted father Joseph, the heir-at-law.

more ingenious than probable; and as they establish between Jesus and the royal line of David a relation merely external and purely legal, we are irresistibly inclined to believe that at least one of these genealogies extends to Jesus through Mary His mother, and not through His adopted father Joseph.

St. Matthew, an Evangelist essentially Jewish, must have occupied himself principally with the legal view of the question. For the surroundings in which he dwelt, it was important to prove that Joseph, the reputed father of Jesus, really belonged to the race of David; this was an easy task. It is solely because, according to the official records and public opinion, this descent of Joseph was indisputable, that the title of son of David, given to Jesus, was not contested. By his marriage Joseph had not only guarded Mary's honour, he had above all communicated to Jesus the last ray of glory and the Messianic hopes that attached to the descendants of the ancient kings of Israel.

St. Matthew sought to establish this on the very first page of his Gospel. His genealogical tree is divided into three sections of fourteen members each, and extends from Abraham, the father of the faithful, down to Jesus, the Messiah. To obtain this perfect regularity, he had to sacrifice certain names; <sup>15</sup> but, in addition to the love the Orientals have for such parallel divisions, which aid the memory, the number fourteen had the advantage of comprising, in an eminent degree, seven, the sacred number, and of representing the numerical value of the name David, the real source of this genealogy. The first series extends from Abraham, the chief of God's people, to David, emphatically called the king; it recalls all the great memo-

<sup>15</sup> Between Joram and Ozias three well-known names are omitted: Ochozias, Joas, and Amasias; between Joram and Jechonias, Joachim ought to be as son and as father.

rics of the patriarchs. The second extends from Solomon to the captivity, and reminds us of the decadence and the ever-growing ingratitude of the kings of Israel. The third extends from the return out of captivity down to Jesus, the Restorer of the fallen glory of Israel. This last series, however, has only thirteen members.

It was at one time thought that careless copyists had omitted one name, but this is not probable; for, even in the time of Porphyry this omission had been pointed out. The Evangelist, however, has counted fourteen generations in this series; how is this to be explained? The name which seems to be wanting is probably that of Mary, which we do not count and which he, probably with reason, may have counted. For the Davidic descent passes from Joseph to Jesus, not directly as from father to son, but through Mary, to whom Joseph has communicated it by his marriage. Mary is the middle term that binds two strange men one to the other; that is why the Evangelist becomes extremely circumspect when he comes to the name of Joseph, and is careful in his expressions to determine the descent of Jesus: "Jacob," he says, "begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus Who is called the Christ."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>The Syriac translation of the Gospels, found in 1895 at Sinai by Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis and her sister, contains a different reading which attracted lively attention in England and Germany. We read therein: *Iaouseph da-mekira hewat léh Mariam betoulta aouled le Iesou de-métqeré Mesiha*, that is, "Joseph, to whom was affianced the Virgin Mary, begot Jesus who is called the Christ"; and farther on, verse 21, instead of "She shall beget a son," it says: *tilad lak déin bera*, which should be translated: "She shall beget thee a son," and in verse 25, *we-iéldat léh bera*, "and she begat him a son." Must we believe that the translator wished to deny the miraculous conception of Jesus? In that case he should have suppressed all the rest of the chapter which affirms it so categorically. He did not do so, for the very simple reason that he did not have the intention attributed to him. The expressions he employs, however explicit they are in appearance, find their true sense in the context, and, besides, their equivalent in the terms used by St. Matthew: *Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς*. The wife is supposed to beget her husband's child, and the Greek text says as much as the Syriac. But the context explains both clearly and reduces to its simple legal bearing the paternity of Joseph.

With regard to Jesus, Mary takes the part of father as well as mother; she, therefore, is worthy of constituting alone a separate degree in the royal genealogy, and thus we find that from Salathiel to Jesus there were fourteen generations.

St. Matthew's work is, then, complete, in its way, and perfectly exact; his thoroughly Jewish origin reveals itself in his characteristic observation of details. At last, he obtains the desired result, in demonstrating the accomplishment of two apparently contradictory prophecies. For the Messiah was to be born of a virgin, and at the same time was to be the heir to the throne of David. But, since women were excluded from the royal hereditary, how could a virgin communicate to her son rights which she did not possess? By becoming the wife of the heir of David, and by acquiring, through this union, the official rights which she would transmit even to the child who was not its fruit. Joseph is the son of David, Mary is Joseph's legitimate wife; therefore Jesus is the heir of David. Such is the summing-up of His civil standing; it sufficed for the views of the Evangelist and for the exigencies of Judeo-Christian society.

However, we can prove more than that. Jesus was not connected with the royal family by mere adoption, by a purely external tie; His descent was real, and was founded in the very essence of things. As the Angel,<sup>17</sup> the Evangelists,<sup>18</sup> and the Apostle Paul<sup>19</sup> attest, He had received the blood of David into His veins through Mary herself.

Side by side with this characteristically Jewish genealogy, preserved by St. Matthew, there was, then, room for

<sup>17</sup> *St. Luke* i, 32.

<sup>18</sup> *St. Luke* i, 27, 32, 69; ii, 5, etc. *St. Matt.* ix, 27; xii, 23, etc.; *St. Mark* x, 47, 48. Cf. *Acts* ii, 30; xiii, 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Romans* i, 3. Compare with *Gal.* iv, 4; *II Tim.* ii, 8; *Heb.* vii, 14, etc.



the more realistic genealogy of St. Luke. This latter was to be devoted particularly to proving that Jesus, son of a virgin, was, according to the flesh, the descendant of the kings of Israel. But, among the Greeks as among the Jews, women occupied no place in the genealogical list. The child was the son of the father, not of the mother. But, as the father was wanting in this case, Jesus must be referred to the grandfather, the name of the mother being suppressed, and a mere mention made of the reputed father, Joseph.

St. Luke has done this with all the keenness of his Hellenic intellect. "Jesus Himself," he says, "was beginning about the age of thirty years, being—as it was supposed—the son of Joseph, of Heli, of Mathat," etc.<sup>20</sup>

It is remarkable that, according to the rabbis, Mary was the daughter of Heli.<sup>21</sup> If they were inspired by the genealogy as St. Luke gives it, then they interpret it as we do; if they followed Jewish tradition, then our genealogy is in conformity with the most accurate historical data. It is possible that Heli is only an abbreviation of Eliachim, and that Eliachim is synonymous with Joachim,<sup>22</sup> the name which the common belief of the Church gives to the father of the Virgin Mary. In any case, it is still possible that Heli was also called Joachim. This was the supposition of Nechonias Ben-Cana in the passage reported by Galatin: "There was in Bethlehem of Juda a young virgin called Mary, daughter of Joachim Heli." This, again, was the response, according to the same author, that Judas the Just made to the consul who questioned him:

<sup>20</sup> Though all the other names have the article *τοῦ*, Joseph, which ought especially to have it, if he is the principal support of the genealogical tree, is without it. This is a sign that he has no part in this descent and is mentioned only to indicate what the public opinion was.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebraicæ*, in Lucam., ii, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Judith* xv, 9, and iv, 5-7-11, with IV *Kings* xxiii, 34.

“The maternal grandfather of the Messiah must be called Heli and Joachim.”<sup>23</sup>

The genealogical tree in St. Luke is quite in harmony with the ideas and character of the third Gospel and of St. Paul. He does not stop, as St. Matthew does, with the father of the faithful, but traces back even to God. The Saviour and the Good-Tidings are not for one people only, but for all. Jesus is not only the son of Abraham and a Jew, He is the son of Adam and the brother of all mankind. His Redemption will be as universal as His family.

The genealogy in St. Matthew followed the descending course of the generations, and was a reproduction of an existing record whereon the individuals had been inscribed in the order of birth. We see there the hand of a man who has revelation as a starting-point, and who advances calmly from cause to effect. The genealogy given by St. Luke goes from effect to cause; it retraces the course of time. It is clear that the author has transcribed a record already in existence, but without adding his own reflections, as St. Matthew did. He proceeds with care, as on ground not his own. If we include God and Caïnan, whom he has taken from the Septuagint, and who are not found in the Hebrew text, his genealogy comprises seventy-seven members; in other words, the most felicitous combination of the sacred number seven. But it is probable that St. Luke thought less of obtaining this ingenious combination than of observing the most scrupulous exactitude. Apparently he has not omitted a single member of the illustrious family. In fact, the line he follows, beginning with David, has none but obscure names over which there can be no dispute for or against; but the number of generations he establishes corresponds with sufficient correctness to the number of

<sup>23</sup> Pierre Galatin, *De Arcan. Cath. Veritatis*, vii, ch. 12.

years elapsed. Twice he seems to coincide with St. Matthew, in Salathiel and Zorobabel, first, and in Mathan or Mathat, later on; but he parts from him immediately,<sup>24</sup> and assumes a liberty of procedure that reveals a writer sure of his documents and careless of their agreement with the data that others may possess.

While St. Matthew seems to have derived his information, for the genealogy as well as for the narratives of Jesus's childhood, from the relations of Joseph, everything inclines us to believe that St. Luke was informed from sources emanating from Mary. However that may be, both have engraved for all ages this incomparable title of nobility, and have gloriously inscribed it at the beginning of their history of Jesus: St. Matthew on the first page of his Gospel, and St. Luke, as a souvenir perhaps of the place occupied in the book of Exodus<sup>25</sup> by the genealogy of Moses, at the moment when the young Carpenter of Nazareth is on the point of commencing His public career.

All the glory, the virtue, the faith, the piety of this grand race of Israel descends therefore upon Mary's Son, the Heir of the divine promises. Poor and outcast as He may seem to us in His humble beginning, we cannot but salute, upon His brow, so many glorious memories of the past, and in the blood that throbs in His heart we feel the very life of His most illustrious ancestors.

More than this, having learned from St. John that not only was He sprung from kings, but was, in His own Person, the very Word of God, we are justified in declaring

<sup>24</sup> It is thought by some that these names designate, in the two genealogies, different personages (see Wieseler). Others believe they are a consequence of the Leviratic law, and many think that the same personage is a real son in one branch and an adopted son in the other. (See Grimm, *Einh. der Evang.*, p. 737, and the fol.; Hervey, *Genealogies of Our Saviour*, London, 1853.)

<sup>25</sup> *Exod.* vi, 14.

that heaven and earth have united in the Messiah all that they accounted most precious in both.

And now that we have penetrated the secret of this Personality in Whom two distinct natures are united, let us stand firmly by the twofold profession which is to guide us in the exposition of this difficult biography: Jesus is God and man together. This thought will enlighten many obscurities and will initiate us fully into the secret of a life which each of us must imitate and adore.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONCEPTION OF JESUS

THE NEW MAN, LIKE ADAM, IS TO BE CREATED, NOT BORN—MARY, JOSEPH'S AFFIANCED, IS CHOSEN BY HEAVEN TO CO-OPERATE IN THIS CREATING—THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE—HIS COLLOQUY WITH MARY—MARY BECOMES THE MOTHER OF THE SON OF GOD—SHE HASTENS TO SHARE HER HEAVENLY SECRET WITH ELIZABETH—THE MAGNIFICAT DISCLOSES HER WHOLE SOUL. (St. Luke i, 26-56.)

THE genealogy presented by St. Luke, extending from Jesus to Adam, seems to establish between these two extreme terms a parallel which from the time of St. Paul has been logically developed in Christian dogma. If indeed Adam was the first of the old humanity, Jesus is the beginning of the new. Both appear to us the first stock of a new lineage, and, as they constitute the beginning, they must be created, not born. Since in them life will be raised up to a new level, or, better, since a new life is to be inaugurated, they shall not come forth in response to a normal effort of what already existed, but God will intervene to bring forth out of nothing that which as yet was not in existence.

Thus, in the creation of the first man, God takes a little earth—for man was to have some original bond that should hold him to the world he was to spiritualise—He breathes upon this clay, and Adam is created.

In the formation of the new man, God will take a drop of the blood of humanity that is to be purified, restored, and associated with divinity, and this drop of blood that has flowed through the veins not only of saints and holy women, but also of faithless kings and sinners, shall be the element of which His all-powerful activity will make use to form, without the aid of man, in the womb of a virgin, the Chief of the new humanity, Jesus Christ.

Like Adam, Jesus will have no father but God. He will be the true gift of heaven. Adam sprang from the earth; He from humanity. As some point of contact with the world they were to transform was required, Adam had his in a handful of clay, Jesus His in a molecule of living matter found in the purest and most perfect of the daughters of Juda.

. . . . .

In Nazareth of Galilee dwelt a young maiden of the house of David; her name was Mary.<sup>1</sup> Of her origin and of

<sup>1</sup> The name Mary seems to have been very common at this epoch. Several women of the Gospel bore it, *e. g.*, Mary Magdalen, Mary the wife of James, Mary the mother of Mark, and others. But while these are called *Μαρια*, the mother of Jesus is invariably called in the nominative, *Μαριάμ*. In Josephus, *Antiq.*, iv, 4, 6, this same name is written *Μαριάμμη* or *Μαριάμνη*. It is possible that the letter *μ* was added to come nearer to the original Hebrew Miriam, made famous by the sister of Moses, the only one of this name among all the women known in the Old Testament, for I *Paralip.* iv, 17, probably speaks of a man. Ordinarily the etymology of Hebrew names is easy to establish, especially of those of women, who nearly all have names of fruits, flowers, animals: Gazelle, Lily, Rose, Apple, etc. But this is not the case with this name, and the variety of meanings proposed for Miriam is large. The Greek Onomastica, falsely attributed to Philo and Origen, say that Miriam comes from *mar*, *bitter*, and *iam*, *sea*, or, again, from *mareya*, *sovereign*, if it be derived from the Aramean. St. Jerome says this: "Melius est, ut dicamus, sonare eam *stillam maris*, sive amarum mare. Sciendumque quod Maria, sermone Syro, domina nuncupatur." Copyists having, at an early date, written *stella* for *stilla*, although the great doctor never meant to translate as *star* the substantive *mar*, which, in *Is.* xl, 15, signifies *drop*, and is rightly rendered in the Vulgate by the word *stilla*, we know how much poetry and eloquence have profited by this mistake. But if Mary is a transformation

her earliest years the Sacred Books say nothing. But, as if to make up for this silence, legendary lore has given us many strange and incredible stories. Certain Apocryphal Gospels are replete with them, but it would be wrong to look for anything of serious import in these puerile compositions.<sup>2</sup> Wherever the work of falsehood is evident, neither art nor piety should seek for inspiration. All that is not the truth, being dangerous and unsound, ought to be earnestly rejected. Let us admit that we do not know whatever the true Gospels have not told us.

Mary was probably the daughter of Heli-Joachim, and sister, or rather sister-in-law,<sup>3</sup> of the wife of Cleophas

of the old Hebrew name Miriam, the latter ought to suggest the real etymology. But, by suppressing the ending *am*, which is neither a substantive nor an adjective, nor even a suffix of the third person plural, but an appendix without meaning, we find ourselves confronted by two roots, *marah* with a *heth*, and *mara* with an *aleph*. The first signifies "to be rebellious," the second "to be fat," which among the Orientals is synonymous with "to be beautiful." Hence, Miriam, with the suffix, would signify "our rebel" or "our beautiful one." The latter meaning would be more agreeable than the first, but probably not so well proved.

<sup>2</sup> One of these had great success and a lamentable influence, especially in the Church of the Orient. This was the *Protevangelium*, thus named because it reports facts anterior to what is contained in our canonical Gospels: the miraculous birth of Mary; her education in the Temple, where she was fed by the hands of angels; the series of prodigies that moved the high priest to confide her to Joseph, already an old man and burdened with a family, etc. This book, attributed to James, the brother of Our Lord, is mentioned by Origen in *Matt.* iii. Known probably to Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, vi, and to St. Justin, *Dial. c. Tryph.*, 78, we find it widespread in the Orient in the fourth century. Cf. Greg. of Nyssa, *Orat. in diem nat. Christi*; Epiphanius, *Hæres.*, lxxviii, 7, and lxxix, 5, etc. Although it was by no means accepted as canonical, it was read as a book of edification in the liturgies. For this purpose it had been translated into Syriac and Arabic. Finally, it found its way into the Occident under a double form and with diverse developments, in the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* and in the *Gospel of the pseudo-Matthew*. It was in this way that it had an influence on the histories of Mary and of Joseph, which an ill-inspired piety thought necessary to write. If the readers of these legends ever have the legitimate curiosity to run through the Apocrypha from which they are derived, they may easily judge of the credit they deserve. Cf. in Thilo and Tischendorf, *Ev. Apocrypha*.

<sup>3</sup> It would be somewhat surprising that two sisters should have borne the same name. Mary, the wife of Cleophas, may have been sister to Joseph. *St. John* xix, 25.

whose name also was Mary. Though belonging to the tribe of Juda, she had some connection with that of Levi. Her Davidic descent did not prevent her from being a relative <sup>4</sup> (*συγγενής*) of Elizabeth and of Zachary, members of the sacerdotal caste.

At the time of her appearance on the scene of the Gospel history, she is already affianced to Joseph, an obscure descendant, like herself, of the family of David. It may be that, as she had no brothers, and, hence, was heiress by privilege of the paternal house, she was obliged by law to become the wife of one of her relatives. In any case, her rare virtues, her modest grace, were enough to gain her due appreciation in the intimate circle of her kinsfolk and to secure her the heart of her cousin.

There is no good proof that Joseph had reached a mature age, and much less old age, when he began to consider this alliance; and there is not the slightest reason why Christian art, in obedience to ancient legends, should have obstinately persisted in casting upon this patriarchal union the ridiculous appearance to which the ill-assorted marriage of an aged man to a young girl is always exposed. It was in the plan of Providence that Joseph by his work should support the Holy Family, surround it with his protection, and forbid calumny or any suspicion of the most chaste of spouses. This was hardly the part of an old man. The testimony of the Apocryphal <sup>5</sup> writings has been accepted

<sup>4</sup> *St. Luke* i, 36.

<sup>5</sup> The Apocryphal Gospels agree in representing Joseph as a decrepit old man. The author of the *Protevangelium* ix, 2, makes him say: *πρεσβύτης | εἰμί*; | in the *Pseudo-Matth.* viii, he says: "Senex sum et filios habes; ut quid mihi infantulam istam traditis, cujus ætas minor est nepotibus meis?" According to the *History of Joseph* x, the pious carpenter married at the age of ninety years and died at the age of one hundred and eleven, thus surpassing by a year the age of the son of Jacob, whose name he bore. St. Epiphanius obstinately follows this extravagant opinion (*Hæres.*, li, lxxviii, etc.), and thinks that Joseph, having married at eighty years of age, returned from Egypt to Nazareth at eighty-four, and died at ninety-two. By his confident



too willingly by pusillanimous minds that ignore one's strength over one's own heart, when God says he must remain a virgin by the side of a virgin consecrated by grace from on high. Whoever has a knowledge of human nature knows that it is not old age that begets chastity, but virtue. Virtue is no less courageous and powerful at thirty than at fifty. Youth, generous and enthusiastic, is never unequal to great sacrifices.

Joseph, therefore, like every Israelite who came to man's estate, sought to establish his domestic hearth. Celibacy was not held in honour among the sons of the patriarchs. In his choice of Mary, he had followed the predilection of his heart. The details of the preliminary negotiations, the last word in which was to belong to God alone, are unknown to us.

In such a case the usual Jewish procedure was as follows: When the young man had determined his choice, he made known his desire to the father, mother, and brothers of the young maiden. If this was favourably received, they proceeded with the betrothal, that is, each party bound

acceptance of this apocryphal tradition, this ecclesiastical writer, whose ideas are frequently peculiar, prepared the way for those who assign to Joseph, as children by a former marriage, four sons, James, Joseph, Simeon, and Jude, and two daughters, Salome and Mary (cf. *Hæres.*, xxviii, 7, and lxxviii, 9. Cf. Anchorat, 60). These sons are in our Gospels called the brothers of Jesus. However great might be the personal authority of the doctors who share this opinion, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria, we know how vigorously St. Jerome refuted them in his book against Helvidius by his appeal to the authority of Apostolic Fathers, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, Justin the Martyr, etc. The only indication in our Gospels, brought forth to prove that Joseph was advanced in age when he espoused Mary, is that he had very probably died before Jesus began His public ministry. Indeed, after the incident in *St. Luke*, ch. ii, 42, he is no longer mentioned. But to give any value to this conclusion we must admit that old age is the only cause of death, which is not true. The text of the same Gospel tells us, ii, 51, that Jesus was subject to His parents, i. e., to His father and to His mother, and this inclines us to think that Joseph, after finding his Son in Jerusalem, had the happiness of serving Him a long time as His father, perhaps for fifteen or eighteen years.

himself by oath to contract marriage. To the head of the family the groom offered the *mohar*, or principal present, which was the price of the bride,<sup>6</sup> and to the members of the family the *mattan*, or friendly token of less importance,<sup>7</sup> intended to acknowledge the favour which each one, according to his power, had deigned to grant him.

These charming customs, which are also found among the Greeks of Homer, and among the Germans, have been preserved for us in several places in the Sacred Books in stories as admirable for their simplicity as for their poetry. They are still partly in vogue in Nazareth.

The agreement made and the *mohar* given—under Moses<sup>8</sup> it varied from thirty to fifty shekels—the young couple were considered legally united.<sup>9</sup>

Between betrothal and marriage, there was a certain time allowed to elapse: a whole year for maidens, a month for widows. The betrothed couple saw each other but rarely during that time; and they kept up their affectionate relations through the medium of one who was called the friend of the bridegroom.<sup>10</sup>

If the young maid were convicted of infidelity, she was deemed as culpable as if really married; she was exposed to ignominious repudiation with a bill of divorce, or could even be put to death. Philo tells us expressly<sup>11</sup> that the betrothal imposed the same bonds as marriage, and conferred the same rights, except that of cohabitation. The bridegroom was frequently called the husband, *ἀνὴρ*, and the bride also wife, *γυνή*; an infant conceived during the time of betrothal

<sup>6</sup> *Gen.* xxix, 18, 27; xxiv, 11, 12. *Jos.* xv, 16. *I Kings* xviii, 23–26. *II Kings* iii, 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Gen.* xiv, etc., and Le Camus' *Children of Nazareth*.

<sup>8</sup> *Exodus* xxi, 32; xxii, 15.

<sup>9</sup> *Deut.* xxii, 23.

<sup>10</sup> *St. John* iii, 29.

<sup>11</sup> *De Spec. Leg.*, p. 788. Cf. also the texts of the rabbis in Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebr.*, in *Matt.* i, 18.

was not illegitimate either in public opinion or before the law.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless the betrothed girl was always addressed as a maid, because she lived apart from her spouse, and could truthfully say that she had no husband.

Such was Mary's situation at the moment when God turned His eye upon her. She dwelt piously in her father's house or with her sister-in-law at Nazareth, leaving Providence to guide the course of her life and to determine the lot of her youth. She had been promised in marriage before her mind had, perhaps, ever confronted the grave obligations imposed by the conjugal tie. There are some chosen natures which, absorbed in meditation and in the ecstasy of divine love, ignore the world of men about them and are interested in heaven alone. It is from heaven that they await the decisive sign which will determine for them their future. Their virtue consists in willing heroically whatever God wills. The Gospel tells us that Mary's was one of these meditative souls that delight in interior communion with themselves and with the supernatural world. God had filled her with graces, and she herself, by her co-operation with them, had certainly become, among creatures, the least unworthy of the attention of her Creator. The lively faith of the patriarchs, the noble aspirations of the prophets, the sweet and humble devotion of holy women, blossomed in her like a pure and fragrant flower, and of all created souls, after that of Jesus, there was not one more balanced, more free from stain, more holy than hers.

Judging that the time was come for the redemption of the world, God deputed His Angel to negotiate the alliance of heaven with earth and to make preparation for the

<sup>12</sup> Selden, *Uxor. Hebr.*, 2, lib. ii, ch. 1, and *passim*. This observation decidedly favours the opinion that the conception of Jesus took place before Mary's marriage.

Incarnation of His Son. Gabriel, the messenger of the Good-Tidings, went down to Nazareth. It is of little interest to us whether the young maid was at prayer or at work, weaving cloth or spinning flax. For devout souls work is prayer, and their life, despite all human excitement and preoccupation, remains in perpetual converse with God, to Whom it is consecrated. She was alone when the Angel presented himself. "Hail, full of grace," said the envoy of Heaven, "the Lord is with thee." There could be nothing simpler or more gracious than the Angel's salutation to this lowly girl. It is not a good wish that he utters; it is a declaration that she is in a state of grace, and he felicitates Mary on her intimate union with God. It is a revelation for the simple child who has no suspicion of her extraordinary goodness. These words, as well as his sudden appearance, trouble her candour and disturb her modesty. Whence comes this salutation, and what does it mean? The Angel will tell her and thus put an end to all her anxiety: "Fear not, Mary," he says, "for thou hast found grace with God." He calls her by name to reassure her; and he reveals to her at once, together with her present sanctity, her future dignity: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and thou shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus." Mary, then, is to occupy, with regard to the Messiah, the place nature has assigned to motherhood. In her womb, as in a furrow that has been blessed, the rod of David shall spring up, and from this virginal womb, as from an untainted place of shelter, the flower of humanity shall issue forth. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

What tidings! and how overwhelming to the pious Virgin! The desire of the women of Israel of so many centuries was, then, to be fulfilled in her. A son was promised her and this son was rightly to be called the Son of God. Never had man borne such an awful title. In the child of this promise it was to be the exact expression of a super-human dignity and the proof of His heavenly origin. The true Messiah, it shall be His portion to raise up the throne of David, and to reign, with no other limit of duration than eternity, over the house of Jacob, of which all the faithful on earth shall constitute the mystical family.

All this is grand and beautiful, but disturbing to her virginal purity; hence the question so full of simplicity and candour dictated by her startled conscience: "How shall this be done, seeing that I know not man?" A virgin till that moment, she knows not man, and though her family had betrothed her to Joseph, she gives us to understand that she shall never know man, so great is her repugnance to all carnal union, however legitimate. Then Gabriel, eagerly but with reverence, calms the susceptibility of her troubled soul and imparts to her the secret of this chaste mystery: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Here, then, is no mention of the chief agent in all human generation, the father; it is the Holy Ghost who takes his place. The Spirit, Who in the beginning moved over the abyss to scatter abroad the life-germs out of which our world was to spring, shall envelop Mary within His shadow in order to prepare a new creation, and, taking in her virginal womb the thrice-holy germ that lay dormant there, shall rouse it from slumber, fecundate it, and quicken it with life.

And hence even from a human point of view we have a reason for calling the infant the Son of God. Even in His earthly nature He has no father but God. Therefore He is perfectly pure and holy, as was Adam, that other son of God,<sup>13</sup> when he stepped forth from the divine hand. But while Adam most pitiably disgraced the human nature of which he was the first representative, the Virgin's Child shall raise it to its most sublime ideal, giving to His disciples, who are to be His true descendants, an example of all human virtues, realised in the free use of the soul's faculties under the rule and for the glory of God.

Mary religiously gives ear to the Angel's words. She asks no sign; her faith and her love can do without it; but the Angel vouchsafes her a sign, closely connected with the conception of the Saviour. "And behold," he adds, as if to emphasise the unlooked-for utterance he is about to make, "thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren; because no word shall be impossible with God." Indeed, the laws by which God directs the world are not chains that bind His hands, but threads whose elasticity responds to all the plans of His wisdom and His mercy. The Angel, therefore, is right in saying that the word impossible is not God's.

These words penetrated Mary's soul like a ray of light, dispelling all the hesitation of her virginal candour. It was God that demanded a spouse or rather a human element for the creation of the new man. It was easy for her to consent to such an honour; but was there not a dark and menacing shadow in this perspective? Could not this miraculous way, over which the Angel sought to lead her, be the way of shame and scorn? How should she explain

<sup>13</sup> *St. Luke* iii, 38.

her condition to her betrothed? Would her strange story be credited? Would she be cursed or blessed, stoned or glorified? Everything foreboded the severest judgments, the most woful future. Happily there was in the mother the heroic courage which we shall admire later on in the Son; she, too, believes herself able to bear the cross with all its dishonour, if it is a question of saving the world. If God be with her, she cares not for aught else. "Behold," says she, "the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." Sublime words that reveal the state of that admirable soul, and which the most holy of creatures alone could find within her heart. Humility is the first to speak and offers a handmaid where a mother is sought; the spirit of sacrifice closely follows and gives utterance to the fiat, the consent that gives the Saviour to the world; finally, hope in the goodness of God speaks the last word. But what a refined delicacy presides in all she says! In the original text by a shade of meaning untranslatable into our language, instead of asking that all this be done immediately,<sup>14</sup> Mary most happily intimates that she leaves all to God as to the day and the hour for the accomplishment of this miracle. Not a trace of eagerness such as vanity might have suggested, not a sign of hesitation such as diffidence might have caused; pure heroism is what this gracious Virgin has attained to without having sought it.

The Angel withdrew immediately and bore back to Heaven that incomparable response of faith, love, and obedience.

Mary had but to await in silence the fulfilment of the divine message; but what must have been the emotions that stirred her soul! We shall soon hear again their lively echo

<sup>14</sup> Mary uses the aorist *γενούτο*, not the present.

in her hymn of thanksgiving. There is no doubt that from this moment her life-work became evident to her with all its griefs, its influences, and its triumphs; but humility and prudence warned her that the time had not yet come when she should reveal this divine mystery; and again her maiden timidity made her secret the easier and more dear. Mary knew how rare those souls are that enter simply into the designs of heaven, and how numerous are those impious souls that mar them. Would not this miraculous conception that was so exposed to calumny bring a smile to the countenance of a thoroughly malicious world, and would not the work of God be confounded in the minds of men with the work of demons?

At this moment, if Mary had been Joseph's spouse, her first duty would have been to communicate to him this heavenly message and to inform him of her consent to these divine plans, which would affect the conjugal right. We may even say that if she had lived with him in those relations of respectful but close affection which ordinarily bind the young betrothed, Joseph would not have failed to perceive in her candid soul the trace of the emotions awakened in her by this miraculous event.

Mary was only promised by her family. As she had herself given away neither her heart nor her own final promise, she felt herself almost free and somewhat as a stranger to her betrothed. Hence, with no fear of failing in what was right and becoming, she sought, outside of him, her first confidant for these great tidings. A woman's heart seemed fittest to receive the precious secret. In all probability her mother was no longer alive; Mary, therefore, naturally turned her thoughts to that cousin of whom the Angel had reminded her, and who, also being herself miraculously pregnant, would comprehend and appreciate better than any other this astonishing revelation.



The young maid arose and hastened into the mountains of Judea, to the sacerdotal city<sup>15</sup> where dwelt Zachary and Elizabeth his wife. It was at least a good four days' journey from Nazareth to the hill-country extending south from Jerusalem. But Mary, borne up by faith, a force that reckes of no obstacle, set out from Nazareth, thinking nothing of the fatigue of the journey or of the inconvenience of her absence.

When she presented herself on Zachary's threshold, filled with the great joy she could withhold no longer, and shedding about the divine grace that flooded her soul, she appeared to Elizabeth like a heavenly vision. The holy woman, having conceived the Precursor, could not be ignorant of the fact that the Messiah was about to come, but she had no suspicion as to whence He should come forth. The sight of Mary roused again all her hopes, and the sound of the first words she heard stirred her to the very depths of her being. Immediately the child she bore leaped, as sleeping nature moves and smiles at the approach of the sun's first rays. As she perceived this interior sign

<sup>15</sup> The question arises what city this was. Some suppose it to be Machærus, the first city of Judæa after Jerusalem, and situated at the foot of the Arabian mountains. Others—Ewald, Townsend—think it was Hebron, which was in the mountains of Judæa and was one of the principal sacerdotal cities. Many others—Ritter, Raumer, Robinson—believe the city of Judæa was no other than Jutta, of which the book of *Josue* speaks (xv, 55, and xxi, 16), and which was classed among the cities of the sacrificial priests. None of the manuscripts indicates any fault of copyists, and if the Evangelist had really wished to name the city where Zachary lived, he should have done it when he mentioned him for the first time. We see nothing, then, to prevent us from following the exact indications of tradition, and admitting that Zachary dwelt in Ain-Karim, about three and a half miles south-west of Jerusalem, and nearly four miles north-west of Bethlehem. The disciples of the Baptist, as well as the Christians, must have wished to preserve the memory of the place where their master had first seen the light of day; and Tobler's observation that the tradition concerning Ain-Karim dates no farther back than the Crusades is without foundation. The scene of the Visitation probably took place in Zachary's country house, where Elizabeth had retired, a short distance from the city.

that responded so well to the impressions of her soul, Elizabeth hesitated no longer, and, resigning her heart to the Spirit, Who took possession of her,<sup>16</sup> she gave a loud cry.<sup>17</sup>

Like the prophets, under an influence from on high, she beheld in God's secrets what human eye had not yet looked upon, she heard what no ear had yet heard. "Blessed art thou among women," she said to her cousin, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

So, then, the Incarnation is an accomplished fact; Elizabeth affirms it, because she experiences its miraculous influence: "For behold," she says, "as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy; and blessed art thou because thou hast believed; because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." Mary listens in silence to this first congratulation addressed by human lips to her divine maternity, and in accepting it her soul generously refers it to the God to Whom she owes her exceptional grandeur. She has no need, like Elizabeth, of a special inspiration of the Spirit in order to speak of the mystery with which she is filled; she has but to let flow from her lips the sentiments of a soul absorbed in divinity.

However great her happiness, her expression of it is ever calm and majestic; it is not an ordinary woman who is about to speak, it is a queen, the spouse of the Most High; and in her accents there is a something divine that astonishes and fills with admiration hearts worthy of hearing the voice of heaven.

"My soul," she says, "doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid."

<sup>16</sup> *St. Luke* i, 4.

<sup>17</sup> *St. Luke* i, 42.

Joy and thanksgiving unite in arousing her most lively transports. She exalts the Lord by submitting to His empire, and glorifying His majesty by complete surrender of her being in adoration and gratitude. Her spirit, that most subtle and lofty point where the soul meets God, that tabernacle wherein dwell her ideas of the invisible world, has been agitated beneath the merciful influence of the Saviour God. She, the humble daughter of the people, the frail offspring of a fallen family, the betrothed of an artisan, has received from Heaven the most consoling and most honourable attention.

“For behold,” she continues in another strophe of her sublime canticle, “from henceforth all nations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me and holy is His name; and His mercy is from generation unto generations to them that fear Him.”

Knowing fully her sudden greatness and her future and universal glory, Mary foretells her place in the future with a certainty of foresight equalled only by her modesty. She herself is but the humble pedestal bearing up the weight of a work constructed by the power, the holiness, and the mercy of God. Therefore it is God alone that she glorifies in the very midst of her joyful outbursts, God Who surrounds His servants with His mercy, and with His wrath hurls down His foes.

The time for this intervention by God is already come; Mary, Elizabeth, and Zachary are its first proof. The coming of the Messianic kingdom will only serve to make this glorious revolution universal.

The inspired Virgin goes on: “He hath showed might in His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away.”

Such will be the dominant idea in the Gospel: the weak are to overcome the strong. God wishes us to know that He has no need of our assistance in the accomplishment of His works. Self-abasement, cleansing of the soul, confession of helplessness, these are what are required, and then divine goodness will come to raise us up. The Pharisees in their pride, the rich of earth, Herod and Cæsar are turned aside, and two poor daughters of Israel are selected to become the objects of Heaven's great manifestation. Pride, tyranny, fortune have ceased to reign. God abhors them, and shelters with His affection, with His holiness, with a ray of His glory, humility, lowliness, and poverty. Faithful Israel shall witness it. While the enemies of God are overthrown, Israel shall be favoured with the fulfilment of the promises made to the patriarchs. This is the idea of the fourth strophe, which terminates the canticle:

“He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.”

In all the Gospel we have only this page to introduce us into the spiritual life of the Blessed Virgin; <sup>18</sup> but what a lightsome disclosure of an interior life such as our most filial devotion could never suspect! How unjust the judgment of that life, if, because her part is commonly unmentioned, we had confounded it with those ordinary lives that make up the history of humanity! What glowing warmth beneath that modest, calm exterior! Mary had nourished her youth with the finest passages in the Sacred Books; the

<sup>18</sup> It is hardly necessary to mention here the singular variant in the three manuscripts of the *Itala*, and confirmed, according to Origen in *Luc. Hom.*, vii (translated by St. Jerome), by several Greek witnesses, which places this sublime canticle on the lips of Elizabeth and not of Mary. There is nothing, either in the text or in the intrinsic testimony, to justify us in paying any attention to a reading manifestly at fault.

memory of the heroines of the Old Testament occupied her heart, and when she speaks the praise of God, she reverts to their thoughts, their expressions, which have been the constant food of her soul.<sup>19</sup> How strong and religious the breath that makes this young Virgin's breast to heave! She does not speak, she sings. The Hebrew language lent itself well to this unconscious transition from the vulgar form to the poetic and measured. The Semite's soul, under a deep impression, passed without an effort from conversation to the hymn, and mounted gradually to the most beautiful accents of lyric poetry.

The silence Mary had preserved up to that moment, with regard to her heavenly communication, had served only to move her to a livelier emotion and a more eloquent outpouring on the day when she should reveal her secret. This is why her piety, her gratitude, her spiritual joy, her abnegation, all speak at once from her lips. The soul of the illustrious faithful of the Old Testament had passed into hers. These great servants of Jehovah spoke in no more sublime, no more proud, no more generous accents than Mary as she prophesied, with a holy trembling, the new religious revolution and the triumph of the friends of God. Like them, she loved her people. The last word of her canticle is a touching cry of patriotism. She knew and honoured God better than they.

Her stay in Zachary's house was rather long; she remained there three months. This theocratic atmosphere was in harmony with the state of her soul. It was made up of the most perfect products of Judaism in delicacy of religious sentiment and in supernatural aspirations. In

<sup>19</sup> In the *Psalms* xxxiii, 4; xxxiv, 9; lxxv, 18, 19; cx, 9; cii, 17, etc., and especially in *Kings* ii; *Gen.* xxx, 13; *Ex.* xv, 16; *Deut.* vii, 9; *Isa.* xli, 8, and *Mich.* vii, 20, exegesis has sought and found the beautiful thoughts contained in the canticle. For this comparison see Geikie, *The Life of Christ*, vol. i, p. 109.

sweet effusions of piety and affection, they all glorified God and fortified their faith.

When John was born Zachary, as we have seen, regained his power of speech, and he, too, gave voice to his canticle. He had put himself in unison with the soul whom we have just heard.

After having taken part in the family feasts in honour of the birth and circumcision of John, Mary returned to her own house<sup>20</sup> to await there until it should please God to take account of a moral situation the gravity of which was getting more marked day by day.

<sup>20</sup> The expression used in St. Luke i, 56, *καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς*, gives us to understand that she was not accompanied by Joseph, and that she yet dwelt in her own family. There seems to be no reason why Joseph should not have been mentioned, if he had made the journey with her. It has been said, though without proof, that among the Jews the young betrothed women were not supposed to travel. There must have been a servant, a few relatives or friends, with her as company on her journey to her cousin's. This would not have been difficult, since at that epoch of the year. Nisan (March-April), many went to Jerusalem in caravans.

## CHAPTER III

# THE MARRIAGE OF MARY AND JOSEPH

JOSEPH DISCOVERS THAT MARY IS WITH CHILD—THE ANXIETY OF BOTH—GOD SPEAKS TO JOSEPH, THE JUST MAN—HE ASKS OF HIM A TWOFOLD SERVICE—JOSEPH TAKES MARY FOR HIS WIFE AND RESPECTS HER AS A SISTER—THE BROTHERS OF JESUS—THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN VIRGINITY. (Matt. i, 18–25.)

THE consequences of what God had brought to pass in the chaste womb of Mary soon became apparent. Joseph, who was more interested than any one else in the condition of his betrothed, took note of it.

According to the Evangelist's expression,<sup>1</sup> he discovered it as something unexpected; this is a proof that he knew nothing of the Angel's visit or of the pious conversations which Mary had with Elizabeth in Zachary's house. No doubt his religious, upright soul would have been no less submissive to the will of Heaven and no less believing than Mary's, had he been informed of what she had seen and heard. Being ignorant of it all, he was greatly troubled. He dared not to cast a doubt upon the virtue of his betrothed. The incomparable purity of her youthful life,

<sup>1</sup> The expression used by St. Matthew, "she was found to be with child," *εὗρέθη*, indicates that Joseph became aware of this by what he saw and not by what was told him.

and the serenity of her glance undisturbed by any worry, distinctly told him that suspicion would be a crime. Yet with his own eyes he beholds this absorbing reality. Thus his mind encounters, at the same time, a physical fact, Mary's pregnancy, and a moral fact no less undeniable, her virtue perfectly secure. To seek an explanation would be painful; Joseph knows better than any other the wound he would thus inflict upon her whom he has so esteemed and whom he yet reveres. To accept the situation and close his eyes seems to him unreasonable. He decides to follow the dictates of his good and honest heart.<sup>2</sup> Between the young girl's parents and himself there was merely a promise of marriage, simply a verbal bond. A word can yet undo what a word has done. Some would break the engagement with publicity; he, inspired by his benignity, a prominent feature of his character, will employ prudence and tact. The decision he proposes to make will be in accord with his dislike to believe her guilty. Secretly, without noise of scandal, he will give her permission to remain free. Thus the world shall see nothing in this affair. Joseph distrusts the justice of earthly magistrates, and, incapable himself of judging a case so difficult, he leaves it to the justice of heaven.

Mary naturally must have divined the anxiety of her

<sup>2</sup> Some interpreters express the opinion that Mary had informed her betrothed of the work God had accomplished in her, and that Joseph, being a just man, was unwilling to trust to her word alone in a matter of such delicacy. As guarantee of this divine intervention in Mary and of the miraculous origin of the child about to be born, he must himself be convinced by incontestable evidence. Short of that he will have nothing to do with a matter of such great importance from the religious point of view. On the other hand he cannot doubt Mary's word; he has always known her to be so perfect and she yet appears to him to be so holy and so pure. In his hesitation he is equally afraid either to denounce his betrothed before the judges or to protect her by taking her in marriage. He will repudiate her secretly, that is, by giving her a bill of divorce in legal form, without naming the grievance that called forth this determination. Thus he proves himself a just man, leaving it to heaven to clear up a situation too dark for him to decide.



betrothed, and, perhaps, feared the danger of a coming separation. So there began for her, together with her joy as a mother, a series of moral sufferings which were to torture her whole life. If Joseph refused to marry her, what a prospect! The purest of young virgins would become the most despised of the women of Nazareth, and the "fruit of her womb" would be born Himself under the weight of most awful dishonour. Must she then make known heaven's secret? Who will believe so strange a story? Ought she to keep silent beneath the blows of calumny? To be sure she is capable of immolating herself, but must not God's honour be kept intact, and what will be the future of this Messiah Whose cradle may be dishonoured by a calumny which appearances would seem to justify? Indeed, it was this very thought, sad and bitter as it was, that was to sustain Mary's faith. Logically, she had only to trust in God, Whose wisdom could not hold aloof from a work so miraculously undertaken; and though she knew not precisely whence her salvation was to come, Mary in all her anxiety awaited it undiscouraged.

The trouble that weighed down Joseph's soul had a deeper foundation and was more violent, since he had nothing to enlighten him in his trial. God could no longer be silent. One night when the carpenter had retired, his heart given up to the most bitter anguish, the Angel of God appeared to him. Through Moses,<sup>3</sup> Jehovah had said that He would sometimes speak to His prophets in dreams. Indeed, although in sleep, reason and judgment, the reflex faculties by whose aid the soul controls its impressions and discovers the imaginary from the real, generally lie dor-

<sup>3</sup> *Numbers* xii, 6. It is, perhaps, in conformity with this passage that, according to *St. Matthew*, the Angel of the Lord always speaks to Joseph or to the Magi in their sleep (*St. Matt.* i, 20; ii, 13; cf. ii, 12, 22), while in *St. Luke* he appears to Zachary, to Mary, and to the shepherds during their waking hours (*St. Luke* i, 11, 26; ii, 9, etc.).

mant, the sensibility and the imagination are unusually active. We can understand, then, that, even in these circumstances, God or a superior being can enter into communication with our spirit. However, there will always be a criterion of truth by whose aid the soul of him who sleeps may judge of these impressions; the soul is affected by the manifestation or real influence of a superior being in a manner quite different from that in which it is moved by illusions or simple dreams. The clearness of the perception, the importance of the communication, the deep conviction of him who, after awaking, declares that he did not dream, but saw, are sufficient to establish a radical distinction between the world of chimeras and the world of realities.

“Joseph, son of David,” said the Angel, “fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.”

The light beams in upon him and consolation flows to him from the words of heaven’s messenger as they fall upon his ear. All his uncertainty vanishes, all clouds are dispelled, and the just man feels himself no longer confronted by compromised virtue, but sees himself in the presence of the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. At once, before his eyes is clearly sketched out the providential and glorious part assigned to him by God. To guard Mary’s honour and that of Jesus, by sheltering mother and child under an official marriage, to respect her as the temple of the Most High, to nourish and protect Him as His own son; these are his duties dictated to him by the messenger from Heaven. A true descendant of the faithful of Israel, Joseph does not hesitate to accept this holy mission of charity and chastity.

He arose, says the Gospel, and did what the Angel had commanded; he took Mary for his wife.<sup>4</sup>

According to the most ancient and most unanimous Catholic belief, he lived with his spouse as if he were her brother, and Mary remained always a virgin. The Gospel, despite certain specious difficulties,<sup>5</sup> most certainly strengthens this conviction; for in assigning to Jesus as brothers those who were only His cousins, the sacred historians logically prove

<sup>4</sup> This proves that they were only betrothed, for if they had been already really married, there would have been nothing for Joseph to do. There would have been something *not to do*, that is, not to procure the bill of divorce. On the contrary, if, as we have proved, they were only affianced, Joseph had to act in taking Mary finally for his wife. Besides, the Angel, in these words, "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife," clearly indicates that the marriage had not yet been celebrated; for besides the fact that we cannot fear to do what is already done, but only what is to be done, the word "to take" (*accipere*) proves that the young maiden's family had not yet given up the betrothed to become a wife. If we do not admit this explanation, like Strauss in his *Leben Jesu*, vol. i, p. 173, etc., we become entangled in an intricate maze of difficulties.

<sup>5</sup> St. Matthew notes that Joseph respected his wife *until she had brought forth her first-born son*. This *ἕως οὗ*, they say, affirms or denies a thing only for the length of time indicated, and supposes the contrary after that limit is passed. So that when the Evangelist says that Joseph respected Mary until after the birth of Jesus, he means to tell us that this respect did not continue the same thereafter. But, as St. Jerome remarks, the adverb "until" explains what is doubtful and passes over that which is certain. Thus in saying that "Helvidius will not be converted until he dies," one does not pretend to say that after his death he will do penance. St. Matthew, then, declares that Mary remained a virgin until the birth of Jesus; and with regard to what took place after that, he says nothing, because the reader is supposed to know it from the remainder of the Gospel, which mentions no other children as being born of Mary. It is true that the phrase he employs seems somewhat strange; but we must bear in mind the genius of the Hebrew language, which has many such expressions (*Gen. viii, 7*): the raven "did not return till the waters were dried up upon the earth," not meaning that it returned afterward. The term "first-born," *πρωτότοκος*, which is wanting in several manuscripts, as applied to Jesus, drew the following remark from Lucian (*Dæmonax, 29*): "If he is the first, he is not the only one; if he is the only one, he is not first." But it is probable that the Evangelists employed this word by way of allusion to the law term, and to give to Jesus a title which flattered every true Israelite, since the first-born was offered to God, and became for a moment the man of God. The first-born mentioned by the law (*Ex. xiii, 2*) was often an only son and remained first even though alone. These different arguments prove nothing, if it is clear from other sources that Jesus had no brothers.

that He had no real brothers. It was among the customs of the Jews to give the title of brother to the cousins-german of the only son; while it was impossible to confer it, without a confusion of ideas, upon the cousins of one who already had own brothers. It is certain that those who are called in the Gospel the brothers of Jesus were only His cousins. They were James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude.<sup>6</sup> James, whom St. Mark calls "the less," and Joseph were the sons of Mary,<sup>7</sup> wife of Cleophas and sister or sister-in-law of the Blessed Virgin.<sup>8</sup> Therefore they were merely cousins of Jesus. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians,<sup>9</sup> plainly calls James the Less the brother of Our Lord. Now among the Apostles there were only two who bore the name of James, one the son of Zebedee and the other the son of Clopas or Cleophas, or even Alpheus, according to the different rendering in Greek of the original Aramean.<sup>10</sup> But in St. Paul there is question not of the former, who had already suffered martyrdom, but of the latter, who had an influential voice in the council of the Apostles, and who was the son of Alpheus, and by no means of Joseph. Yet he is called the brother of the Lord. But this James himself had a brother Jude; of this we are assured by the catalogue<sup>11</sup> of the Apostles and by the canonical Epistle of St. Jude. Here, then, is a third brother of Jesus, who, in reality, was only His cousin, since he was the son of Mary, wife of Cleophas. Simon therefore is the only one whose genealogy we cannot find explicitly given in the New Testament; but an author who is very nearly the contemporary

<sup>6</sup> *St. Matt.* xiii, 55.

<sup>7</sup> *St. Matt.* xxvii, 56; *St. Mark* xv, 40.

<sup>8</sup> *St. John* xix, 25. Cf. with *St. Matt.* xxvii, 56, and *St. Mark* xv, 40.

<sup>9</sup> *Gal.* i, 19.

<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew *cheth*, which is the first letter of this name, has been transcribed in Greek or in Latin, sometimes by a strong aspiration (hard *h*), and sometimes by the still rougher consonant *c* or *k*.

<sup>11</sup> *St. Luke* vi, 14, 16.

of the Apostles, Hegesippus—he wrote about the middle of the second century—tells us that the second bishop of Jerusalem was Simon, the son of Cleophas and cousin of Our Lord, and that he suffered martyrdom under Trajan,<sup>12</sup> at the age of one hundred and twenty years.

This proof seems conclusive.<sup>13</sup> We must not wonder, then, that Jesus, in His last moments, should confide His mother to a disciple, to a friend: Mary really had no child other than He Who was dying on the cross. She would not have accepted the hospitality of an adopted son, if she had any of her own. And we cannot say that Mary retired to John's house because of the incredulity of the brothers of Jesus; we find these same brothers at her side in the Cenacle and they share her faith and her hopes.

The logical conclusion is that the Spouse of the Holy Spirit could not become the wife of a mere mortal. The first-born had absorbed all the fecundity of the virginal womb that had conceived Him, as an exceptionally beautiful fruit or a particularly delicate flower absorbs all the vital force of the tree that gives it its bloom. Again, if man naturally respects the dwelling-place of Divinity how can

<sup>12</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.*, has preserved for us the testimony of this author. Thus in Book III, xi, 4, he says that: "Simeon, second bishop of Jerusalem, was cousin, ἀνεψιός, to the Lord, Clopas being, according to Hegesippus, brother of Joseph." Farther on, ch. xxxii, 5, and Book IV, ch. xxii, 15, he says on the word of the same historian that Simeon was the son of the *uncle of the Lord*, ὁ ἐκ θελοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου.

<sup>13</sup> A difficulty has been raised with regard to *John* vii, 5, where it is said that six months before the Passion the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him, which is hardly in accordance with the fact that three of them were already His Apostles. Shall we answer that this meant a relative incredulity? The text classes them among the unbelievers in Galilee: "Neither did His brethren believe in Him," and Jesus severely says to them: "The world cannot hate you," because they are still of the world and outside of the Kingdom of God. Nothing of this kind can be understood of the members of the Apostolic College (compare *St. John* xv, 19); it remains for us only to cast upon Joseph, son of Cleophas, and the husbands of the daughters of Cleophas called the sisters of Jesus, the accusation of unbelief which is here raised as an objection.

we admit that Joseph the Just, the Pious, did not feel himself bound to the deepest veneration for the blessed temple where the shadow of the living God had rested? He was, then, the first of that illustrious race that guards the Sanctuary of the Lord, not only in justice, but in most courageous chastity. He became the model of those priestly heroes who in all ages have spent their lives in chaste contemplation of the mysteries with which they are in touch, without a thought of the rights of flesh and blood which their hearts have solemnly renounced.

Joseph espoused Mary as the Catholic priest espouses the Church, with the intention of sacrifice and immolation; he offered himself generously to serve her and to honour her. This sense of a lofty mission received from heaven and freely accepted is sufficient to explain whatever is astonishing in the chastity of the priest, as well as in the virginal relations of these two young spouses. They alone fail to understand this mystery of virginity who, in the depth of their soul, have never heard the voice of God.

It is quite natural for us to believe that Joseph and Mary kept to themselves alone the secret of this union, which in reality was so exceptional, but which exteriorly was like any other. What could they hope to gain by revealing it to a world incapable of understanding it? Thus we may account later for the attitude of the Nazarenes toward Jesus, and for the incredulity of His near relatives.

## CHAPTER IV

### JESUS IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM

GOD'S TWOFOLD DESIGN IN HAVING MARY GO UP FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM—THE CENSUS IN PALESTINE—THE MANNER AND THE DATE OF ITS TAKING—NO PLACE IN THE CITY FOR THE SON OF DAVID—THE CARAVANSARY—HIS BIRTH IN THE MANGER—THE SONG OF THE ANGELS—ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS. (St. Luke ii, 1-20.)

MEANWHILE the ninth month from the message of the Angel was approaching, and the pious couple, full of faith and hope, could foresee that hour wherein the Child of the promise should be born. Even though a child conceived during the time of betrothal was legitimate according to the law, there was for Mary a profound humiliation in becoming a mother before nine months of married life had passed and amid surroundings where she was observed of all. The elect of the kingdom of the Messiah must, to be sure, be able to submit with resignation to public scorn and to most unjust accusations in order to merit their spiritual rehabilitation; but it could not be part of the plan of divine Providence to permit even the slightest stigma to be attached to the reputation of Mary or of Jesus. God, Who directs men and events according to His will, provoked a political measure the result of which was to withdraw Mary and Joseph out of Nazareth, and put them

amid new surroundings wholly indifferent to the apparent prematurity of a child's birth. The census of Palestine safeguarded the honour of the Holy Family and, at the same time, insured the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies by locating the cradle of the Messiah in Bethlehem, and not at Nazareth.

At that time, says St. Luke, Cæsar Augustus published an edict for the enrolment of the whole Roman world.

The time was favourable. For the first time the empire was in the enjoyment of universal peace, the temple of Janus was closed, and Augustus, at the very apogee of his power, was enabled to busy himself advantageously with the organisation of his vast estates.

Already, under the consulate of the first Cæsar and of Marcus Antonius, 44 B.C., a decree of the Senate, dividing the empire into four parts, had sent out surveyors in all directions to measure the provinces and to make complete records of the survey of lands. This work, which lasted thirty-two years, was completed only under Augustus. It was then that Balbus, according to the carefully collected results, outlined the configuration of all the provinces, and the agrarian law was everywhere proclaimed.<sup>1</sup>

The census of the population was the natural complement of the first work of surveying. In fact the *Breviarium* of the empire, written entirely under the hand of Augustus and read in the senate after his death, seems to indicate that this census had been already taken. We find there in detail all the revenues of the state, "the number of citizens and of allies in arms, the number of fleets, of kingdoms, and of provinces, the tributes and the feudal services."<sup>2</sup> How explain this precious nomenclature with-

<sup>1</sup> Frontin., *de Coloniis*, ed. Goes., p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Annales*, i, ii. Cf. Suetonius, *August.*, xxviii, 101, and Dion Cassius, liii, 30; lvi, 33.



out admitting a previous inquiry concerning the lands not only of the empire properly so called, but also of the allied peoples? Now Herod's kingdom was of the number of the *regna reddita* which were to be subjected to this measure.<sup>3</sup> Since the taking of Jerusalem by Pompey, Judea was tributary to Rome, and paid both head-tax and land-tax. During the latter years of Saturninus, according to Josephus, the Jews were forced to pledge by oath their fidelity to the emperor Augustus.<sup>4</sup>

When, therefore, Cæsar wished to have the census taken according to rule, he had only to speak; the vassal obeyed. For the census here spoken of seems to have been taken by the local authorities and according to Jewish customs. That is why Joseph went to be enrolled, not in Nazareth, his domicile, as the Roman custom<sup>5</sup> would demand, but, following the national custom, in Bethlehem, the place where his ancestors were born. The entire organisation of the Jewish state was based upon the distribution of Israel

<sup>3</sup> It is thought that the ninth and tenth lines to the right on the second tablet of the monument of Ancyra prove that the enrolment under Augustus included also the provinces which were allied with Rome. Cf. Huschke on this question; compare Wieseler in his *Synopse*. Tertullian (*adv. Marc.*, iv, 19) appeals to the public documents which prove historically that the census was taken under Augustus by Sentius Saturninus. The testimony of Cassiodorus (*Var.*, iii, 52) and of Suidas under the word ἀπογραφή, though of later date, are not without real value, as is proved by their independent character.

<sup>4</sup> *Antiq.*, xviii, 24. Six thousand Pharisees refused to take the oath; therefore they had kept account by registering those who gave or refused this homage.

<sup>5</sup> It is not, however, absolutely certain that the Roman law ordained that the enrolment of persons should be made in the place of residence and not the place of origin. We see in all times that the Latins residing at Rome were obliged to repair to their respective municipalities at the time of a census (Livy, xlii, 10). Since every native of Italy was a Roman citizen, it was decreed that each one should go to be enrolled in the city of which he was a citizen, that is, where he was born, where he had been adopted, or where he had been enfranchised; in other words, to his place of origin, whether natural or moral. (Cf. Zeller, *Choix d'Inscriptions Romaines*, p. 275: "Quæ municipia.")

into tribes, races, and families. If one desired to determine the number of citizens with order and exactness, it was necessary to attach each individual to his family, each family to its race (*gens*), each race to its tribe. The Twelve Tribes constituted the entire genealogical tree of Israel, and each one thus brought its contingent to the formation of the whole population.

Women were inscribed upon the public registers only when, having no brothers, they inherited the paternal property.<sup>6</sup> As we read nowhere that Mary had any brothers, it was probably under the title of heiress that she went to be enrolled with Joseph.

Some have asserted, not without some semblance of truth, that Mary took part in this enrolment, not by privilege, but because the obligation extended to all the women of Israel. We know,<sup>7</sup> in fact, that the law subjected to the personal tax all women between the ages of twelve and sixty years; and it is not surprising that, in order to determine their age, they should be obliged to present themselves even in a purely preliminary census, which was preparatory to a redistribution of the tax. After all, it may be that, in taking his spouse to Bethlehem, Joseph simply had the intention of seeking there a new domicile, if perchance his family relations should promise him employment and a modest degree of comfort. But the reasons that soared above all human views were those of Providence: God wished officially to prove the authentic ties by which Mary's son was connected with David, the great king of Israel.

The date of this journey would be precious if it were well determined, for it would mark the exact epoch when the Saviour of the world was born. But it is difficult to

<sup>6</sup> *Numbers xxxvi, 8-9.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ulpianus, D. L., xv, De Censibus.*

explain the passage in which St. Luke gives his chronological data. Does he say that the census was conducted by Quirinius who, at that time, was quæstor, and not governor of Syria? <sup>8</sup> Some assert that he does, and they are supported by a certain appearance of truth.<sup>9</sup>

Does he say that this enrolment preceded or prepared that of Quirinius, as others understand it? <sup>10</sup>

In neither case have we the precise date. We are reduced to simple conjecture. Each one must be content to take this general information in the sense that he may judge best. St. Luke's narrative still retains all its authority, and we shall find a peculiar charm in devotedly following its details, which are as beautiful as they are true.

<sup>8</sup> We know from Josephus, *Antiq.*, xviii, i, i (cf. *B. J.*, ii, 8, 1, etc.), that Quirinius, as governor of Syria, ten years later, took the census of Judea. This cannot be the one referred to here, unless we attribute a serious error to St. Luke.

<sup>9</sup> They believe with Tacitus (*Ann.*, 3, 48) that Quirinius, who was highly esteemed by the Emperor and deeply engrossed in the affairs of the East, might have had the financial administration of Syria at the same time that Varus held the military government there, beginning in the year 748 A.U.C.; Josephus (*Antiq.*, xvi, 9, 1-2, and *Bella Jud.*, 1, 27, 2) assigns to quæstors as well as to governors the title ἡγεμόνες; St. Luke's information, therefore, would be absolutely correct. Mommsen (*Res. Gestæ D. Augusti*) has tried to prove from a tomb inscription found at Tivoli that Quirinius held the double administration of Syria. Zumpt (*de Syria Romanorum Provincia*) defends the same position, but relies on different arguments. Cf. Zumpt, *Das Geburtsjahr Christi* (1869), pp. 1-90. M. Bour published a remarkable work in Rome in 1897: *L'Inscription de Quirinius et le recensement de S. Luc.* See also in the *Expositor*, April-June, 1897, an excellent study by Prof. Ramsay: *The Census of Quirinius*.

<sup>10</sup> Grammarians, long ago, in order to deliver apologists from a difficult and embarrassing text, translated this verse of St. Luke, "This enrolment took place *before* Quirinius was governor of Syria." Πρώτη is thus made a comparative preposition. It is not a rare thing indeed for a preposition to enter into the composition of a word and without repetition to govern all the words that follow. In St. John we read, ch. i, v. 15, Πρώτος μου ἦν. (See also xv, 18.) Profane authors also have similar constructions. Others translate the ἐγένετο as meaning "was completed," and the entire sentence reads: "This entire enrolment, commenced at that time, was completed under Quirinius." See Schanz, in *Luc.*, ii, 2.

Joseph, and Mary his espoused wife,<sup>11</sup> participated in the general movement of the children of Israel, and quitted Nazareth in Galilee to betake themselves, over a route of about eighty miles, to the city where was born their ancestor David. It was a long journey for a woman on the eve of confinement, but in the East journeys are made without haste, and the hospitality of the country permits the making of more than one stage upon the route. Besides this we have some reason to believe that Mary was exempt from the weaknesses of a painful pregnancy, since in her miraculous maternity she had been placed above the laws of nature. Besides, the enthusiasm of her soul was capable of dominating the fatigue of her body.

Full of the thought of God's intentions concerning her child, she journeys energetically on toward the place whither the prophecies of Israel summon her and to which she is drawn by the Messianic hope of the world. As she approaches the mountains of Juda, the great Biblical memories of Rachel, of Booz, of Ruth, of David, of which the tokens could be seen on all sides, cast a light of glory upon her providential mission, and, like new voices, tell her again and again of her greatness. The very child she bears in her chaste womb cannot remain silent, and in His divine language He inspires her with holiest enthusiasm. Each step of the young mother brings nearer the hour of the world's salvation; is not that sufficient to make her forget the fatigue of the road and surmount every obstacle?

When they arrived at Bethlehem, the gathering of people was immense, because of the census. The first comers

<sup>11</sup> This expression of the Evangelist is used of set purpose. Mary was Joseph's legal spouse; this is why she accompanied him in this journey; but as spouse she was respected by her husband as if she had been merely his betrothed.

had procured hospitality in the homes of their friends, or at the inns. The rest were lodged as best they could in the khan of the little town. The khan was probably the one that Chamaam, son of Berzellaï of Galaad, had had built at Bethlehem.<sup>12</sup> It was a station for caravans on the way to Egypt. What remains of it in the present Basilica of the Nativity can give no idea of what it was formerly.

The caravansary, such as it is to-day at Khan-el-Ahmar, or at Khan-Youb-Youseph for example, and as it was, no doubt, formerly, is a great square constructed of blocks of stone roughly laid one upon the other, and divided into two distinct parts: a court where the cattle were stabled and a cloister under which were arranged small chambers for travellers. These chambers and those which formed the fore part, serving as entrance to the khan, constituted the inn properly so called. Even in this inn Joseph and Mary found no room. The only refuge remaining was in the excavations cut in the rocks against which ordinarily all caravansaries are built and where, when the nights are cold, the flocks take shelter instead of standing in the court-yard.

It was, in fact, into one of these grottoes,<sup>13</sup> common to

<sup>12</sup> *Jer.* xli, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Not only in the Apocryphal Gospels do we find the tradition that Jesus was born in a grotto; it is also given by St. Justin in the second half of the second century. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 78, he says, "The Child being born then at Bethlehem because Joseph could not find a lodging in this town, they had taken quarters in a cave near by." Origen continues the tradition, declaring that this celebrated grotto is still shown at Bethlehem, *Δείκνυται τὸ ἐν Βηθλεεὺμ σπήλαιον, κ. τ. λ.* (cf. Cels., l, i, 51). About the year 325 the Empress Helen constructed a church to mark the spot where the Saviour of the world was born (See Eusebius, *Demonst.* vii, 2, and *De Vita Constantini*, iii, 41; Epiphanius, *Hæres.*, xx; Theodoret, *In Joel* ii, 31). It was near this cave in that land whence, as the Psalmist says, "*the truth came forth*," that Jerome, the ardent defender of the Church, desired to live and die. He brought there with him his illustrious friend, St. Paula, and her daughter, Eustochium, and together they deemed them-

man and beast, that Mary and Joseph had retreated. Perhaps not far from there, in the strong castle to which he had given his name,<sup>14</sup> Herod the Idumean, reclining on his couch of purple and gold, was receiving the homage of his courtiers, or was seated at a sumptuous holiday banquet. The true heirs of that throne were reposing on the straw of a stable. Bethlehem, that had received with acclaim Herod and Cæsar, both tyrants, or, at least, both usurpers, had closed her doors against the King Who had been foretold to her during forty centuries, and Whose life was of such great promise. True, the Messiah was not a pretender to the kingdoms of this perishable, corrupted world; He sought supremacy over a new, spiritual world, whose perfect realisation was already His chief desire.

Meanwhile Mary became a mother. She wrapped the new-born in swaddling-clothes and laid Him in the manger. What a crib for the Son of God! In like manner, later on, we shall say of His cross: What a throne for the King of the Universe!

There are antitheses so violent that the mind of man will not and cannot imagine them. These profound contrasts of power and of weakness, of grandeur and of humility, would be, in the formation of a human plan of religion, not only a misconception, but also, it seems to us, a moral impossibility and even lacking in sense. But Jesus, uniting the two extremes of divine glory and human misery, has made them a reality. He discovers a means of teaching

elves happy in self-sanctification and in their work for Jesus Christ, which consisted in translating the Scriptures on the spot where they had been so wonderfully fulfilled (*Epist. lviii, ad. Paulin., and passim*). Pilgrims still venerate in the Grotto of the Nativity at Bethlehem the memory of these pious personages, though the body of this valiant doctor of the Church was long ago transported, with the holy crib, to Rome and placed in the Church of St. Mary Major.

<sup>14</sup> Herodion.

us even in the depth of His manger, and from His obscure birth we derive most beneficial lessons. What a harsh rebuke to our presumptuous ambitions! What advice for us in our follies! Riches, honours, pleasures, He despises them. And will man, in his unlawful desires, deem himself wiser than his God!

At this very moment when Jesus is born, unnoticed by the powers of earth, the heavens are moved to their depths. The Angels sing their chants of glory to God and of hope to poor humanity.

The Evangelist tells us that to certain shepherds encamped in the neighbourhood and watching in turn over their flocks,<sup>15</sup> one of the Angels suddenly appeared, blinding them with his brilliancy and giving them a great fright. "Fear not," says the divine messenger, "for behold I bring you tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." At the same time heavenly voices chant the hymn of reconciliation over the cradle of the Reconciler: "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!" and the shepherds listen with delight to the joy of the invisible world which was to give the note to the adoration of mankind. In the presence of this work of works, the Incarnation, this wonder accomplished by God in the midst of

<sup>15</sup> About a mile to the east of Bethlehem, at a point where end four low hills quite suitable for guarding the flocks, are the remains of an old tower built on the level rock. At one side there is still a cave in which the lambs take shelter in winter time. The spot is called by the Arabs, Seiar-er-Rhanem, "sheep stable," which reminds us of Migdal Eder, "Tower of the flock," where St. Jerome said the angel appeared to the shepherds. The ruins of a church with its catacombs and of a vast convent give us to believe that, at an early date, this spot was venerated as the traditional scene of the heavenly manifestation.

time, the world must give forth a cry of admiration, of praise, of thanksgiving, that shall rise from heaven to heaven to those sublimest heights where the Eternal sits. The message of peace written in human flesh has just been sent to earth from God, the Father, the Judge so long angry and inexorable. It is for man to receive it with goodwill,<sup>16</sup> if he wishes to share in salvation.

When the heavenly manifestations had ceased the shepherds, finding themselves again alone, and impressed by the prodigies they had witnessed, said one to another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us." Naturally and unhesitatingly these good and simple souls follow the signs that came from heaven. They do not fear lest their simplicity be deceived. In all haste they hurry into Bethlehem.

It is probable that on that night there were not many children newly born in the city of David, and, in any case, none but the Messiah had a manger for His cradle. Some interpreters suppose that these pious shepherds, accustomed to lodge in the caravansary and the stable, already knew the Holy Family, and shared its hopes. However that may be, their joy must have been great when they beheld the fulfilment of what the Angel had announced. In a poor manger, on a little straw, was laid the new-born Child. About Him, transported in an ecstasy of joy, were Mary, Joseph, and perhaps a few friends, lodging like

<sup>16</sup> This chant of the Angels, forming a sort of distich, with exactly parallel members, has been diversely translated in the last part. Many maintain that it means: "Peace on earth to men whom God loves, or to men the object of divine goodwill." But the genitive *εὐδοκίας* is certainly here a genitive of quality and indicates something found, not in God, but in man, to which the genitive is attached. Others, with some reason, sacrifice the Alexandrine rendering, and read, like the Peschito, the T. R., and the Byzantines, the Angels' chant with *εὐδοκία* instead of *εὐδοκίας* in three separate acclamations: "Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth! Goodwill to men!"



them in the stable of the khan.<sup>17</sup> As they heard the story of the shepherds, they felt their pious admiration increase, and manifested it openly. Mary alone, long since acquainted with the divine plan of the Redemption, seems to have restrained herself in most attentive recollection. She was fixing in her heart the memory of the wonders related by simple and sincere lips.

The most ancient tradition tells us that she did not suffer the pains of child-birth. This belief is supported in the text of the Gospel, since, according to St. Luke, Mary took in her own hands the child she had just given to the world, wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid Him in the manger, as if she alone were worthy of gathering the fruit which she alone, among the daughters of Israel, had been worthy of bearing.

After a few hours of holy conversation, which strengthened the faith of all and exalted all their hopes, the shepherds joyously returned to their flocks. Their grateful hearts gave thanks to the God of Israel, Who, remembering His people, was, at last, about to inaugurate the era of His mercies.

It was winter time, according to the most common tradition, about the month of Tebeth,<sup>18</sup> and, judging from

<sup>17</sup> The Gospel says: "And all that heard wondered at those things that were told them by the shepherds." This seems to indicate more listeners than merely Mary and Joseph, as the former, at least, does not seem to have taken much part in the enthusiastic demonstration of those present.

<sup>18</sup> It belongs to the Church, in deference to the claims of her most ancient traditions, to determine the season of the year in which the Saviour was born. The Gospel says He was conceived six months after John the Baptist, and we, therefore, conclude that He was born fifteen months after Zachary beheld the vision in the Temple. It is impossible, however, to fix the date on which he had this vision. Those who place it on the twenty-third of September, the feast of the Expiations, since that was the only day on which the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, forget that, according to St. Luke, Zachary was a simple priest, and that he saw the Angel, not in the Holy of Holies, but near the altar of incense, that is, in that part of the Temple called the Hékal, or Holy Place. Others, seeking in the Jewish calendar, and in the order of the

priestly courses, the two weeks of the year when the course of Abia performed the sacerdotal functions, have noticed that its first week came about the middle of Casleu (November-December) and the second in the middle of Sivan (May-June). From this they conclude that Jesus was born about the beginning of March or of September, according as John was conceived in December or in June. But nothing is less certain than this hypothetical calculation of the sacerdotal weeks. The reasons given in proof of one or the other of these dates, that the flocks spent the night in the open air, or the census, which should not be undertaken except in the pleasant season, are not very strong. At the present day even, the Arabs, after the rains of December, about the middle of the month, leave their dwellings and go down into the plain with their flocks. Barclay, Schwartz, Schubert, and other famous travellers declare that at the end of December the days in Palestine are often the most agreeable of the year. The earth is covered with verdure, and Tobler assures us that they profit by this to take out the flocks from the folds and drive them to the fields. As for the best time in which to take the census, the Roman people were not accustomed to bother about the convenience of their allies or tributary provinces. If the order of Augustus was promulgated in September, while peace reigned in the empire, the enrolment could take place only in winter in those countries as far from Rome as Palestine. Therefore it is useless for these modern and serious writers to seek a date outside the winter solstice as the season in which Jesus Christ was born. Ellicott (*Lect. on the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ*) says that he was born in February in the year of Rome 750; Greswell (*Dissert. on the Harm.*, i, 402) on the fifth or sixth of April; Lardner (*Works*, v, i, 370) prefers the middle of August or November, etc. Among the older writers, Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, i, 21) gives the opinion of those who placed the Nativity on the twenty-fifth Pachon (May 20) or the twenty-fifth Pharmuthi (April 20). But he remarks that the date preferred in the universal tradition of the Alexandrian Church was between the eleventh and the fifteenth Tybi (from the sixth to the tenth of January).

The East and the West have at all times agreed that Jesus was born on one of the twelve sacred nights venerated with special devotion by antiquity (between the twenty-fifth of December and the sixth of January). There were, no doubt, mystical reasons why the great light of the Messiah should burst forth upon the world during the epoch when the sun, having reached the sign of Capricorn, rises above the solstitial point and returns again toward spring-time to communicate new life to earth. But the fundamental reason is that the first Christian generation, from an early date, had learned how the Saviour was born in a stable on a night in winter. We find in St. Hippolytus in *Dan.* iv, edit. Bonn, 1891, p. 19, the most ancient authority in favour of December twenty-fifth, as we learn from *Can. Pasc. an. 222*, he placed the Conception in the month of March. These circumstances of poverty and cold had become in tradition a natural commentary of the Gospel which the Church could not forget. The East at first celebrated the feast of the Nativity on the last of the twelve sacred nights. Rome preferred to employ it as a substitute for the pagan feast celebrated on the twenty-fourth of December in honor of the birth of the Invincible, *Natales Invicti* (St. Leo the Great, *Sermon* 21, 6; St. Augustine, c. *Faust.*, 20, 4). In the fifth century the Greek Church accepted the date adopted in the Roman Church (cf. Discourse of St. John Chrysostom, *De Die Natali Christi*), and since then the Nativity has been universally celebrated on the twenty-fifth of December.

that information, which appears to be the most exact, near the close of the year 749 A.U.C., about three months before the death of Herod.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> It is impossible to fix even the exact year in which Jesus was born. It is certain that He was born before the death of Herod, and consequently before the Passover of the year of Rome 750, and probably after the universal pacification of the world under Augustus, that is to say, at least later than the summer of 746. The edict for the enrolment of the Empire could have been promulgated only when the Temple of Janus had already solemnly been closed. Reliable chronologists have not gone beyond the series of years between 746 and 750 A.U.C. To know the exact year we must find, either in the Gospel or in profane history, information as yet undiscovered.

Thus we do not know whether the census which brought Mary to Bethlehem was taken by Quirinius, as St. Luke seems to say, or by Saturninus, as Tertullian holds: we know still less the year of their government in which these Roman delegates undertook it.

The calculations which bring us from the eleventh *Loüs* (August, 823, of Rome), the date of the ruin of the Temple, when the course of Joiarib was in service, back to 746, 747, 748, 749, when the course of Abia was fulfilling the sacerdotal functions in September, are not only very involved, but particularly useless, because they take for granted a very debatable issue. There is nothing to prove that John the Baptist was conceived in September.

The star of the Magi throws no light on the question. We must first know exactly what it was. Even though it were Jupiter and Saturn in conjunction, which we do not believe, in the sign of the *Pisces*, which occurred, according to Ideler, about the year of Rome 747, we should yet have to prove that it coincided perfectly with the birth of Jesus, neither preceding nor following it.

Finally, according to St. Luke, John the Baptist had already begun his preaching in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, at which time he baptised Jesus, who appeared to be *about* thirty years of age. But, in addition to the fact that St. Luke does not say for how long a time John had been baptising when Jesus came to him, and that, in addition, the expression "*about* thirty years" is somewhat vague, it has been hitherto impossible to determine the date of the elevation of Tiberius. It is a question whether his reign began at the death of Augustus or with the act by which he was associated in command. If it began with the death of Augustus, which occurred in August, 767, must we include, in the fifteen years mentioned by St. Luke, the year 767 itself? If with his association in the Empire, at what date must we place this association? According to Suetonius it was in 761; according to Paternulus, in 764.

It is plain, then, that there is not a single conclusive argument for any certain date. In choosing 749 we think we take the most probable, but we cannot blame chronologists who make a different choice.

## CHAPTER V

# JESUS UNDER THE LAW—THE CIRCUMCISION

THE MEANING OF THIS CEREMONY—ITS MINISTERS—  
THE SELECTION OF THE NAME BELONGED TO THE  
FATHER—GOD CHOSE THAT OF HIS SON—ITS PRO-  
PHETIC MEANING—TO JESUS, THE NAME OF THE PER-  
SON, IS ADDED CHRIST, THE NAME OF HIS FUNCTION.  
(St. Luke ii, 21.)

THE eighth day after birth was the customary time for the circumcision of the child. With this sacred ceremony Judaism took possession of the new-born. It officially declared Him a true son of Abraham; and with the imprinting of the very title of His nobility in His flesh, it unconsciously shed the first-fruits of a Blood that was to regenerate the world. St. Luke, having given much space to the incidents that surrounded the circumcision of John the Baptist, is exceptionally brief in his mention of that of Jesus. It was no doubt because circumcision had a real importance for John, who was a man of the Old Testament, while for Jesus, the man of the New Creation, it had simply the value of a symbol. But the symbol is nothing when the living reality of which it is the figure is at hand.

Following the Jewish custom, Jesus was circumcised, not in the Temple nor in the synagogue, but in the stable itself, or rather in the house, that sheltered the mother and

the child.<sup>1</sup> This ceremony was performed in the bosom of the family. The father or even the mother was the ordinary minister. Thus Abraham, Isaac, Jacob do not yield this paternal right to any other; and mothers were put to death by Antiochus for having circumcised their young children.<sup>2</sup> To Joseph, then, the head of the Holy Family, fell the honour of marking on the child's body the traditional, distinctive sign of the people of God.

As he made the incision, the father said: "Blessed be Jehovah, the Lord! He has sanctified His beloved in His mother's womb and has written His law in our flesh. He marks His sons with the sign of the covenant, to give them the blessings of Abraham, our father." And those present responded in the words of the Psalmist: "May he live, whom thou hast taken for thy child."<sup>3</sup>

At this circumcision the new-born received a name. The choice lay with the father, and he never renounced this right. Here God had exercised His paternal prerogative in proclaiming in advance that His Son, born of Mary, should be called Jesus. This name, which in Hebrew is spelled Jehosuah, and abbreviated into Jeshuah, had a sacred meaning, as is indicated by its derivation. Hosee, the son of Nun, was named by Moses Josue, *God saves*, because of the providential mission he was to accomplish by guiding his people into the Promised Land. Since then this name had become common in Israel; but to bestow it intentionally and as a presage of an exceptional mission upon a child of the people, born in a manger, was the act either of a fool or of a prophet.

What human reason could be imagined for hoping, on the eighth day after his birth, that the obscure son of a

<sup>1</sup> According to St. Matthew, the Star of the Magi stopped above the *house* where the Child was, and then the Magi visited mother and Son. II, 11.

<sup>2</sup> II *Mach.*, ch. vi.

<sup>3</sup> Hieros., *Berakot*, fol. xiii, 1.

Nazarene woman would save his people and the world? Assuredly none. Moreover, even at the time when the Evangelists made mention of the prophetic signification of this name in the Gospel story, who would have ventured to foretell the decisive influence, the healing force, the salvation, in a word, which the world would owe to Mary's Son? We must, then, recognise in this a categorical and well-defined prophecy, formulated before the event, a prophecy whose fulfilment would be only the more clearly perceived, evident, and undeniable in the course of ages. Has it been fulfilled, and is it true for him who can read history, that Jesus saved the world yesterday, is saving it to-day, and will save it in all future time?

From the first another name was added to that of Jesus, to designate more fully the Saviour of mankind: it was Christ or Anointed, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Meschiah.

The first, Jesus, was the name of the person, the latter the name of his official function. The former designates an individual in history; the latter his dignity as Messiah. Although the Old Testament grants the title of Anointed to kings, priests, or prophets, because all are consecrated by the symbolic unction, it was known that this designation was to belong really to the Desired of all nations.<sup>4</sup> For, in Him, through the hypostatic union, human nature was to receive the most perfect consecration with which it can be honoured by Divinity.

Custom has gradually made inseparable these two names: Jesus and Christ. The Apostle Paul, especially, seems to have contributed to make them pass thus united into the language of the primitive Church. Since then, how many lips have uttered them in joy, in pain, in faith, in hope,

<sup>4</sup> *Psalms lxi, 1; St. Luke iv, 18.*

before tyrants, in the prætorium, in the arena, on the funeral pile, despite allurements, in silence of the heart or in the whirl of life! We may say that this name—Jesus Christ—has been the password for virtuous, noble, heroic humanity, and under heaven there is no other given as the sign and means of salvation.

The ceremony of circumcision was performed in the presence of ten witnesses, who attested the child's official enrolment among the theocratic people. In the popular belief, Elias,<sup>5</sup> invisible, held his place among these witnesses. A seat of honour was prepared for him, and the young circumcised child was placed upon it for a moment to receive the blessing of the great servant of God. If it was the mission of this awful defender of Jehovah's rights to see that the patriarchal sign should mark in Israel the sources of life, until the true son of Abraham, the Messiah, should be come, he could now retire; his part was done. The son of the promise was born; circumcision was no longer necessary. Jehovah would henceforth know His people, not by any sign made upon the flesh, but by an invisible character impressed upon the soul. It was circumcision no longer, but faith that was to separate from the wicked the new people beloved of God.

<sup>5</sup> Buxtorf, *Synagoga Judaica*, lib. iv.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

AFTER THE SIMPLE SHEPHERDS, SCIENCE COMES TO JESUS' CRIB—THE MAGI OF CHALDEA—THE SIGN THEY BEHELD IN THE HEAVENS—THEIR ARRIVAL IN JERUSALEM—THE CRAFTY ATTITUDE OF THE AGED HEROD—THE STAR GUIDES THE MAGI TO BETHLEHEM—WHAT THEY DID THERE—THEIR RETURN INTO THEIR OWN COUNTRY. (St. Matthew ii, 1-12.)

GOD had begun by drawing to the cradle of the newborn Child the poor and ignorant in the person of the shepherds; but He could not exclude from salvation the wise and the great of earth. These latter, indeed, hold a providential and important place in the life of mankind. God sought the first-fruits of them among the Gentiles, in the plains of Chaldea,<sup>1</sup> whence He had taken Abraham, and among men who had devoted their lives to the search for truth, in the patient and logical study of nature.

<sup>1</sup> The text says that they came from the East, ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν, that is, the countries that extend from Palestine to the Euphrates. The word *Magi*, if derived from the Pehlevi *Mogh*, signifies priest, and if derived from the Sanskrit *Mahat*, μέγας, magnus, it means great. In either case history tells us that the Magi played an important part in the Assyrian Empire. After the decadence of various dynasties, they still remained powerful in the country, and even if they had spread into Arabia and into Egypt, it is no less true that, according to the usual meaning of the words, by the *East* the Gospel indicates Persia or Babylonia, the ordinary country of the Magi. (Cf. Lenormant, *La Magie chez les Chaldéens*, Paris, 1874, and W. Upham, *The Wise Men*, New York, 1873.)



To the shepherds, who kept watch in the mountains of Bethlehem, Angels had spoken the language of men; to the wise men of the East, who sought the signs of divine power in the firmament, a star spoke the language of heaven. Followers or even priests of the religion of Zoroaster, the Magi consecrated their lives to the study of astronomy and natural history in their relations to theology. They inquired into the secrets of all creation, and in Persia enjoyed the greatest consideration. Besides, to sustain themselves in public esteem, they did not fear to undertake long journeys, or to spend long vigils in study. Although distinguished from their fellow-citizens by their superiority, both intellectual and moral, they were kings only through an abuse of language.<sup>2</sup> These priests, these philosophers wore no crown but that of science and religion.

God, therefore, wished to guide these seekers after truth to the cradle of the Redeemer. But little was needed to enlighten their souls. In the religion of the Zend-Avesta, nothing was more common than the idea of redemption by the great Sosiosh, who was to triumph over evil and regenerate humanity. But very probably the reading of the sacred books had furnished clearer light, and had fixed in more precise form these doctrines, strangely made up, as they were, of error and truth. Undoubtedly, during the captivity in Babylon, the books of Moses and of the prophets had not escaped the notice of these wise men, so eager to learn and to judge the various systems of religion or of morality that obtained in the world. If they had read those lines wherein, with a touching cry of faith and love, the patri-

<sup>2</sup> This error is due to the false interpretation of Psalm lxxi, 10, *Reges Tharsis*, etc. The adoration spoken of here is not that of the Magi, but the homage the entire world gives to the Messiah. For *Tharsis and the Isles* were very probably European lands.

archs and the prophets announced the coming Messiah, they could not fail to participate in the Messianic hopes that filled the Orient.

At the first sign, these religious souls, who had already turned toward Jerusalem<sup>3</sup> as to the central point of the universal hope, were to understand the voice of heaven and start at once upon their journey to prove that God had fulfilled His promises. The sign, we have said, appeared in the firmament, the ordinary book read by their scrutinising glance. According to many modern scientists, it was nothing else than an astronomical phenomenon, quite natural, but sufficiently extraordinary since it occurs only once in eight hundred years. Two planets, Jupiter and Saturn, they say, coincided in the sign of Pisces at three different times, in May, in September, and in December, and appeared as one star, astonishing in size and brilliancy, and called by the Magi the star of the Messiah.

Kepler's calculations, corrected by Ideler, have all but demonstrated<sup>4</sup> that this phenomenon must have occurred about the year of Rome 747; but it is most difficult to admit that this corresponds fully with the data of the Gospel. The star that appears is something new, something miraculous, which science does not explain; that is why the Magi are moved. It advances before the travellers and halts above the house where the Holy Family is lodged. Therefore it could not have been very high above the earth, and in its nature it must have resembled a star much less than it did the column of fire that guided the Israelites in the desert. It went from north to south, preceding the travellers from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and consequently

<sup>3</sup> *Numbers* xxiv, 17.

<sup>4</sup> See Kepler, *De J. C. Vero Anno Natalitio* (Frankfort, 1614); Ideler, *Handbuch der Chronologie*, ii, 339. For the contrary, astronomically, see Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, under the word *Star*, and vol. ii, p. 1375.

did not follow the regular evolution of our sidereal world. The Gospel calls it a star, but it is not unusual to see things qualified in the Gospel according to their appearance and not according to their reality. This luminous body, miraculously formed in the air by inflammable substances, might, indeed, have been a meteor. The question has even been asked, with some reason, if it were visible to any other than the Magi. Heavenly signs are ordinarily for certain privileged souls, and God, Who enlightens the just, leaves in the dark those whom His grace has not selected.

However that may be, while Kepler's hypothesis, excluding every kind of miracle, seems to involve the divine responsibility, and insinuates that there is really a relation of causality perfectly established between the heavenly revolutions and earthly events, the idea of a miraculous star does not at all authorise the conclusions of a ridiculous astrology. In the first explanation, one might believe that man's lot depends fatally on the star under which he was born; in the second, the star is born to honour man, who is superior to it. In this way, the star owes its destiny to Jesus, but Jesus does not owe His destiny to the star. Astrology must not take advantage of a fact that stands absolutely beyond its puerile deductions. In this case, from a miraculous phenomenon, which they behold, the Magi legitimately deduce the extraordinary event which they await. Balaam's prophecy attracted their attention particularly, and, interpreting it in a literal sense, they suppose that the star which has appeared in the firmament is the visible symbol of the star of salvation that is to rise out of Jacob. This is their belief, they wish to behold it, and they start upon their journey to the country of the Messiah.

Did their departure coincide with the birth of Jesus,

or only with the appearance of the star? We do not know. In either case, as far as Gospel chronology is concerned, there is no need of entering upon the question of their journey and its length, for there was nothing to prevent the star from appearing before the event which it announced, or the Magi from beginning their pilgrimage soon enough to reach Bethlehem just when the king of the Jews was born.

Tradition varies as to the number of these pious pilgrims. St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom thought that there were twelve; but the most common opinion is that of St. Leo the Great, who held that there were only three. This opinion is probably founded in the number of presents mentioned in the Gospel, and the symbolical meaning of this sacred number has made it forever popular. In fact, the legend gathered by the Venerable Bede gives us not only a description of them,<sup>5</sup> but also gives us to understand that, from early times, these three travellers were looked upon simultaneously as the emblem of the three ages of life, and as the representations of the three great races that constitute humanity. In modern times, Christian art has been restrained within these data of common tradition; but the most antique paintings of the Catacombs represent indiscriminately two, three, and four Magi offering to Jesus their presents and their adoration.

The surprise of these pilgrims must have been great when they arrived in Jerusalem. They found the Holy City absolutely in ignorance of the religious anxiety that had brought them, Gentiles, through fatigue and danger, so far from their country. "Where is he that is born

<sup>5</sup> "Primus dicitur fuisse Melchior, qui, senex et canus barba prolixa et capillis, aurum obtulit Regi Domino. Secundus, nomine Gaspar, juvenis, imberbis, rubicundus, thure, quasi Deo oblatione digna, Deum honoravit. Tertius fuscus, integre barbatus, Balthassar nomine, per myrrham Filium hominis moriturum professus."—Bede, *De Collectaneis*.

King of the Jews?" they asked, impatiently. By thus emphasising the royal title of the Messiah, they seek to make the natural subjects of this King blush for their indifference. Besides, they know well that, though coming from among the Jews, the Messiah will nevertheless extend His Kingdom over the entire world. In coming to adore Him, they themselves are but the first-fruits of paganism as it bends beneath the sceptre of Heaven's envoy.

If by their question they showed that they were certain of the birth of this King, they at once gave the reason of this certainty by declaring that they had beheld the Messiah's star in the heavens. This assertion promptly gave rise to a rumour throughout Jerusalem. Herod was informed of it, and he was even more deeply moved than his people. That any one should come to seek a new King of the Jews in his capital and even in his palace, even after he had immolated his own children that he might not be supplanted, was somewhat strange and full of menace! Yet this crafty old man at once veiled his terror, and prepared his plan of campaign for vigorous action, if the rumour should happen to be well founded. Out of deference to his illustrious visitors he at once convoked the Sanhedrim. This, in theological questions, was the oracle accepted by all. It was composed of the high priests, that is, the chiefs of the twenty-four sacerdotal families, the doctors of the law or renowned Scribes, the elders of the people or influential laymen, all, in number seventy, under the presidency of the High Priest. The question was: "Where is the Messiah to be born?" They respond: "In Bethlehem of Juda." The proof of it was written in the prophecy of Micheas.<sup>6</sup> "And thou Bethlehem the land of Juda

<sup>6</sup> *Mich.* v, 2.

art not the least among the princes of Juda ; for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel." Herod then received the Magi in private audience and communicated this information to them. At the same time he inquired the exact time when the star first appeared. If, later on, he is obliged to defend himself against a redoubtable infant, he shall have taken every means to discover him. For the time being, he judged that he could do nothing better than overlook the faith of these pilgrims and pretend, by simulating perfect indifference, that he attached no importance to these chimerical reports. True, it would have cost him but little trouble to send men to Bethlehem to gain direct information, but that would favour the popular emotion, might, perhaps, provoke an armed resistance beside a cradle which superstition would wish to protect, and, in any case, would lend credence to the possibility of such an event. But this possibility alone was for him a real danger. The sceptic judged, therefore, that he had better ridicule the pilgrims, and leave them to follow their own way, as he would in treating with credulous and foolish people. It was, as it seems, the best way to hush up the affair, and, at the same time, if, perchance, there were a conspiracy, to follow up at leisure all its ramifications without awakening public attention. Nevertheless, he recommended to the Magi to continue their search, beseeching them to return when they had found the child, and to inform him of it. He himself would go to Bethlehem to adore Him, that is to say, to kill Him.

This attitude on the part of Herod, full of irony and scepticism, as well as the indifference of the Sanhedrim, must have wounded the religious souls of the Magi and filled them with discouragement. They, foreigners, had come, in spite of numberless obstacles, to salute the new

King; and the Jews, the people of the promise, at first ignorant of and then disdaining the great tidings, did not even dream of following them to honour His cradle! If these latter did not believe in the fulfilment of the prophecies they officially guarded, would the Gentiles, to whom they were not addressed, accord them any greater importance?

Meanwhile, the greater part of the day having been consumed in seeking or in awaiting the responses of the Sanhedrim, or in procuring the audience with Herod, the Magi were able to resume their journey only at a late hour. In the Orient they prefer to travel by night, but this time there was a special reason for following this custom, namely, the hope of seeing the guiding star again appear in the firmament. As a matter of fact, as they went forth from Jerusalem the miraculous star suddenly shone out before them as if inviting them to pursue their journey, and offering to guide them. After an hour and a half of travelling on a good road, through the mountains of Judea, they came to Bethlehem, where the star halted, indicating, by its emission of luminous rays, the dwelling of the new-born Child. It was no longer the stable of the khan, but a house properly so called. They entered; the Child was with Mary His mother, both illumined with heavenly beauty. The Magi prostrated themselves in token of their veneration, and adored Jesus. "When two men," says Herodotus, "meet on a road in the Orient, it is easy to determine their respective dignity. If they are on equal footing, they embrace by way of salute; if one is inferior to the other, he prostrates himself and adores his superior." Here the superiority of the Child they look upon<sup>7</sup> was undeniable, but their homage had in it something deeper than a mere

<sup>7</sup> Matt. ii, 11, says: *Καὶ προσέκυνησαν αὐτῷ.*

avowal of respect or dependence. It was eminently religious, and without grasping, perhaps, the whole theological notion of this Emmanuel Child-God Whom they contemplated, they nevertheless directed the expression of their veneration to the Messiah-King. The threefold offering they brought Him, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, although only the usual presents in Chaldea, appear to many to acknowledge more particularly in Him the King, the God, and the Man. At all events, the revelations Mary made to the pious visitors, during their stay in Bethlehem, dispelled the last of the clouds that enveloped these honest, generous souls. Why, then, with faith being strengthened more and more by the wonderful stories of the Holy Family, and with God rewarding the human merits of these courageous pilgrims, should not the belief of the Magi be as deep as that of Mary and Joseph?

The striking contrast they found between the interior of the dwelling of Bethlehem, bright with moral beauty and supernatural life, and the sombre palace of the tyrant of the Jews must have completed the woful impression of scepticism, incredulity, and malice which Herod had made in their hearts. Therefore the crafty monarch's recommendation to return through Jerusalem to bring news of the child, seemed to them fraught with peril. God strengthened them in this impression by a dream in which He plainly warned them to return into their country, not through Jerusalem, but by another route.<sup>8</sup>

They obeyed this command, and departed to bear the Good Tidings in their own land. Thus fell, at the first appearance of the Messiah, the barriers that had surrounded the worship of the true God in Palestine. All

<sup>8</sup> They came most probably by the road from Damascus to Jerusalem, and must have returned by the road through the desert to the south of the Dead Sea.



nations were invited to join in one flock under one shepherd. Men of the East, seers of Chaldea, go to your homes and proclaim that the nations are to unite at last in the holy brotherhood of one only religion; there are no longer either Jews or Gentiles, or Greeks or Barbarians; henceforward we shall know only Christians!

## CHAPTER VII

# THE PURIFICATION AND PRESENTATION

THE LAW OF PURIFICATION AND SUBSTITUTION—MARY AND JESUS SUBMIT—THE DECADENT PRIESTHOOD DOES NOT PERCEIVE THE MYSTERIES SO NEAR AT HAND—THE PIOUS SERVANTS OF GOD—SIMEON AND HIS PROPHETIC HYMN—ANNA, HER PART AS MODEST AS HER VIRTUE. (St. Luke ii, 22-38.)

UNDER the law of Moses,<sup>1</sup> a woman who had given birth to a son,<sup>2</sup> remained in her impurity a whole week. She could not leave her dwelling until the fortieth day, and then only to go up to the Temple, where she was purified. This God was pleased to exact not only for hygienic reasons, but to remind them that even in the legitimate work of marriage and the blessing of fecundity, after the fall of the first man, culpable concupiscence might still be present and require expiation.

On the other hand, if the child was the first-born, he became *holy to the Lord*, that is, separated from all that is profane and consecrated to the service of Jehovah.<sup>3</sup> In this way God affirmed His absolute power over Israel by

<sup>1</sup> *St. Luke* ii, 22; *Levit.* xii, 2.

<sup>2</sup> If a daughter was born, the impurity lasted two weeks and the seclusion eighty days. (Cf. Michaelis, *Mos. R.*, § 192.)

<sup>3</sup> *Exod.* xiii, 2.

claiming the first-fruits of the family, as He had demanded the first-fruits of the goods of earth and of domestic animals. The first-born son belonged, therefore, not to the father, but to the Lord; and, in the law of Moses, it was by these eldest-born of the different families that the official cult was to be rendered to the God of Israel. A special ordinance, however, had regulated that the tribe of Levi should fulfil the sacerdotal functions in their stead;<sup>4</sup> and this substitution was made only on condition that the first-born should be offered in the Temple and at the same time redeemed by a ransom of five shekels (about three dollars). This symbolic consecration, at which a priest, in the name of the Lord, took possession of the child and returned it to its parents only in consideration of an offering as ransom, was sufficient to maintain God's rights and the duties of each family in the Jewish theocracy.

When, therefore, the fortieth day had come, Mary and Jesus, under the guidance of Joseph, went up to the Temple, the mother for her purification, the Son to be consecrated to the Lord. Assuredly neither of these legal ceremonies was necessary on this occasion. Mary, having conceived and brought forth by exception to the common law, was free from all stain, and Jesus, being really the Son of God and His Priest, required no consecration to Him. But humility, discreet silence with regard to the divine plan, absolute respect for the law, were more becoming to the reserved, modest, pious character of Mary than a premature revelation of the heavenly mysteries or an imprudent declaration of her maternal rights. She came, then, as a woman with stain, to the door of the Temple, and a priest asperged her with blood. Unable to give a young lamb,<sup>5</sup> the obligatory offering of rich families, she made the offer-

<sup>4</sup> *Numbers* iii, 12, 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Levit.* xii, 6-8.

ing of the poor, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons, and was officially relieved of the legal impurity which, however, she had not contracted.

The Child, in turn, was presented to the Lord as a Victim before the altar; the priest received the ransom and, no doubt, intended to set Him at liberty. He knew not that this time substitution was not possible, for He Who was offering Himself was to substitute Himself for all mankind and to represent mankind in the service of God. Jesus was the only true Priest Whom all the tribe of Levi could not replace, and He gave Himself as the Victim of His own priesthood. Thirty years hence it will be seen, on the cross, that no one had dispensed Him from immolating Himself to the glory of His Father; it will be understood how He, the true sacrificial Priest and the sole Victim, supplanted, in a more perfect tabernacle,<sup>6</sup> a barren priesthood and fruitless victims.

The ceremony was nearly ended, and there was nothing to lift the veil of seeming unimportance that enveloped two lives in reality so extraordinary and so full of God. It is not unusual for Heaven to be pleased to conceal beneath the modest exterior of the most humble creatures its own majesty and its mighty manifestations, in such manner that those alone may discover them who look with the eyes of the soul and listen with the ear of a pure heart. The official priesthood, the slave of Pharisaical formalism and in complete spiritual degeneracy, had laid hands on the Holy of Holies with no suspicion of His majesty; two just and deeply religious souls among the people were now to speak in its place and hail the Saviour of Israel.

Simeon, whom some, without sufficient reason, have iden-

<sup>6</sup> *Heb.* ix, 11.

tified with Simeon the Pious,<sup>7</sup> or with the son of Hillel<sup>8</sup> and the father of Gamaliel, was an old man, just and fearing God. A faithful believer, he had long looked, with deep and indignant grief, upon the prevarications of Israel and her subjection under the yoke of the foreigner. In close communication with God, he had asked Him more than once what of His promises, and God had responded in the secrecy of His heart: "Have confidence, yet a little while and my Messiah cometh; thou shalt not see death before thou hast seen Him." And Simeon relied on this word.

Meanwhile long years fled away; a soul of less powerful character would have lost all hope; he, though near to the grave, bravely awaited.

On that day, under supernatural influence, he had entered the Temple. A first-born was being offered to the Lord. He looks upon the child; he looks upon the mother, and his soul is stirred to its depths. He asks whence comes this infant. From Bethlehem? It is from thence that the Messiah is to come forth. It is thither that the pilgrims from the East have gone, guided by the miraculous star.<sup>9</sup> He asks the honour of taking the new-born Child for a moment in his arms to scrutinise Him more closely, and while he contemplates Him, the Holy Ghost speaks deep

<sup>7</sup> Josephus (*Ant.*, xiv, 9, 4) gives us a fine portrait of this Simeon, a prophet, a member of the great council, a citizen beloved and blessed of all his people, who forced Herod himself to bend before the prestige of his piety and justice.

<sup>8</sup> This is not probable; for Hillel's son, who was influential in Jerusalem and renowned for his wisdom, became chief of the Sanhedrim in the year 13 A.D. Hence he could not have been an old man at the time of the birth of Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> The chronological order, which we are following and which is moreover the most natural, explains several points which have given rise to difficulties. The Magi having gone to Jerusalem, we see why Simeon's hopes revived. The scene of the Purification being noised abroad, the anxiety and fury of Herod are also understood. Besides, the two omissions which must be supplied in St. Luke, viz.: the visit of the Magi and the flight into Egypt, can only be placed immediately before and after the Purification.

down in his soul: "I have kept my promise; thou holdest the Saviour of Israel." Immediately the faith of the new patriarch is exalted, his eyes rise up toward heaven with an expression of gratitude and wonder, his heart beats with enthusiasm and he cries: <sup>10</sup>

"Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord,  
According to Thy word in peace;  
Because my eyes have seen Thy Salvation  
Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples,  
A Light to the revelation of the Gentiles,  
And the glory of Thy people, Israel."

Thus this saintly old man, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, assumed the solemn accent, the lyric phrase, the original and almost enigmatic words of the ancient prophets. He is the servant, Jehovah the Master; as long as it pleased the Master to suffer him to remain in this sad life awaiting the coming of the Saviour, he bore his burden with faith and courage; now that he has contemplated with his own eyes the instrument of salvation, the means of deliverance placed by God at the disposal of mankind, both pagan and Jew, let him be dismissed, let him go to rest in peace with his fathers. Better days are assured for all the world; what a consolation to a religious soul! None shall be excluded from the redemption, and, like Isaiah,<sup>11</sup> like the Psalmist,<sup>12</sup> like the patriarchs,<sup>13</sup> he sees the heavenly benediction spread over all creation without distinction of race, of Jew or pagan, of freemen or slaves.

For the Gentiles, who are wrapped in the gloom of a dark prison, the Messiah will be the light disclosing the

<sup>10</sup> One is struck with the power of these six verses. They may be divided into two strophes. In the first, v. 29 and 30, the holy old man expresses his joy at having lived to see Him who brings salvation, σωτήριον. In the second, v. 31 and 32, he predicts what salvation shall be for the nations and for the Jews.

<sup>11</sup> *Isa.* xi, xix, xiii.

<sup>12</sup> *Ps.* lxxxvii.

<sup>13</sup> *Gen.* xiii, 3; xviii, 18; xxviii, 14; xix, 10.

truth; for the humbled Jews He will be the glory restoring a downcast nation. The first to be called efficaciously to salvation are the pagans; the old man foresees the hostile attitude of the Jews toward the Messiah, and he announces the glorification of Israel as the final consequence of the conversion of the Gentiles. His thought is that Israel is to share in salvation only when the entire world shall have entered into the kingdom of the Messiah.

As they listened, Joseph and Mary were filled with wonder. Suddenly the old man, whose time-burdened brow seemed lighted with a heavenly glory, turned, and, blessing them, spoke to Mary. The prophetic instinct told him that, true mother as she was, she alone was united to Jesus by the ties of blood, while Joseph, as His adopted father, was attached to him merely by the bonds of the heart: "Behold," he adds, "this child is set<sup>14</sup> for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

All this is to be fulfilled just as the holy man foretells. From the beginning of His public life and in the first impression He makes on Israel, Jesus becomes for some a cause of scandal, for others a principle of resurrection. At once two camps are formed, widely separated; between them Jesus is raised upon the cross as the sign which the latter will defend and the former contradict. Mary, at the foot of the cross, will experience the anguish of death.

This terrible drama, no longer localised in the Jewish people, which is disappearing, will be enacted before all mankind, the true Israel, since it is eminently the child of

<sup>14</sup>This picture is borrowed from *Isa.* xxviii, 16; from *Dan.* ii, 54; and from *Zach.* iii, 9, where the Messiah is likened to the stone that bruises the wicked and saves the just.

God; and even to-day we still see some fall and some rise again around the cross; and the great sign for the contradiction of all ages, of all lands, of philosophy, of science, of literature, of eloquence, of our political institutions, of thought under all its forms, is the Christ. Permitting indifference to no man, He brings forth into the light of day the good or evil that is hidden in the depths of souls, and fatally does He inspire love or hate. The holy old man had indeed read the history of the future.

In the background of this stirring scene stood a woman who, perhaps, was the means of preserving for us these precious details.<sup>15</sup> She too was initiated into the secrets of Heaven by the Holy Spirit, and awaited on earth the reward of the tender virtues that filled her long life. This was Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser,<sup>16</sup> a prophetess, that is, a woman of good counsel in Jerusalem, who by her discourses defended God's law, reproving vice and encouraging virtue. It may be that she too had the privilege of knowing the future: God frequently rewards the generous fidelity of His servants with extraordinary gifts. The daughter of Phanuel, then at the age of eighty-four years,<sup>17</sup> had been a widow since the seventh year of her marriage. She no longer left the Temple, but honoured God with her fasts and prayers, and laboured for His glory day and night. With what joy must she have beheld the new Ruler of Israel, Who came to visit the

<sup>15</sup> The modest part she took in this affair and the peculiar tone of the narrative make this opinion probable.

<sup>16</sup> This genealogical detail deserves notice. It proves the existence of registers kept in Jewish families.

<sup>17</sup> We follow the most common interpretation, but it may be that the best reading is as follows: "Having lived seven years with her husband since her virginity, a widow for eighty-four years, she was quite advanced in age." Seven years of marriage and eighty-four of widowhood, with fifteen of virginity, would give a total of 106 years, which would justify the text: *προβεβηκυῖα ἐν ἡμέραις πολλαῖς.*



second Temple and thus make it more glorious than the first!

The Evangelist does not give us the words of happiness and of love that came forth from this faithful soul. He merely says that she paid homage to God, like Simeon, and that she spoke of Jesus to all those who looked for the redemption of Israel.

Thus Judaism, by the voice of two aged, holy souls, heirs of the ardent faith of olden times, saluted heaven's Envoy in the Temple in the midst of a silent priesthood. When God sees that His priests do not discern His hand and His work, He raises up religious souls with the extraordinary mission of speaking for them.

## CHAPTER VIII

# PERSECUTION AND FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

PUBLIC RUMOUR AWAKENS HEROD'S ANXIETY—HOW CRUELTY INSPIRES THE AGED TYRANT—THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT—THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS—HEROD'S DEATH—THE HOLY FAMILY RETURNS TO NAZARETH—THE VARIETY OF DOMICILES EXPLAINS WHAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE INEXPLICABLE. (St. Matt. ii, 13-23; St. Luke ii, 39-40.)

ON departing from Jerusalem the Holy Family left behind it a state of excitement that was full of danger. In the Temple, men could not but be moved by the incident that had occurred; Simeon and Anna related what they had seen to the people, and public report soon brought it to the ear of Herod himself.

The aged king was then probably dying in his palace in Jericho. He recollected that the Magi had not appeared on returning from Bethlehem, and, for the want of details as to the results of their journey, he gave himself up to all sorts of suppositions. The organisation of a vast conspiracy, at the time when his reign was about to end, did not seem to him improbable. His bitter experience of political life had made this fear a familiar one. By himself, a child was not redoubtable; but the people, who would surround his cradle with superstitious prejudice and patriotic hopes,

might create a real danger. This thought beset him and awoke the bloody instincts of a soul ever the more eager for crime the nearer it approached eternity. The unhappy man had massacred his priests and the great men of his kingdom with impunity; he had drowned his son-in-law, slaughtered his own sons Alexander, Aristobulus, Antipater; his uncles, his brother-in-law, his friends, his mother-in-law, Alexandra; he had strangled his wife, the beautiful Mariamne, whom he had loved nevertheless with wild passion; and all this blood, though torturing his conscience, seemed to make him more ferocious yet. History tells that toward the end of his life he thought of imprisoning in the amphitheatre of Jericho the heads of the most noble families of his kingdom, and of having them killed on the day of his death: "Thus," said he, "there will be tears at my funeral." It was natural, then, that, in the presence of any danger, imaginary or real, he should have recourse to extreme and most bloody measures. If the people dare to salute a newborn child as King of Israel, nothing is easier than to impose silence upon them by drowning all their foolish hopes in blood. If the Messiah is born, He shall die, and that His death may be certain, every child in and around Bethlehem two years of age and under shall be slaughtered. To put to death only that one indicated by public rumour, would not annihilate the pretensions of patriotic agitators. These might yet be transferred to any child of the generation just begun in that part of Judea. But if all are massacred without exception, the popular excitement will subside of itself, for Herod will say to the Jews: "Either your Messiah is not come, or, if He is come, He has died at His birth." Thus reasoned this aged monarch, and immediately he gave the order to put his horrible plan of campaign into execution.

God, however, has no difficulty in dealing with the wicked

and their criminal projects. After the presentation in the Temple, Joseph had led the Holy Family back to Bethlehem,<sup>1</sup> where, as we have said, he desired, perhaps, to fix his home. The labourer who carries his whole fortune in his arms, readily settles down where he finds it possible to secure his daily bread. The story of the shepherds and the visit of the Magi must have lent importance to the Holy Family. Everything seemed to give promise of labour and modest ease at Bethlehem, and it is not improbable that the Holy Family possessed some acres of land, the insignificant heirloom of a royal fortune long since scattered.

Herod's envoys, then, were to surprise the Child and include Him in the general massacre. God warned Joseph in his sleep. The faithful servant retained, even in his dreams, consciousness of the responsibilities he had accepted. Thus does the sentinel, knowing no repose, watch before the tent of his sleeping king, and, at the first sign of danger, seize in his arms and bear away the prince in safety. "Arise," said the Angel of the Lord to Joseph, "and take the Child and his mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."

Immediately, without waiting for daylight, Joseph arose

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, who seems not to have known of the flight into Egypt, says that they returned to Nazareth. The omission he has made here does not contradict in any way the account given by St. Matthew. He declares that, after being born at Bethlehem, Jesus had His home fixed at Nazareth; but he does not exclude the incidents that might intervene between His birth at Bethlehem and His installation at Nazareth. Such omissions are not errors. They prove, however, that these two Evangelists, whatever Resch may say in his very curious book, *Das Kindheits Evangelium nach Lucas und Matthæus* (Henrichs, 1897), did not draw from a common source, and even that they were unknown to each other. Otherwise we would have to conclude that the one gave but little credit to the other.

and turned his steps toward Egypt with the Mother and the Child.<sup>2</sup>

The Egyptian frontier was only two days' journey from Bethlehem. In a week one could reach the very heart of this rich country, which had been at all times the natural refuge of those whom persecution or adversity drove out of Palestine. Thither the Jews had fled from the wrath of Nabuchodonosor; thither had gone Onias, the son of the High Priest of that name, with many of his compatriots, to escape the vengeance of Antiochus. During the wars of Hircanus and Aristobulus, the Jews again had taken refuge there. A magnificent temple erected at Leontopolis by their predecessors, under Ptolemy Philometor, reminded them of the Temple of Jerusalem. Finally they established themselves in that land, and, at the beginning of the Christian era, we find a considerable colony of Jews flourishing, not only in Alexandria, where they formed a third of the population, but also in the district of Heliopolis, where they were divided into groups according to their professions.

Joseph probably joined one of these trades-corporations, particularly prosperous at Babylon or old Cairo, in order to find work and food immediately. On the other hand it has been supposed, with some reason, that the gifts of the Magi had fully sufficed for the expenses of the journey. According to the legend, they more than sufficed, "for the palm-trees all along the way suddenly brought forth their fruit, and miraculously bent down their branches to nourish the august travellers, while the dragons

<sup>2</sup> We learn the principal stages of this journey from legends; at Hebron and at Gaza are shown places where the Holy Family passed the night. (See Kitto, *Life of Christ*, 139.) The Holy Family took up its residence at Metariyeh, near Heliopolis. The old sycamore-tree that sheltered the travellers is still pointed out, and branches of it are presented to credulous pilgrims.

and the leopards came to adore the Divine Child, and the roses of Jericho bloomed beneath His steps." According to other wonderful tales, at the moment when He first set foot on the soil of Egypt, the statues of the false gods fell down from their pedestals and were broken. But the Gospel, stern as truth, says nothing with regard to these strange prodigies, and leaves us the right to think that they existed only in the diseased imagination of certain apocryphal writers who were eager to invent where history was silent.

Meanwhile, around Bethlehem, Herod's commands were receiving a terrible fulfilment. In this town of three thousand inhabitants, there might have been twenty or thirty male children under two years of age; the assassin's fury spared not one of them. We cannot say whether they were butchered all together in one frightful slaughter, or one after the other, in silence, or by what means; but it is not unlikely that Herod skilfully concealed the hand that gave the death-stroke to these innocents. At all events, although history has neglected to make a note of this barbarous act<sup>3</sup> in a reign already replete with blood, the mothers' hearts felt no less the awful grief spread abroad by the violence of the murderers. Rachel, who was buried on the road to Ephrata, seemed to weep again within her tomb, and to join her lamentations to those of the mothers who grieved without desire of consolation, because their sons were no more. She, Jacob's spouse of old, must have lamented above all for the sad subjection of her people,

<sup>3</sup> Macrobius, in the fourth century of our era, is the only author who seems to have read in more ancient documents any historical evidence of this massacre. He relates (*Saturnal.*, ii, 4) that Augustus, on learning that Herod had included his own son in an execution of young children carried out by his orders in Syria, exclaimed: "It is better to be Herod's pig than his son." The play upon the words *ἔν* and *ἰδόν* would lead us to believe, in spite of the historical error as to the death of Antipater, that the pun was authentic.

who endured in silence the sanguinary despotism of the aged tyrant. If Jeremias could say to the Israelites, as they were led to captivity past the tomb of Rachel: "Hearken to the groans of your mother; <sup>4</sup> she who was dying in the pains of child-birth now suffers anew," had not the Evangelist the right to exclaim that the illustrious mother of Israel shall weep yet more on beholding her people, in their own country, under a servitude more galling still than that of Babylon?

All these crimes did not check the ravages of the awful disease that had seized upon the despot. An ulcer was devouring his stomach; his intestines, in their corruption, were a moving mass; the infectious odour spread through all the palace. The unfortunate man sought to put an end to his life; but he was prevented, as if the finger of God would carve on every portion of his body the punishment of his crimes. He breathed only with great pain; a perpetual fever caused him to experience the torment of insatiable thirst, and at the same time nothing could satisfy his hunger. He endured all the physical woes of the damned, and probably, too, all their moral woes. Finally, five days after having put his son Antipater to death, he died at the age of seventy years, in the thirty-fourth year of his reign.<sup>5</sup>

Then came the Angel of God at once <sup>6</sup> to tell Joseph that he could return to his country, for they who sought the life of the Child were dead. Joseph, therefore, went up out of Egypt and set out once more for Palestine. At the frontier he learned that Archelaus was reigning in

<sup>4</sup> *Jer.* xxxi, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Antiq.*, xvii, 6, 5, *et seq.*

<sup>6</sup> If our chronology is correct, the stay in Egypt was very short. Herod died three months after the birth of Jesus, and Joseph, warned by the Angel, returned from exile without delay. The brevity and the unimportance of the incident explain perhaps why it was not set down in the memoir or the traditional accounts of the Childhood utilized by St. Luke.

Judea, and he feared to go farther. A worthy son of his father, this prince had just had three thousand of his subjects slaughtered in the Temple. On the other hand, everything favoured the return of the Holy Family into Galilee, the province which had fallen to the lot of Herod Antipas. This prince, who at the beginning was peaceable and good for political reasons, and occupied himself in beautifying his estates in order to attract foreigners, appeared to desire the greatest possible alleviation of the fortunes of his people. Joseph, therefore, gave up his project of establishing himself at Bethlehem, and went to Nazareth, which was to become the own city of the Messiah.

Thus did God, by these successive journeys, deliver the Child of the miracle not only from the hatred of His enemies, but also from the premature worship and untimely devotion of His friends. Herod's persecution had borne Him away, like a blast of wind, far from the scene of the wonderful manifestations of God. After His departure, the shepherds must have forgotten the chant of the angels, and, believing souls, scandalised, perhaps, by this hurried flight, wondered if He were truly God who could fear the wrath of a mortal king. Faith ever dies more quickly than it is born. Were the heavenly signs they thought they had seen nothing more than the illusions of a moment? Simeon and Anna were dead, and none had inherited their ardent faith. Bethlehem and Judea had no longer any recollection of Jesus. Nazareth, an obscure town, whence nothing good was expected to come forth, received Him. There He dwelt up to the time of His solemn manifestation.



## CHAPTER IX

### CHILDHOOD AT NAZARETH

THE NAZARETH OF TO-DAY—A CARPENTER'S SHOP—THE EDUCATION OF JESUS AND THE QUESTION OF HIS INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT—THE ONLY KNOWN INCIDENT OF HIS YOUTH—JESUS LOST AND FOUND SEATED AMONG THE DOCTORS IN THE TEMPLE—HIS RETURN TO THE OBSCURE LIFE IN THE WORKSHOP. (St. Luke ii, 41-52.)

AFTER Jerusalem, the city of greatest memories for a Christian, is Nazareth,<sup>1</sup> the home of the Saviour.

Faith delights, amid the ruins that cover the Holy Land, to find this modest city still standing and inhabited.

Nazareth, in fact, did not disappear, like so many other biblical sites, in the long series of catastrophes that overwhelmed the country. Far removed from the most frequented roads of Palestine, and somewhat distant from the greatest centres of life, the old market-town of Galilee

<sup>1</sup> Keim had no sufficient reason for insisting, in his *Life of Jesus*, on the name Nazara in preference to that of Nazareth, as it is found in the great majority of manuscripts. Even though Nazara were the primitive form of the name, it would not follow that this form was most in use in the time of Jesus. The testimony of Julius Africanus and of a few others is not equal to that of all the manuscripts which give Nazaret or Nazareth. We may, therefore, consider it certain that the etymology of the name is from *Nétzer* (*Isa.* xi, 1), a sprout, a shoot, because of the shrubs that cover the hills encircling the town, and not from *Nozerah*, the protectress (*IV Kings* xvii, 9). So that there is something providential in Joseph's selection of Nazareth for a domicile after the return from Egypt. Isaias had said that the Messiah would be a rod, a sprout (*Nétzer*) out of Jesse. Jesus, later on commonly called the

is even at this day almost what it was long ago. In a broad valley in the heart of the mountains that dominate the plain of Esdrelon on the north, behind the great cactus-trees, in the midst of the grayish olive, the fig, the pistachio, and the slender almond-trees, its houses, built of white stone, are ranged, as formerly, along the side of the hill. Nearly all the buildings are of recent construction, but they represent, nevertheless, the invariable type of Jewish dwelling, with its quadrangular form, its outside stairway, its terrace of clay, and sometimes the upper room corresponding to the ancient *aliyya* or guest-chamber. Along the steep and ill-kept streets are scattered at random very primitive workshops where artisans are forging iron, carding hemp, and fitting the wood, according to the old methods of their elders, with very imperfect tools. As we stroll before these modest shops, we forget that nineteen hundred years have passed, and easily believe we are still living in the days of Joseph the Carpenter. When in the evening, the family goes out upon the terrace of the house to assemble in friendly intercourse or in prayer, one says to himself: Mary and Joseph did so, too; when the children scamper to the hillsides in their flowing woollen or linen tunics to give themselves up to their noisy, innocent sports, one wonders if it was not like them and in these same rocks that Jesus played long ago; and when the beautiful women of Nazareth, of the Syrian type in all its splendour,

Nazarene, was, then, taken by all for the rod of the prophecy, feeble and humble like the little shrub, valiant and illustrious like the royal race from which He was descended. Inasmuch as this same figure of the sprout is found,—not, however, with the term *Nétzer*,—applied to the Messiah by *Jeremias* xxiii, 5; xxxiii, 15; *Zach.* iii, 8; vi, 12, we can understand how the play upon words suggested by the text of *Isaias*, was a temptation to *St. Matthew* ii, 23. *Nétzer* reminds him of *Ναζαραιός*. Especially desirous of showing the perfect fulfilment of the Old Testament in the New, and heedless of the fact that Nazareth had not been mentioned even once in the Bible, the Evangelist thought it proper to conclude that the *Nétzer* of the prophets was realised in Jesus the Nazarene.

with the fulness of purity in their gaze and mildness in their speech, go to the antique fountain to fill their pitchers, holding, the while, their little children by the hand, one is tempted to look and see if the young Virgin of Juda is not among them as of old, going to take her place and to receive the congratulations of the gracious daughters of Nazareth.

At the turn of the street, the traveller comes upon a carpenter's establishment, and his imagination easily rebuilds the humble, peaceful home where Jesus passed thirty years of His life. This lowly hut opens at one side on the street, while the other side is concealed as if in a vault in the cliff. At the entrance a few coarse tools hung upon the walls, or carefully collected in their half-shut chests, plainly tell that neither the skill of the artisan nor his tools have progressed with the centuries in this little town. Sycamore or cedar boards almost squared lie here and there among the yokes, the ploughs, and the rough-hewn bits of furniture. The shop never has any addition to serve as kitchen or family-room. The workingman, to-day as of yore,<sup>2</sup> prefers to set up his hearth outside of the shop. It is there that one should visit him, in the evening, to study the details of his domestic life. On the terrace which we reach by the outside staircase, the larger children, reminding us of James, Simon, Jude, and Joseph, the "brothers" of Jesus, solemnly seated around three stones arranged as a fireplace, or before an earthen stone, are dutifully watching the antique *olla* caressed by the smoke ere it mounts slowly toward the sky. Soon appears a young woman whose eye is mild and pure beneath its long lashes; she is the mother. Christianity has marked her with an impress that recalls the Virgin Mary. She is re-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Historia Josephi fabri lignarii*, ch. iv, in the Apocrypha of Thilo, p. 13.

turning from the fountain, bearing, slightly inclined upon her head, the amphora filled for the evening meal. With a word and a look she makes sure that all has been in order during her absence, and at once takes and spreads the mat whereon the family will eat at sunset. More impatient than the others, a new-born child is crying in his cradle, and the mother eagerly bends over to console her famished babe. On her knees, she tenderly nurses him. And now, returning from the workshop, the father appears smiling and happy on the threshold of his home; he gladly forgets his weariness at this spectacle of a mother's love.

Thus lived the Holy Family. Mary, according to the Oriental custom, must have nursed her young son at least two years. When she weaned him, all her relatives and friends, following the Jewish custom, assembled for a holiday, and came to congratulate her. By law the child still remained under the mother's direction until the age of seven; then the father began to care for him by teaching him the law of God and the profession he exercised himself.

It was therefore at this age that Jesus received His first lessons from Joseph in the workshop. Faith pictures Him with tenderness, lending to His foster-father the assistance of His young arms, and to the pious conversation of His Mother all the attention of His most profound and serenely balanced soul. He could scarcely have found better masters on earth than Joseph and Mary, those two friends of Heaven illumined with the light of grace and associated with the very thoughts of God; but it was in His own nature that the Child bore the secret of His complete development. Samuel, Solomon, and a multitude of others had masters to form them; Jesus had not even the *Hazzan* of the Synagogue to instruct him.<sup>3</sup> Great,

<sup>3</sup> Elementary instruction seems to have been introduced into Palestine only at a much later date, by a son of Gamaliel, the High Priest Jesus, about the

therefore, was the astonishment of the Nazarenes later on, when they saw Him read and expound the law, as if He had studied it all His life. For the Evangelists, as for us, it was natural to conclude that He had learned everything by Himself. In fact, this is the logical consequence of faith in the Incarnation. If the Word of God was made incarnate in Jesus, It became in Him the divine flame whence the soul was to derive perpetual light, and the infallible preceptor to guide His humanity safely and without error amid the obstacles on His way. How did this influence of the divine Person act upon the human nature in Jesus Christ? It is difficult to say, for here we enter into the mystery of the hypostatic union. The greatest difficulties baffle the theologian<sup>4</sup> who tries to solve this question. If he forgets that Jesus was true man as well as true God, or that He was true God as well as true man, he suppresses one element that constitutes His Person, and he nullifies the Incarnation. The wisest method, therefore, is thoroughly to be impressed with this twofold conviction, that Jesus had not alone the appearance of human nature and of divine nature, but both in full and complete reality. He was God like His Father, and man as we are, except in sin. Furthermore, as His Divinity was not lessened by His contact with humanity, so humanity was not absorbed, but merely perfected in its union with Divinity. It remains perfectly itself, employing its intimate and hypostatic union with the Word of God as its safeguard against error and weakness, but never developing into anything prodigious, inimitable, or useless for our edification.

year 65, that is, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and the complete subjection of the Jewish people. Cf. Van Gelder, *Die Volksschule des Jüdischen Alterthums* (Berlin, 1872); Simon, *L'Education des enfants chez les anciens Juifs* (Leipzig, 1879), and Keim's *Life of Jesus*, vol. ii, p. 131, etc.

<sup>4</sup>See in Schanz, *Evang. des h. Lucas*, 148, the opinions of the Fathers of the Church.

It was important, indeed, that Jesus should live and act as a man among us, and that the God in Him should manifest Himself only when it was exceptionally necessary to draw the attention of the indifferent or incredulous masses by means of some prodigy. Nevertheless the man in this divine Personality was not separated from the God. From time to time and according to diverse occasions, He opened the eye of His soul to the light of the Divine Word, Whom He had essentially present in Him. There He read the work to be accomplished or the word to be uttered. Thus to natural and human science was added divine science to which He had recourse when events demanded it, and in keeping with the prudent laws traced by Providence Itself. These events were at all times in harmony with the regular phases of human life; and that is why the Evangelist remarks that the child grew in wisdom before God and men, as much as to say that though He had God's infinite knowledge at His service, the man in Jesus Christ made use of it only in proportion to His needs, and according to the laws that regulated the development of His human nature and of His divine mission. Hence in Him there was nothing abnormal or fantastic. As a Child He neither speaks nor acts like a man; such unnatural precociousness would have inspired every one with fear; He is pleased to be a Child in every way. As the years roll on, the sight of the world, contact with men, the habit of meditation will gradually develop His human knowledge,<sup>5</sup> and, in perfect conformity with the will of God, He will perfect this knowl-

<sup>5</sup> The two passages in *St. Luke* ii, 40 and 52, both establish a correlation between the physical development and the moral development, so evident that it seems difficult to admit that the one was real, the other only apparent. It is for theology to explain the mystery, if it can, by observing that the present participle *πληροῦμενον*, poorly translated in the Vulgate by *plenus*, expresses, as well as *ἤβριζανεν* and *προέκοπτεν*, the idea of a fact not accomplished, but which is being gradually accomplished.

edge by the aid of the eternal light He bears within Himself. In this fidelity of Jesus's soul in consulting the Divinity, His human merit chiefly consisted, and it is one of the practical sides by which our Saviour presents Himself for our imitation.

We, therefore, shall leave to the apocryphal writings the pleasure of picturing the Infant Jesus with nothing common to childhood, living apart as in a nimbus of glory, with habits out of proportion to His age, or a miraculous power altogether premature.<sup>6</sup>

Our Evangelist paints Him with greater truth and charm, subject to His parents, and, by His obedience, modesty, mildness, intelligence, piety, and grace, drawing upon Himself the approbation of Heaven and of earth. By surrounding Himself with all the circumstances of childhood He has sanctified that lovable period of life and has made Himself the model of all as they traverse it.

It is known that at the age of about twelve years the Child enters into a period new as well for his moral as for his physical life. The horizon begins to spread more broadly before Him. It is then for the first time that Jesus lets us know the perfection of His soul, the elevation of His thought, and the depth of His religious feeling. Only one story of this period has been given us by St. Luke, but it conforms perfectly with what our devotion might expect.

This sudden manifestation of the spiritual grandeur of

<sup>6</sup> Even if the miracles related in the Apocryphal Gospels were not as puerile as they are ridiculous, we might reasonably doubt them on account of their perfect uselessness. How, indeed, could they have served a cause the defence of which was not a child's duty? Were they not such as cruelly to embarrass Mary and Joseph and to place them in a most painful situation? St. John, moreover, decides the question by saying that the miracle of Cana was the first miracle performed by Jesus and that the cure of the Centurion's son was the second. Again, the astonishment of the Nazarenes at the time when Jesus begins His public life could not be explained if they had long been accustomed to see Him work miracles.

the youthful Jesus admirably unites the miraculous scenes of His nativity and of His baptism, and proves that, though hidden beneath the embers, the fire divine was none the less alive in the heart of Mary's son.

Every year at the feast of the Passover, the male representatives of each family went up to the Temple to participate in the religious solemnities. They were obliged to do this from the age of twelve years, which among the Orientals is the age of virility. Women were free to take part in these pilgrimages; and the most devout did not let pass the occasion of the great paschal solemnities without going each year to adore Jehovah in the Holy City. Jesus, having become a son of the law, as the Jews were accustomed to say, since He was twelve years of age, prepared to go up to Jerusalem with Joseph. Mary joined them. Nothing was more legitimate for so excellent a mother than the pleasure of joining in the first pilgrimage of her child.

Jesus spent the seven days of the feast in a holy ecstasy. All the great memories of Judaism on which He meditated stirred His soul with delight, and, through the symbols of the past and of the present, He rose to a contemplation of the sublime realities of the future. When the time came to quit these privileged surroundings, He felt that His heart clung to it as to the essential element of His life; and while His relatives started on the return journey into Galilee, He, drawn by the Spirit of God, enthused by the great aspirations of His exceptional nature, betook Himself to the Temple, the official home of the religious life. Born to spread the truth over the world, He untiringly sought out all that might be preparatory to His glorious mission without a thought of the emotion which His sudden absence might cause His relatives.

Ordinarily the pilgrims' caravans were quite numerous. One was easily lost sight of amid the multitude of travel-



lers who, some of them mounted and others on foot, armed with long staffs, chanted psalms for the sanctifying of their journey, and were separated into regular groups of men, of youths, and of women. Jesus, beloved of all, gracious and affable, was, perhaps, in the habit of passing from one group to another, leaving everywhere the charm of His speech, and sharing His presence among friends and relatives, all of whom were eager for the pleasure of keeping Him near. This accounts for the fact that Joseph and Mary journeyed an entire day without noticing His absence. The affection of all was, of course, sufficient protection to His youth. Moreover, if Mary and Joseph travelled in different groups, the former might easily have supposed that the child was with His father, while the latter might have believed He was with His mother. Among the Orientals a boy of twelve years begins to enjoy a certain liberty and to be responsible for himself.

When evening had come they halted.<sup>7</sup> Travellers in the East usually limit the first day's journey to a distance of twelve or fifteen kilometres (eight or ten miles). All, therefore, assembling for the night, they were counted. Jesus was not there. Mary's and Joseph's emotion must have been great. They sought Him among their relatives and friends, but all search was fruitless. The next day, at first break of dawn, the father and mother set out again for Jerusalem and reached there only at nightfall. That evening they gave up hope of finding Jesus among the great multitudes that had come from all parts and were but little troubled concerning a child who himself felt no anxiety. It was only on the day following, and, conse-

<sup>7</sup> Tradition gives El-Bireh, ancient Beroth, where there was an excellent spring, which would determine the caravan to halt there, if they went from Jerusalem to Galilee through Samaria. But did the pilgrims follow this route? The hostility which they had to fear on the part of the Samaritans renders the supposition improbable.

quently, on the third day, that Mary and Joseph found their son in the Temple, in one of the synagogues<sup>8</sup> where the rabbis assembled to teach the law. One may yet see among the *Askenasim* and the *Sephardim*, in Jerusalem, how this teaching was carried on.

Each master, installed behind a desk, has before him those who desire to hear him or to question him; so that one may count as many groups as there are rabbis teaching. When we read that Jesus was seated in the midst of the doctors,<sup>9</sup> we must understand that He was not on one of their seats, but among the groups which, gradually falling silent, had crowded around Him to witness His youthful intelligence in its encounter with the aged doctors of Israel.

The teaching of the rabbis was conducted by the way of question and answer. Then, as to-day, the doctors aroused the attention of their disciples by a question, and awaited a response from the most sagacious. They then discussed the answer given, and ended by putting forth their own solution of the difficulty. At other times they desired to be questioned, in order to prove their natural perspicacity and their perfect knowledge of the law. For Jesus, merely to speak was to make Himself at once remarkable for the clearness of His responses and for the surpassing originality of His questions. It was natural that the genius of the new humanity, speaking by His mouth, should astonish these representatives of old-time Jewish formalism; and the aged doctors were filled with admiration for the youthful Nazarene.

<sup>8</sup> One of them was *prope atrium in monte templi*. *Gloss. Joma*, f. 68, 2. See also Lightfoot, *In Luc.*, ii, 46.

<sup>9</sup> The rabbis claim that the auditors always stood during the lessons given by the doctors and that the deplorable custom of sitting down was introduced only after Gamaliel (cf. *Megillah*, 21); but their assertion is unfounded (see Vitringa., *Synag.*, p. 167).

Joseph and Mary knew well who the Son was that Heaven had confided to them; but, accustomed as they were to see Him leading a life humble, modest, submissive, and reserved, they were deeply affected at this His first revelation of Himself. Could they withhold their admiration when they beheld these aged doctors of the Synagogue, famous men whom the pious Galileans venerated as prodigies of knowledge and of authority, filled with surprise and enthusiasm before their youthful interlocutor? Joseph, because he was father only by delegation, takes no active part in this; he admires the child in respectful silence. But Mary cannot check her maternal heart, and tenderly utters a mild reproach, as if to justify her momentary negligence: "Son," said she, "why hast thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." If a mother's heart were always accustomed to reason by syllogisms, we might say that Mary did wrong in worrying, since she knew that a son such as He could not go astray. But the impatience of maternal love and its fears are always swifter than reason. Jesus does not neglect to remind His mother of this indirectly. "How is it that you sought me?" says He. "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" This is the first utterance that tradition gives us as coming from the Saviour's lips. Brief as it is, it reveals the depth of this youthful soul who knows but one true father, God; but one business worthy of Him, the business of God; but one house outside of His Father's dwelling where He is to be sought, the temple of God. One may see in this an abridgment, as it were, of the Gospel; for it defines not only the truth of the Incarnation, but also its object, which is the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God here below. Neither Mary nor Joseph understood at the time all its meaning. To receive all the lightsome radiance of these words, they should have

beheld the Messianic work in its entirety. Mary religiously treasured them in her heart, and later on wonders at their marvellous realisation.

The Child, obedient and submissive, left the Temple and went down to Nazareth to await in patience there the hour appointed by Providence. There He plied the tools of the humble trade of Joseph, his foster-father. The Nazarenes became accustomed to see Him bent over His work in the shop, and when He rose up, later on, to fulfil the mission which at the age of twelve years He had set as the ideal of His life, they were astounded and troubled by the irresistible authority of His words. God is often pleased to form great souls in silence, to fashion them gradually in humility or even in suffering, and then, of a sudden, He casts them upon the field of battle where they are to glorify Him. Jesus, His Son, followed this providential law, and it was after eighteen years of meditation and of humiliation amid the fatigues of the workshop that He determined to enter upon His public career.

## CHAPTER X

# FROM THE AGE OF TWELVE TO THE AGE OF THIRTY

THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF JESUS—WHAT HAS BEEN SAID OF HIS EXTERNAL APPEARANCE—HE EMPLOYS HIS STRENGTH IN THE HEAVY LABOUR OF THE WORKSHOP AND THEREBY HONOURS IT—FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS—HIS SOUL IS FULL OF GOD—PROFOUND ORIGINALITY OF HIS RELIGIOUS GENIUS. (St. Luke ii, 40, 52.)

THE human mind is somewhat mystified when it dwells on that period in the life of Jesus that extends from His boyhood to the beginning of His public life. As we have just seen, He was thoroughly conscious of His mission, and during eighteen years, at the very age when human activity is most freely and ardently manifested, He is silent and seems to have cast a veil over Himself, amid the details of an ordinary life, as if His heart knew no loftier aspirations. Of His future, of His great religious worth, of His peculiar nature, His compatriots had no suspicion. And yet we may believe that even in these ordinary phases of everyday life, the Master had sweet and useful lessons to inculcate.

The Evangelists, passing over this longest period of His life in complete silence, or at most marking out in three words the general outlines that compose its modest propor-

tions, oblige us to divine, in these words, the conditions of His physical and moral development, the nature of His relations to His family and to society, and of the daily occupations of His youth. Properly speaking, their books are not biographies, but the history of an idea, of a religious revolution, of the Good-Tidings, and though, as historians, they have not failed to trace the portrait of their hero in order to render Him more a living reality in the eyes of posterity, as Evangelists they have sought only to transmit to us His words and His works in order to present Him as an ideal, not to our eyes, but to our souls.

St. Luke, however, in writing that Jesus grew in stature and in grace, clearly indicates that external advantages were not wanting in the youth. The term<sup>1</sup> he employs signifies, in fact, a stature which develops its traits harmoniously. We are, therefore, justly astonished when we read in St. Justin, in Tertullian, in Clement of Alexandria, or in Origen the avowal that Jesus was small in stature and of an unpleasant exterior.<sup>2</sup> Even if these late and unusual declarations were not counterbalanced by the contrary affirmations of St. Jerome or of St. Chrysostom, the information given by St. Luke would alone suffice to destroy, by its undeniable authority, the purely personal views of ecclesiastical authors who wrote two centuries after Jesus Christ.

Yet, beyond this general hint, which makes Jesus a handsome young man of fine stature, we have no precise knowledge. The imagination of the faithful has pleased itself with varied conceptions as to details, but serious critics have commonly agreed that, from the portrait of

<sup>1</sup> ἡλικία means stature, physical development. Cf. Stephanus, *The-saurus Linguae Græcæ*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Justin, *C. Tryph.*, xiv, 36, etc.; Clement, *Strom.*, ii, 440; *Pad.*, iii, 13; Tertul., *De Carne Christi*, 9: "Nec humanæ honestatis corpus fuit; nedum cœlestis claritatis"; Origen, *Contra Cels.*, vi, 75.

the Saviour drawn by Nicephorus in the fourteenth century, down to the apocryphal letter of Lentulus, everything is founded on the fantastic dreams of certain enterprising minds.<sup>3</sup> It is needless to add that the paintings attributed to St. Luke have no greater authority, for, had they been in existence at the time of the Iconoclasts, they would have formed, in the hands of the Fathers of the seventh general council, the second of Nicæa, a most peremptory argument of apostolic character against those terrible innovators.

With His robust constitution and the perfect development of His physical powers, the young man was able to

<sup>3</sup> Nicephorus, *H. E.*, 1, 40, and a reputed apocryphal letter of St. John Damascene, *Ad Theoph. Imp. de venerandis Imag.*, says that Jesus was the living portrait of His mother. Majestic in His carriage, He stooped a little in His lofty height as He walked. His eyes were very beautiful; His blond hair fell in long curls upon His shoulders; His complexion was pale, of olive tint; His fingers long and slender; His deep expression was full of wisdom, patience, and goodness. The more precise details given in the *Letter by Publius Lentulus, President of the People of Jerusalem* (the meaning of this singular title is unknown), betray still more unmistakably a forger as inept as he is artless. This report, addressed to the Roman Senate, is found for the first time in a manuscript of the works of St. Anselm of the twelfth century. The date of its composition is unknown.

The bloody impress supposed to be left by Jesus's face on Veronica's veil and on Nicodemus's shroud (Niceph., *H. E.*, ii, 7) or His radiant portrait outlined on the linen cloth with which He wiped His brow and sent to Abgar, King of Edessa, in place of the portrait which the artist, sent by the king, could not procure (Joann. Damasc., *in Moses Choron.*), furnish no serious historical guarantee, and even less precision in definiteness and clearness of outline.

The statues of Jesus, one of which was fashioned by the "woman with the flow of blood" at Paneas (Eusebius, *H. E.*, vii, 8), and the other which was set up along with the busts of Abraham, Orpheus, and Apollonius, in the oratory of Alexander Severus (Lampridius, *Alex. Sev.*, 29), would, perhaps, if they still existed, be more satisfactory. But they are lost, and, moreover, we fear that the latter, which was fashioned quite late, between the years 208 and 235, would only correspond, like those of Abraham and Orpheus, to an ideal instead of representing a reality.

The most ancient paintings in the catacombs represent Jesus only symbolically, under the parables of the Fish, the Lamb, the Good Shepherd. As for the portraits of Jesus properly so called, they are of the least primitive epoch, and at all events are merely the product of the artist's imagination.

It is known that the Gnostic sects loved to place the portrait of Jesus

follow the trade of His foster-father. In fact, we know from the Nazarenes' cry of astonishment<sup>4</sup> that Jesus was a carpenter until He reached the age of thirty years. Some have thought that in thus embracing a manual trade, Jesus conformed to the common practice of the Jewish rabbis, who, though devoted to the study of the Sacred Books, were nevertheless skilled in some trade by which they gained their living and in which they found their ordinary relaxation of mind.<sup>5</sup> But this is doing violence to historical truth. Jesus was not a rabbi and a carpenter, but only a carpenter gaining His daily bread by the sweat of His brow. It must be admitted that Jesus thereby offended the most deeply rooted prejudices of civilised peoples. It has been in all ages and is now the conviction of aristocracy that artisans, by the very nature of their occupation, constitute a humbled and disparaged class. Jesus wished to demonstrate that the coarsest and most painful labour cannot demean a lofty soul. Are not the

beside those of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. They were supposed to be copies of an original due to Pilate: *Iren.*, *Heres.*, i, 24; *Philosoph.*, vii, 32. Two of these portraits have been discovered. It may be said that they have some historic truth. One of them, in clay, represents Christ's profile, a young and beardless youth, with the inscription *Χριστός* and the symbolic fish. The other, a sort of medallion, bears the name of Jesus in Hebrew and represents Our Lord with His hair parted on the brow, covering His ears and falling upon His shoulders. (See Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, p. 492.)

Christian art may seem to have been inspired from these sources in representing Christ always with head uncovered. It was free to do so; but we must not forget that it thereby places itself within the domain of the ideal and beyond all reality. In ancient times, as well as to-day, no inhabitant of Palestine went out of doors without some covering on the head, through necessity, on account of the burning sun, as well as out of regard for propriety. We believe Jesus did as all His contemporaries did, and wore the traditional *confyeh*. Concerning the portraits of Jesus, see Jablowski, *De origin. imag. Christi D.* (Lugd. Batav., 1804); Jameson and Eastlake, *The History of Our Lord*, etc. (London, 1865).

<sup>4</sup> *Mark* vi, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Sepp, *Life of Christ*, part ii, ch. xix, and especially the interesting work of Delitzsch, *La Vie de l'artisan chez les Juifs*, more particularly § v: "Comment les études bibliques se combinaient chez eux avec les arts manuels."



vast majority of the sons of Adam condemned to such labour if they wish to live? Could there be any dishonour in the fulfilment of a providential obligation in which man proves by his resignation the vigour of his soul, and by his efforts the generosity of his nature? No more, assuredly, than there would be in a life of poverty; for this latter, instead of enfeebling souls, increases their energy and independence. Misery alone, the usual fruit of vice or of inability, contains aught of shame. Jesus feared not to put on the appearance of poverty, and, making the honourable mediocrity of the workshop the condition of His life, He proved that neither fortune's gifts nor the brilliancy of the world's most honoured positions are necessary to man's happiness or to His own powerful influence upon the world which He seeks to transform.

Furthermore, this example of Jesus, the workingman, has had the deepest influence on the lot of humanity. Since then, it has become clear to many that poverty can mean happiness and even glory, and to the truly wise that labour involves nothing humiliating or impure, since the hand of the Restorer of mankind has wielded the hammer and the chisel, and divine sweat has bedewed the workshop of the labourer.

So, then, for eighteen years Jesus made, according to the demand, tools that served the peasant in the cultivation of his fields, yokes for the oxen, mattocks and ploughs,<sup>6</sup> the rudimentary carpenter-work that supports the roof of the houses, and the doors that protect property against the inroads of robbers, and, in fine, the coarsest of household utensils, chests for the safe-keeping of family treasures, milk-basins, and stools for the labourer to rest when fatigued.

\* See Justin, *Dial. c. Tryph.*, 88; Origen, *c. Celsum*, liv, vi, 36, where the Philosopher clumsily misunderstands the text of *St. Mark* vi, 3; Theodoret, *H. E.*, iii, 18.

If the piety of His contemporaries had preserved even one of the products of His divine hand, what price would we not pay for a relic so precious? But at this epoch there was no suspicion of anything particular in His handiwork, and it was no more highly valued than that of an ordinary artisan. For the divine plan was to envelop Jesus in an almost impenetrable veil, until the time for the Messianic revelation should be come. The apocryphal writers relate how the young carpenter more than once miraculously repaired mistakes made by Joseph, who, in their opinion, was a workman of mediocrity and singularly inaccurate in his measurements; but these ridiculous stories have no historical value.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus' attitude toward His family was, on the contrary, according to St. Luke, one of most respectful subordination, of most filial deference. Joseph probably died at an early date; this accounts for his absence from the scenes of the evangelical ministry. Thus, even from the first disclosure that the Saviour makes of His knowledge in the synagogue in Nazareth, His compatriots, in determining His identity, speak particularly of His mother. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" as given by St. Mark. To the Son, then, and perhaps prematurely, fell the duty of bearing the family burdens. However, it is not unlikely that after Joseph's death Jesus and Mary dwelt in the house of their nearest relative, His aunt, whose children have since been designated as His brothers and sisters. This family, which counted among its members James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon, were slow to understand the mission of their glorious relative, and their incredulity renders the repulses He meets with among His countrymen less surprising to the Saviour.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Protev.*, ch. ix and xiii; *Ev. Thomæ*, xiii; *Ev. Infant. Arab.*, xxxviii, xxxix; *Hist. Josephi Arab.*, ii and iv.

Happily Mary's heart was enlightened by God's grace. In her alone, after Joseph's death, Jesus found a worthy echo of the emotions of His soul. He spoke with her of the past and of the future. The first virgin soil on which He cast the Gospel seed was His mother's heart.

Jesus's disposition was sweet, kind, generous, and, as St. Luke says, we can understand how He grew in favour with men as well as with God. We easily render homage to qualities of heart when we find them united to beauty of physical form. The charm of Jesus lay in the graciousness of His manners, the wisdom of His discourses, and the loftiness of His sentiments.

It is, in fact, inconceivable that the interior perfection of His nature should not shine forth, in spite of His desire to conceal His divine personality. There are certain emanations that the soul can never fully prevent. Jesus manifested them not only to men, but to all the beings of creation. We can easily picture Him strolling to the summit of one of the hills about Nazareth to sit there in meditation and in ecstasy, or to cast Himself upon His knees before His Heavenly Father in contemplation and adoration. To Him all things spoke a language as yet unintelligible to the rest of mankind; the sun that set in the blue waves of the sea, beyond the peaks of Carmel; the wind that blew down from the heights of Lebanon; the movement of the insect beneath the blade of grass, of the bird in the air or of the man in the dale of Nazareth; the lily in its robe of white; the little birds in their nest suspended from the rocks above the torrent;<sup>8</sup> the noisy games of the children on the hillsides;<sup>9</sup> the sower scattering his grain in the furrow; all seemed to Him to be full of God, and His heart expanded in this religious contemplation

<sup>8</sup> *St. Matt.* vi, 29, etc.

<sup>9</sup> *St. Matt.* xi, 15.

of His Father's name as He beheld it inscribed on the works of nature. His soul, the sight of the universe, life in all its lofty forms, were the great book of earth whence He drew His human knowledge by the personal enlightenment of the Divine Word. Hence we must pity the efforts of critical science obstinately seeking in His words the echo of the theologians or of the sectarians of His time. He had nothing in common with them; all things serve to separate Him from their teaching.

As for the Pharisees, He must needs have detested their extreme exclusiveness, their hypocritical formalism, their puerile craftiness; He stood forth as their adversary; His religious conscience, broad and upright, made this a duty for Him. As for the Sadducees, He could not but despise the revolting materialism of their principles and the indecency of their moral and political theories. As for the Essenes, He repelled their ideas of fatalism, their empty dreams, their haughty separatism, their fierce asceticism. Holding aloof from all, He was simply Himself; and on the day appointed, His life, long restrained in the silence of reflection and prayer, fully nourished by God, with Whom He was in endless communion, suddenly broadened out strong in beauty and incomparable in its superhuman originality.

The thought of the Sacred Books, which seemed to have been His customary meditation, illumined His soul with new and unexpected light, and none has read the Old Testament as He read it Himself. There again and again He discovers Himself in prophetic symbols, as their true object and divine archetype. The title God of Abraham is to His observing mind an unexpected demonstration of the immortality of souls. In scrutinising the law of Moses, He finds therein the intimate union of two laws, separated until then, which constitute the sole

basis of all moral life: the love that rises up to God and the love that goes out to man. He grasped the true meaning of the Sabbath in the consideration that the Father is unceasingly and restlessly at work. When He speaks, all understand. They feel that He has set forth, in all their phases, the thoughts upon God, upon redemption, upon righteousness; He explains them at will. Incomparable as a teacher, He has a language that reaches all ages, all peoples, all conditions; whereas philosophers always speak the language of time, He has found the language of eternity.

This is what we know of the early life of Jesus. It is so meagre that of four Evangelists two have made no mention of it, content to begin His history with His public career.

## BOOK III

### *Immediate Preparation of Jesus for His Public Life*

#### CHAPTER I

### THE RETREAT INTO THE DESERT

JESUS IN THE DESERT RECALLS TO US ADAM IN PARADISE—HIS TWOFOLD OCCUPATION—HIS THANKSGIVING TO GOD, WHO HAS JUST PROCLAIMED HIM HIS SON: HIS SOUL'S ECSTASY—THE PREPARATION FOR HIS DIVINE MISSION: THE FORTY DAYS' FAST. (St. Matt. iv, 1-2; St. Mark i, 12-13; St. Luke iv, 1-2.)

IN reality, it was the voice of God the Father that opened the Messianic era at the moment when, on the banks of the Jordan, He announced that Jesus was His well-beloved Son, the object of Heavenly favour. This voice proclaimed simultaneously to John that, the Messiah being come, he had only to present Him to Israel, and to Jesus that the hour had struck in which He was to inaugurate His public ministry.

We can understand that, from this moment, the soul of the newly baptised was, on the one hand, filled with gratitude and love toward God, Who had consecrated Him as the Messiah; and on the other, seized with a holy fear at the stupendous and superhuman task He was called

upon to undertake. It was then that, to give Him time for thanksgiving and to make an immediate preparation for the Divine work, the Holy Spirit took possession of Him, and, not suffering Him to return to Galilee, drew Him into the solitude of a vast and savage wilderness.

This wilderness was the mountainous and uninhabited country running from north to south along the western coast of the Dead Sea. Whoever has wandered once in his life amid these waste solitudes can never forget the impression of fear and loneliness that comes upon him as he beholds on one side the immense sea of sandy hills, spread out in yellow, motionless waves, and on the other, rocky peaks overhanging dried-up torrent-beds, whence all life seems to have vanished, burnt up as soon as it appeared, by the sun or the simoon. It was to one of these ravines or to the summit of one of these mountains<sup>1</sup> that Jesus retired. We have visited these solitudes, and they are not less horribly mournful and deserted to-day than of old. Hermits still take refuge here in dark caverns whose possession they dispute with the hyenas and jackals, and strive by extraordinary fasts and devotions to honour the place of the Saviour's retreat.

Fully resigned to the Holy Spirit, in the midst of this desert, abandoned nature, Jesus completely lost sight of

<sup>1</sup> Every one knows that the tradition of the Middle Ages indicates the Quarantania as the place into which Jesus withdrew. But steep and rocky as this mountain appears, was it not too near Jericho to be the desolate spot spoken of by the Evangelist as far removed from all human habitation and overrun by wild beasts? From these heights one could, in fact, contemplate the Great City, and its noisy thoroughfares, in the midst of its oasis of palms and rose-trees. Any one who was hungry and athirst on Mount Quarantania could easily descend the mountain and buy bread in Jericho, without resorting to a miracle to get food. Farther on, either to the west or to the south, the solitude would be far more fearful and wild. The gorges we have followed in the Kelt of the side of Tell-el-Fara, though less burned up than the sand-hills on the shores of the Dead Sea, are neither less mournfully silent nor less frightfully barren.

the outside world. Never thinking that He had a body to nourish and to preserve from the dangers of the climate and from the teeth of wild beasts, He wandered about at hazard, filled with the great thoughts that shook His soul.<sup>2</sup> In like manner had Adam dwelt in the solitude of the primitive world; but instead of a desert he had a paradise, and, surrounded with the delights that creation offered, he ruled the animals, and to them assigned names and orders. But, whereas Adam forgot what he owed to God and to his posterity, and thought only of the culpable longings of his soul, Jesus was ever wholly in contemplation of His personal relation to His Father and of His new duties with regard to fallen humanity. The one had destroyed us by his gluttony; by fasting the latter prepares to save us. Adam listened to the demand of the flesh; only the pious movements of His soul are heard by Jesus. What transpired within that soul? What hymns of gratitude did the well-beloved Son address to the Father, Who had just consecrated Him Messiah? To divine them one must himself be on the level of that perfect union. When, on earth, the just man hears God's word fall into his troubled heart, he feels a joy so lively that he at once goes into an ecstasy. Seized at all the points of contact of his being, he readily forsakes the affairs of earthly life to give himself up to the sweet impressions of the life of heaven. The chants of joy, the cries of love, the calm repose, and the profound sensation, in this quietude, of the possession of God, succeed each other in the depth of that happy soul. This, in the highest degree, is what Jesus must have experienced in the retirement of the desert and in recollection beneath the eye of heaven. Abandoning His soul entirely to the breath that

<sup>2</sup> *St. Luke iv, 1, ἤγετο . . . ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ*, depicts the external agitation of Jesus as He went from place to place in the desert, manifesting thus the moral work to which His Soul devoted itself.



bore it aloft, for forty days He drew His nourishment from God alone and from His interchange of love. Unceasingly he heard His Father's call, and unceasingly He offered Himself, ever repeating the prophetic *Ecce Venio*.

Then the clear vision of His Messianic labour rose up before Him in vast proportions of awful shadow and glorious light. The superior will which He intended to fulfil demanded not the death of the wicked, but their conversion and their life. It was for Him, therefore, to seek and to save that which was lost. This was the entire world; He was to penetrate it with His thoughts, to transform it in its aspirations, to govern it by His law. He will call this spiritual and moral work the *establishing of His Kingdom* or the *Kingdom of God*. His aspirations were, therefore, that He might become nothing less than the King of all mankind restored, saved, and united by Him in one fold. He has no secret intention of disturbing earthly monarchies: King of souls, He desires not that His royalty may be as the royalty of this world.

Higher and more certain than anything transitory, His power, by the suppression of all distinctions of race and nation, shall extend over all religious hearts and build up the most lasting and most universal of empires. But before the final triumph, He reckons up in detail all the difficulties that the wicked shall raise against His work, the faithlessness of His people, and the obstinacy that shall prove their ruin. So that in the background of the picture of His public life, He can discern, like a shadow of blood, the gibbet that will bring about the final catastrophe. His soul perceives in the Messianic prophecies the story of all the woes that await Him, and a most overwhelming stupor succeeds to His most lively joy.

In these alternate sentiments of supreme beatitude and profound distress, of generous love and holy fear, He

existed during these forty days. Forty was the sacramental number, in the expiation of sin or in intercession for sinners. The waters of the deluge fell forty days and forty nights on the guilty world. For forty years Israel wandered in the desert in punishment for her faithlessness, and forty was the number of blows the criminal received for his crime.<sup>3</sup> Finally, Moses and Elias had fasted solemnly for the same length of time, and the Ninevites<sup>4</sup> themselves had sought to repair their sins by forty days of penance.

Was the fast of Jesus an absolute fast? St. Luke affirms it categorically,<sup>5</sup> and recent examples have proved that man, even without supernatural aid, can live seven weeks without taking nourishment. Only, in the present instance we must acknowledge that the moral state into which Our Lord entered became an efficacious help to human nature when there was danger of defeat. The effect of ecstasy is, in truth, the absorbing of the material life in the powerful current of the spiritual life. But such a state must have its limit of time, and then maltreated nature claims its rights with renewed force. This was the moment chosen by Satan to present in definite outline the temptations with which he beset<sup>6</sup> Jesus during the forty days.

<sup>3</sup> *Deut.* xxv, 3, and *II Cor.* xi, 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Jonas* iii, 4.

<sup>5</sup> He says *οὐκ ἔφαγεν οὐδέν*, which prevents us from taking the expression of *Matt.* iv, 2, *νηστεύσας*, in a wide sense, and admitting that the fast, while excluding ordinary nourishment, did not exclude roots, leaves of the trees, and wild honey, as perchance in the fasts of Moses and Elias.

<sup>6</sup> According to *Luke* iv, 2, and *Mark* i, 13, it would seem that temptations followed each other during the whole sojourn of Jesus in the Desert. The three related at length, as coming at the end of the forty days, are, as it were, an example and summing up of the whole.

## CHAPTER II

### SATAN—THE ENEMY

SATAN IS NATURALLY AGITATED BY THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH—WHAT REASON TELLS US OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE DEMON—WHAT IS ADDED BY REVELATION AS TO HIS NATURE, HIS INFLUENCE, AND HIS POWER—THE IDEA OF REDEMPTION RESTS UPON THE IDEA OF SATAN, THE OPPRESSOR OF HUMANITY—JESUS' STRUGGLE WITH SATAN—IN WHAT SENSE COULD JESUS BE TEMPTED?—WHAT SATAN WISHED TO KNOW FROM HIM. (St. Mark i, 13; St. Luke iv, 2; St. Matt. iv, 3.)

SATAN, as his name signifies,<sup>1</sup> is the enemy of God and of the servants of God. He is called *demon* to indicate that his nature is intelligent and spiritual, and *devil*,<sup>2</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> It is derived from the Hebrew verb *satan*, which means *to oppose, to be against*. We find it used in this sense of adversary, *III Kings xi, 14*, "And the Lord raised up an adversary to Solomon, Adad, the Edomite" (compare in the same chapter v. 23; see also *I Kings xxix, 4*; *Numbers xxii, 22*, etc.). In *Job i, 6, 7, 8*, etc., and *Zach. iii, 1, 2*, this name is given to the Demon, as in *I Paralip. xxi, 1*. It is in common use in the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup> The word *δαίμων* or *δαίμόνιον* signifies generally a being, good or bad, inferior to God and superior to man. Plato, *Cratylus*, xvi, *edit. Didot*, gives the etymology *δαίμων, knowing*, and supposes that thus was indicated the superior knowledge of these spirits who serve as intermediaries between God and man. The pagans acknowledged good and evil spirits. (See Plato, *Cratyl.*, *Timæus*, *passim*, and Plutarch, *de Defect. Orac.*, etc.). In the New Testament the word Demon always indicates evil spirits, of whom *James ii, 19*; *Acts xix, 12-13*, etc.; *Apoc. xvi, 14*, and several of the Gospels and Epistles record the rôle and pernicious influences.

sower of false reports, to have us know that in his relations with men he is the perpetual fashioner of evil.<sup>3</sup>

Here, for the first time in the Gospel story, this mysterious evil-doer comes upon the scene, and henceforth we must expect to find him at almost every step. Summoned to earth in haste by Him Who comes to destroy his empire, he is obliged to come forth and do battle. We may conclude from the religious history of mankind as we read it in the Sacred Books, that, after his disguised appearance in Eden and his cruel victory, he had concealed himself in the background of our world, which had become his conquest.<sup>4</sup> His influence, however, was no less immediate and no less general. Thus paganism was his work, and his completest triumph. Through paganism he held successions of generations in bondage; and, free from danger, he silently enjoyed his homicidal royalty. A few of God's servants, ill at ease on this earth of abomination, alone perceived his existence and knew him by his work.<sup>5</sup> The rest of mankind, drinking iniquity as if it were water, endured his rule without suspicion, so dense had become the darkness that enveloped human life.

While absolute master, Satan remained in concealment; when threatened on his throne, he comes forth into view. What excitement breaks out in his kingdom, what a parade of strength, what confusion, when the Son of God advances to destroy it! Just as when a daring hand bears

<sup>3</sup>The expression *διάβολος*, derived from the verb *διαβάλλω*, to put something crosswise, to accuse, to calumniate, is used even by profane authors, Xenophon, *Agesilaus*, xi, 5, in the sense of calumniator (*τοὺς διαβόλους μάλλον ἢ τοὺς κλέπτας ἐμίσει*); Aristophanes, *Knights*, 45; Aristotle, *Topic.*, iv, 5. In Gospel language it designates the calumniator *par excellence*, the one who speaks evil of man to God, and evil of God to man (*Matt.* xiii, 39; *Luke* viii, 12; *John* xiii, 2, etc.). Three times only (*I Tim.* iii, 11; *II Tim.* iii, 3; *Tit.* ii, 3) it is employed as a qualifier, and means those who calumniate.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. St. Augustine on demons, *De Genesi ad litt.*, lib. xi, ch. xiii-xxvii.

<sup>5</sup>*Job*, ch. i and ii; *Zach.* iii, 1, 2; *I Paral.* xxi, 1; *Wisdom* ii, 24; *Eccli.* xxi, 27.

light into the depths of a lonely cave, where, for ages, the birds of night reigned alone in exclusive sovereignty, the tumult, the cries of war and of fright, proclaim a decisive battle.

Rationalistic philosophy asks whether the demon really exists and whether his empire is elsewhere than in the credulous imaginations of men. But it is hard to see a ground for these scruples. Does not reason tell us that there can be immaterial beings superior to man and created free like him? Liberty supposes probation; and the logical consequence of probation is success or failure. Therefore, there can be fallen spirits, who are become the slaves and even the agents of the evil they have committed. Among them, as in every society, we must admit that there are some who exercise over the others a preponderating influence, and even that, organised under a hierarchical form, they have a central point about which they are grouped, a king upon whom they depend. Revelation assures us that this is so; and Jesus has recognised the kingdom of Satan<sup>6</sup> and the existence of his satellites,<sup>7</sup> not for the sake of accommodating Himself to popular prejudice, but because such is the truth. He publicly promises His aid against the pernicious activity of the evil spirit. Satan will pass the Apostles through the sieve, like the grain upon the threshing-floor; in other words, he will try them, and Jesus has prayed that Peter's faith may not fail. Satan is in possession of the world, and the Son of Man, more mighty than the Wicked One, is come to dispossess him.<sup>8</sup> Satan is the enemy of mankind whom he has succeeded in doing to death from the very beginning; Jesus is man's friend and the shepherd who insures man's salvation.

<sup>6</sup> *St. Matt.* xii, 25.

<sup>7</sup> *St. Matt.* xxv, 41.

<sup>8</sup> *St. Luke* xi, 21-22.

Good by nature, insomuch as he came from God's hand, the Demon was perverted through his own fault, by his abuse of liberty. The probation that was to decide his merit brought on his fall.<sup>9</sup> He sinned most probably through pride,<sup>10</sup> at the head of his angels. God's justice has bound them all for all eternity to the evil that they did. Their punishment has rid them neither of their pretentious ambition that caused their ruin, nor of the hatred of God, against Whom they revolted. Thus God leaves them their activity as he does the wicked, the impious, the criminals even among us on earth. They are the chief workers of the evil which is part of the providential plan of this world, and in forcing the exercise of virtue by the just, they often contribute an increase to the merit of these latter. Their influence, according to Scripture, is confined within limits marked out by Divine wisdom and justice. They cannot, therefore, establish a power independent of the one only God, and thus lead us to the idea of a perilous dualism. They are simply secondary causes; and whether they tempt the virtue of Job or the faith of Peter, they do so only by God's permission.

Their spiritual nature, in spite of the darkness by which their fallen intellects are obscured, renders them in many respects superior to creatures without reason and even to man himself. Hence the immediate influence they are able to gain over matter and over minds. If peoples have acknowledged the existence of these evil *genii* it is for the reason that they saw them or felt their influence, and this universal belief depended on the experience of centuries. In the course of this book, we shall have occasion to define the influence that the demons exercise over those who are possessed; but we feel each day the power they have over the heart.

<sup>9</sup> *St. John* viii, 44.

<sup>10</sup> *I Tim.* iii, 6.

Masters of a corrupt world, and rulers of the darkness that envelops it, according to the Scriptural expression,<sup>11</sup> they at times so dispose light or darkness about the objects that occupy our attention and so arrange coincidences as to change the impressions in our souls and to excite sharply our evil concupiscence. They have, moreover, their subjects, their soldiers, who are the wicked. For as the demons, at the instigation of Satan, their prince, labour in sowing cockle in the world, so men, slaves of the demons, seek to pervert the servants of God.

Hence the gradual extension of the Satanic kingdom which, after the fall of the first man, fatally, as it were, embraced the entire world. Happily there was one point scarcely perceptible that escaped this awful influence, and from that point, from that tiniest drop of blood, transmitted from one generation to another, salvation was derived and the Kingdom of God came forth.

The Kingdom of God is the negation of the Kingdom of Satan, and its establishment means the emancipation of mankind, man's delivery from the devil's yoke; this is why, as we may casually remark, the idea of the Redemption rests almost entirely on faith in the existence of an oppressor of our feeble humanity.

The essential character of Christ, as Redeemer, is to come forth as the adversary of the terrible enemy of God and man. His work consists principally in dispelling the darkness that Satan had gathered about the head of mankind; with this object in view He will furnish precepts and examples of the most perfect virtue; He will introduce His people into the true religion worthy of the Creator and of His creatures; for this, in fine, He will surrender His life; by His blood He will obtain grace, the counter-

<sup>11</sup> *Ephes. vi, 12.*

balance of the devil's power, and, at the close of His career, He shall have redeemed for us, in part, by His triumph over Satan, that which had been lost to us by the fall of the first man.

It was a terrible struggle. Christ had to commence by the conquest of Himself, before gaining for others the elements of victory. Satan sought to destroy the new Adam, as he had destroyed the first. He laid siege to his opponent, at times, by means of desires that he endeavoured to excite in His heart; at others, by essaying to inspire Him with fear. Neither craftiness nor audacity was wanting in his awful plan. There were, in particular, two critical occasions on which he multiplied his efforts, first at the beginning and then at the end of the Messiah's career; but he never ceased, at any time, to wage a stubborn, treacherous war against the Redeemer.

It is a question how deep a hold temptation took upon the soul of Jesus, and in what sense the Spirit of evil was able to reach and annoy the Adversary whom he attacked. This question is one of extreme difficulty, inasmuch as it touches directly upon the mystery of the hypostatic union. It is certain that, if we suppose that the soul of Jesus was at all times equally and inevitably enlightened by the direct communications of the Word, temptation for Him was neither a source of danger nor of merit; it was not a struggle, but merely a semblance of a struggle, a deceptive and useless phantasmagoria. If the Divine ray is ever the same in the depth of the Saviour's conscience, what is the meaning of those periods of religious joy and of sadness so clearly indicated in the Gospel? Above all, what means that cry of supreme anguish, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Theologians in all ages have contended that in the moments of trial the Divinity withdrew into the superior



regions of the soul of Jesus, and seemed to retire as beneath a veil. This is as much as to say that the Word suspended its communications of light and left the soul, as it were, to itself. So does a mother seem to leave her little child to make its trial of strength alone; but though she hides or withdraws her guiding hand for a moment, she continues none the less in her care to give her all-powerful help. The child, if about to encounter or struggle with some obstacle, will never fall, for, if he should seem to falter, the mother's hand goes out at once to strengthen him; and yet, if he walks without a fall, if he succeeds without a failure, he gains no less glory than if no vigilant eye or powerful aid had been there to succour him. In all the temptations of Jesus, the presence of the Word ever assured His triumph, but the momentary isolation of the soul established its merit. Jesus seemed to have lost the form of God, Divinity, and to have preserved only the form of the slave, humanity; but this humanity was so pure, so well protected by Divinity, that it was absolutely impeccable.

And yet, standing thus isolated in temptation, His humanity is for us a model to be imitated. Doubtless there are other essential differences between Jesus' natural attitude and ours in the presence of temptation. For instance, temptation for Him was exterior, having not the slightest hold upon His heart, while for us it becomes immediately interior and finds a valued aid in our evil concupiscence; for His heart was not, like ours, merely purified; it was essentially pure. In us, even when in a state of justice, temptation, searching our souls, discovers deep down the memory of sin, the fugitive traces of ancient stain, and, by the merest agitation, it disturbs what a moment ago was seemingly clear and limpid. In Jesus's heart, where nothing evil had ever been, temptation stirs up nothing.

Nevertheless we can say with St. Paul<sup>12</sup> that Jesus was tempted in every way like ourselves, and, in His energetic resistance, He has a right to stand forth for us to imitate Him.

At the beginning of the struggle, Satan did not know clearly with Whom he was dealing. No doubt, indeed, he heard from the voices of heaven and of earth the title Son of God bestowed on Jesus, and took note of it, as we shall see in the story of the temptation; but what, in reality, was the Son of God? Was he a man especially holy and beloved of Heaven? Was He a Reformer of mankind, the Founder of a new religion? Was He the Word of God become man and God like His Father? Some one has said that Satan was of old cast down from his glory and hurled into the abyss for refusing to believe in the future realisation of the mystery of the Incarnation. At all events eager to know who this man, the object of his anxiety, was in reality, he hastens without delay to make trial of Him or to tempt Him.

<sup>12</sup> *Heb.* iv, 15.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TEMPTATION

SATAN DOES NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHOM HE IS TEMPTING—HE RENEWS HIS ANCIENT ATTACK AGAINST ADAM—THE FIRST TEMPTATION IS SENSUALITY—IN WHAT SENSE?—THE SECOND, PRESUMPTION—IN WHAT SENSE?—THE THIRD, PRIDE OF POWER—IN WHAT SENSE?—THE IDEAL OF THE MESSIAH COULD NOT BE DISFIGURED—THE VICTORY OF JESUS AND HUMANITY—WAS THE TEMPTATION, WHICH WAS UNDENIABLY REAL, A PHYSICAL OR A MORAL FACT? (St. Matt. iv. 1-11; St. Mark i, 12, 13; St. Luke iv, 1-13.)

THE shock of these two representatives of opposing powers was to be violent and decisive. Satan is the great agent of evil in this world; Jesus is the chief Agent of good. Which of the two shall destroy the empire of his adversary? The issue of the first struggle will give us an inkling; but it is only on the cross, when all shall have been consummated, that Satan's rout will be final. Indeed, if the demon had made his attack on God Himself, his ruin was certain from the first; he is only a creature, and his folly, however inexplicable, cannot leave him in ignorance that he must respect the Creator's holiness and bend before His power; but he enters the arena with a representative of humanity, and, as we have noted, the Divinity seems for a moment mysteriously to have veiled Itself in Jesus, to

permit the man to battle alone against the onset of his adversary. This is what makes Satan so daring and the triumph of Jesus so glorious.

Near to the forbidden tree, in the earthly paradise, man had been beset by a temptation of gluttony, for the fruit was pleasant to the eye; by a temptation of presumption, for the serpent had said that he might eat it without fear of death; by a temptation, finally, of insensate pride, for man hoped by eating of it to become like God, the Sovereign Master, knowing good and evil.

In the desert, the representative of the new humanity shall again be tempted in this threefold way that leads most surely to the heart of every son of Adam, since it is naught else but the triple branch of our evil concupiscence. Satan hopes, if he is in reality in the presence of the Messiah, to change by his suggestions the whole divine plan in the Messianic work, as he succeeded in doing in the primitive work of creation. Therefore, the end he sets himself is the disfiguring of the ideal that Jesus has conceived of His mission, and which is the Divine ideal. No, Satan will say, the Messiah cannot be a suffering Messiah, exposed to human woes; He is to astonish the world by a capricious show of miracles, and to build up finally, by human means, the vastest of kingdoms here below.

In this way the tempter pays court, in turn, to sensuality, the longings of the flesh; to presumption, the pride of life, and to thirst for the goods of earth, the awful concupiscence of the eyes. But in each of these three assaults the enemy of mankind will hurl himself in vain against a word borrowed from the law of God, and will exhaust himself before a soul so perfectly holy, that it does not even stop to consider the evil thought he suggests. As the glowing iron cannot bear the drop of water sprinkled on it, but by its heat changes it at once into vapour, so the

soul of Jesus immediately rejects and brings to naught the dangerous pictures called up before it. The first man had compromised all by his complaisant hesitation; Jesus will save all by allowing no delay to a conscience struggling with lust. For His life there is but one law, the law of God, and on His lips Satan will ever find a text of this law which, calmly and with triumphant irony, will come forth to rout him.

The physical condition of Jesus after a fast of forty days naturally occasions the first diabolical suggestion. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." It is not right, forsooth, that He, Who is not a man, but the Son of God, should restrict Himself to the conditions of ordinary human life and suffer hunger, when by His word the pebble in the desert can become the most substantial nourishment. Thus, again, at the close of His life, His murderers, the instruments of Satan, will shout at Him: "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross."

But on the first as on the last day of His career, Jesus, ever God, intends to remain a man and never to separate Himself, by a new manner of existence, from the common lot of mankind. If He, because He is the Messiah, should put aside all suffering, how could He accomplish the expiation? Ought the chief of an army that is suffering from hunger and thirst excuse himself from suffering in common with his soldiers because he is king and leader? In vain, therefore, does Satan pretend to Jesus that, as the Son of God, He has His omnipotence at the service of His sensuality; Jesus merely replies: "It is written: Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."<sup>1</sup> It is useless, then, to seek to draw Jesus

<sup>1</sup> *Deut.* viii, 3.

out of that human condition which He has assumed; by the first word of His response, He energetically affirms it. Satan cannot persuade Him that He is not a man among men; therefore, instead of employing His Messianic power in His own personal interest, He prefers to forget that He is possessed of it, and to bow humbly beneath the hand and the commands of the God Who has proclaimed Him His Son. How unworthy the Demon's idea to propose to Jesus the buying of a little bread by means of a miracle! Has man nothing but bread for nourishment? Did not Jehovah provide for Israel in the desert, without giving her the bread of Egypt she longed for so bitterly? And from a loftier standpoint is not the word that comes from God into the soul a nourishment that drives away all thought of bodily needs? Can the man who tastes of it worry about the bread of earth? Heaven's beloved has only to wait with confidence; God in His Providence knows his needs, and if He cares for the soul so generously, He will not leave its bodily dwelling to a miserable death.

Satan, seeing that Jesus was superior to material life and impregnable to all sensuality, straightway removes his plan of attack to other grounds. Unable to disturb His filial confidence in His Father, he will seek now to magnify His confidence into presumption. It is not unusual for us to be moved by our consciousness of being tenderly loved to a capricious abuse of the omnipotence of Him Who loves us. Jesus was unwilling to distrust; may He not be rash enough to trust too much?

Satan then transports Him into the Holy City, and sets Him upon the pinnacle<sup>2</sup> of the Temple. It was naturally

<sup>2</sup>The expression employed, τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ, does not indicate, as some have supposed, the extreme height of the arsis formed by the roof of the Temple. If the Evangelist had wished to speak of the summit of the holy place, he would have used the word *ναός*. Moreover, we know from Josephus, *Antiq.*, v, 5, 6; vi, 5, 1, that the roof of the Naos was bristling

fitted to be the scene of religious temptation, as the arid desert had been of sensual temptation.

The chasm cut by the Cedron was deep enough to cause vertigo. If Jesus were to descend there borne on the wings of His angels what a wonderful sight it would be for the entire city! He could well afford to refuse to prove to Satan His Divine Sonship by a miracle, but ought He not grant it to all Israel, who was awaiting the Messiah? "If thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down." It was a strange suggestion. But as the law of God seems to be the code wherein Jesus reads His rule of life, the spirit of evil cites it in support of his proposition: "For it is written: That He hath given His angels charge over Thee; and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest, perhaps, Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." It is to the just that Scripture promises this help; but for far greater reason is it assured to the Prince of the just! If God thus guards His servants, how much more will He not protect His beloved Son! It has been noted that Satan craftily suppresses a word which considerably modifies the meaning of the text.<sup>3</sup> God, in fact, promises His aid to the just man who keeps his way in obedience to the providential order. But the abyss is not a way, and no one will cast himself down it without a higher command.

with iron spikes to prevent the birds from roosting there and soiling the house of God. The *ίερον* therefore is, properly speaking, the whole sacred enclosure with its divers buildings; and we prefer to seek the scene of the second temptation at the angle of the south-east corner of the wall of enclosure where the roof of the Royal Portico ends in a pinnacle—*ἄκρον τοῦ τέγους*, says Josephus, *Antiq.*, xv, 11, 5—overlooking Cedron at a height of 400 cubits. *Antiq.*, xx, 9, 7: "If any one looked down from the top of the battlements, he would be giddy, while his sight could not reach to such an immense depth," adds the Jewish historian. The stones of the angle which one may still see on this part of the ancient Temple agree very nearly with the measurements given by this same author (*Antiq.*, xx, 9, 7), and mark the eastern extremity of the portico. See Le Camus, *Voyage aux pays bibliques*, vol. ii, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> *Ps.* xc, 11, 12.

What plausible reason could Satan suggest to legitimise this strange proposal? Did he seek to persuade Him to establish of a sudden the Messianic kingdom by a decisive exhibition of omnipotence in a journey through space before the eyes of astonished Jerusalem? This is probable. In fact, we shall see later on, with what insistence the incredulous will ask a sign from heaven that they may be moved to formulate their act of faith. Since Jesus is about to commence His public life, why not do so by a brilliant event? Why undertake those long and painful ways to make Himself known only gradually? Why consent to be discussed, despised, rejected? Is it not better to prevent all the evil that the Messiah is to suffer and others are to do, by one generous act of His great power?

Whatever the tempter's reasoning may really have been, the work he asks is a miracle that is either useless or altogether beside the Divine plan, and certainly presumptuous. In vain does Satan look for support from a declaration by God; it is not difficult to prove to him that texts of Scripture must not be used with violence in sanctioning our errors or in encouraging our whims. Certain texts, taken alone, sometimes seem to authorise our dangerous opinions, but with the context they at all times affirm the truth.

Jesus responded to this new doctor of the law: "It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." This advice, addressed to the children of Israel, is expressed in the plural, "*Vos*";<sup>4</sup> and Jesus has modified it intentionally. He desires to give His reply a twofold sense: first, He applies it to Himself in His relation to God, and then to Satan with regard to Himself, meaning—has Satan the right to tempt Jesus, Who is his God?

The second retort, more incisive than the first, and in

<sup>4</sup> *Deut.* vi, 16.



which we may discern the indignation that is to burst forth in the third, does not yet discourage the tempter; it only increases his uncertainty. He begins to doubt the power of Him Who has only the words of Scripture for a defence. If he is in the lists with a mere man, why not try him in his weakness and not in his strength? Taking Him, therefore, to a very high mountain, he rapidly brings before His eyes all the kingdoms of the earth and their glory, and says: "To Thee will I give all this power, and the glory of them; for to me they are delivered, and to whom I will I give them. If Thou, therefore, wilt adore before me, all shall be Thine." The snare is not so plain as one might believe. Satan does not pose as the true God, but simply as God's representative in the government of the universe. He declares that he has only delegated power, but that is enough to make him the great distributor of the goods of the earth. We have already seen the foundation he has for this assertion, and in what way, both in the minds of the Jews and in Our Saviour's thoughts, Satan, at that epoch, was really the prince of this world. As universal monarch of the kingdoms he had just exhibited, he could share his throne with none but a faithful vassal ready to bend beneath his hand and to seek investiture from him. The adoration he calls for was, therefore, merely an exterior sign of Jesus' submission of His soul to diabolical influence in order to become the powerful wielder of that influence upon earth. Satan's plan was to transform Christ into Anti-Christ.

But it is not true that Satan is God's representative in the world: he is God's abhorred counterfeit and enemy. He is master here by usurpation, and Jesus, Whose advent is not for the support, but for the ruin of his empire, must completely offset his wicked influence. Even though it were to disappoint the dearest hopes of His people, He will

reject all material means of securing His domination, all violent conquest, all earthly conspiracy. His kingdom, purely spiritual, shall not be like the kingdoms of this world. He will build it up slowly in meekness and in patience, seeking and winning souls one by one, putting little by little into the mass of humanity the leaven that will at length transform it, and sowing with care the grain of mustard-seed that will become the great tree of the new society. Satan offers glory, Jesus prefers ignominy; Satan presents wealth and pleasures, Jesus chooses poverty and suffering; the one would build the Messianic Kingdom on force and violence, the other intends to establish it on weakness and mildness. "Begone, Satan," cries Jesus, "for it is written, 'The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.'"

The Son of God cannot be deceived; from the clear gaze of His soul the ideal of His earthly mission cannot be removed; no false hopes can have place within His heart. Let Satan later on make Him feel the extent of earthly powers; He accepts, for He advances to the martyrdom of the cross; but when, in the belief of all, He has been done away with, He shall come forth from His tomb to proclaim to His adversary that the means God employs ever succeed, and that through them He is forever true King of the world and vanquisher of hell.

This triple triumph of Jesus over His enemy avenges the cruel defeat inflicted long before on nascent humanity beneath the tree in Paradise. Satan has just broken his weapons in an attack on an invulnerable enemy. Henceforth man, no longer his slave, may trample under foot as the Saviour has done, as often as he wills it with energy, all seductions of pleasure, of glory, and of the goods of earth. In the trial from which He has come forth triumphant, Jesus presents not only an example of valour and

the secret of strength, but also, in the grace He promises, the all-powerful element of victory.

This much suffices to tell us that the temptation was a real fact, and not a mistaken parable, still less a myth.

Ecclesiastical writers, however, have long been divided as to the precise meaning to be assigned to the Gospel narrative. The greater part, taking it literally, admit that Satan appeared in physical form; and, according to them, Jesus was in reality transported to the pinnacle of the Temple, and even to a mountain from whose summit He looked upon all the kingdoms of the universe. Others, from the time of Origen,<sup>5</sup> Saint Cyprian,<sup>6</sup> and Theodore of Mopsuestia,<sup>7</sup> think that Satan, though the immediate author of the temptation, remained invisible; that he sought to exert his influence on Jesus, as he does on our souls, by bringing up pictures before the imagination, by multiplying illusions, by murmuring perilous solicitations. To their minds, this struggle took place in a sphere purely spiritual; nevertheless there can be no doubt of the reality of the combat, of the triumph, and of the merit. The tempter is ever Satan, and whether he speaks to the ear of the heart or to the ear of the body, he is equally redoubtable. On the other hand, victory lies wholly in the free reaction of the soul which rejects evil suggestions on the instant, without suffering any contact with them. Admitting that Jesus was tempted through the senses, we must, indeed, acknowledge that finally the temptation was summed up in a moral impression which was to be rejected or welcomed. Hence, one does not clearly see the reasons for presenting physically, in material acts, a scene which belongs entirely to the spiritual order. The only sound argu-

<sup>5</sup> Origen, *De Principiis*, iv, 16.

<sup>6</sup> St. Cyprian, *De Jejunio et Tentationibus Christi*.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore of Mops., Cf. in Münter, *Fragm. Patrum, fasciculum. i*, p. 107.

ment is found in the expressions employed in the Gospel text. But of two difficulties, one of words, the other of things, it is better, apparently, to suppress the latter.

Besides his manifestation under the form of a serpent in the earthly paradise, we see no other evidence, in Biblical history, that Satan ever revealed himself in a visible manner. In the present instance, more particularly, there is nothing to indicate that he was seen by Jesus Christ. It is, indeed, vain for commentators to represent him as a hermit in the desert, as an angel of light on the pinnacle of the Temple, as the spirit of darkness on the mountain. Nothing is more arbitrary than their suppositions. Moreover, the transit through the air, the alighting on the embrasure of the Temple, present real difficulties, if we do not admit that Jesus and Satan were invisible both to the inhabitants of the country and to those of the Holy City. The sight of two personages traversing space and settling down on the top of the sacred edifice, would have unusually attracted the attention of spectators. Finally, it must be admitted that there is no mountain on earth from whose summit may be seen, in an instant, all the kingdoms of the world. But since, in every hypothesis, it is always necessary to accept certain details in a broad and figurative sense, it would be simpler, perhaps, to concede that the Gospel story relates to us, in metaphors, the threefold interior combat which Jesus sustained against Satan and from which He came forth completely victorious.

The Evangelists in certain details of their history appear to confirm this view, even where the actual text seems to exclude such parabolic meaning. Thus, St. Mark, epitomising in one verse the history of the temptation, leads us to suppose that it took place entirely in the desert. In St. Matthew and St. Luke the order of the last two temptations is reversed, which would be of no importance

were it a question of a purely psychological fact, whereas there would be an error in one or the other of the Gospels if the facts treated of were external and actual. In both, after the physical transportation supposed in the second and third temptations, Jesus ought to be brought back to the desert; but the narrator does not bring Him back, because he never supposes Him to have left it. Lastly, in carefully reading the three Synoptics, it seems that, according to St. Mark and St. Luke, the temptations were continued during forty days, and the three principal ones recorded for us took place at the close of this period. All these details plainly cause this story to hover between the material and external reality, which is rather difficult to admit, and the psychological and internal reality, which is, moreover, sufficient to maintain the importance of the moral lessons conveyed to us by Jesus.

Saint Matthew's expression, that Satan *coming* to the Saviour tempted Him, might be explained in this way, that in the world of spirits there are comings and goings of which we can give no idea, except by the use of words which make the thing perceptible.

Less explicit than his predecessor, Saint Luke contents himself by saying that Satan spoke to Jesus. He must have spoken the language of spirits, in our opinion, and through suggestions, terrible influences, he must have solicited His soul interiorly; it was in imagination that he placed Him on the pinnacle of the Temple and on the mountain, and it was before His mind only that he made the kingdoms of the earth and the depths of the abyss to be in evidence. No more was needed to try Jesus. Physical reality would add nothing to the temptation. The Saviour could not have conquered with greater glory, nor could Satan have failed with more disgrace.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> If, as we must suppose, it was from Jesus Himself that the Apostles received the history of the temptation, it is easy to understand how it may,

However that may be, the historical and moral issue remains the same, for the visible and invisible fact being a reality, the example is equally instructive, and the grace procured likewise abundant.

Satan, shamed by his repulse, retired for a time only; <sup>9</sup> for, although seeming to suspect the Divine personality of Jesus and trembling before His power, he was determined to seize upon any opportunity of renewing the attack. At the foot of the cross, at the final moment of the agony, Satan's supreme effort will be put forth only to be nullified. There only will he admit his complete and irremediable defeat.

In the meantime, in the place of him who fled in confusion, the angels of heaven hasten to the side of the Vanquisher; they seek to honour and comfort in Him the new humanity which has just been associated with their ancient victory over the spirit of darkness; they surround Him piously as a brother found again after the battle, covered with glory and worthy of the most legitimate triumph.

when issuing from their pens, have lost much of the abstract form it bore on the lips of the Master. He may have related the attacks thus: "Satan said to me—Satan tempted me—Satan led me," as in other circumstances He said, "Satan desired to have you to sift you as wheat"; "The Prince of this world cometh"; "I beheld Satan like lightning falling from Heaven"; "Satan came and tore away the word sown in their hearts," without authorising one, more in one case than in the other, to believe in the outward manifestations of this spirit of evil. The Evangelists allowed themselves a certain liberty in their mode of recital; for instance, they tell us how Jesus quoted *Deut.* viii, 3, and Satan *Ps.* xc, 11, according to the Septuagint, whereas these texts had certainly been quoted from the Hebrew. Why should not this liberty have had some influence upon the concrete form of their narration?

<sup>9</sup> This expression, ἀχρι καιροῦ, used by St. Luke, supposes that the first assault of Satan would have its continuation further on. But as Satan has never shown himself later in visible form, it appears logical to many to conclude that the Evangelist has simply seen in the temptations related by him a phenomenon purely of the spiritual order, in which the two adversaries had engaged in a struggle that was very real, though it remained invisible.

## CHAPTER IV

# JOHN THE BAPTIST PRESENTS THE MESSIAH TO ISRAEL

JESUS TO BE INTRODUCED TO HIS PEOPLE BY THE PRECURSOR—THE PRECURSOR SALUTES HIM SOLEMNLY AS THE EXPIATORY VICTIM AND AS THE SON OF GOD—HIS CERTAINTY THAT HE IS NOT MISTAKEN—MAKE WAY FOR THE MESSIAH-KING. (St. John i, 29-34.)

MEANWHILE the great mission of the Baptist had not yet been fulfilled. After having prepared Israel for religious renovation and having recognised in person the Messiah Who was to accomplish it, his final glory was to consist in introducing this Messiah to His people<sup>1</sup> by a solemn declaration.

Since the day on which He had been baptised, Jesus, dwelling in the desert, had never appeared in public. John always cherished in his heart the imperishable memory and the lively image of Him Whom he had seen in the waters of the Jordan glorious in the light of heaven. Reflection, ripening in the depths of his soul the sudden impressions received at the moment of the Divine manifestation, had made only the more conclusive for him the sign by which Jehovah ended the ancient alliance and inaugurated the new.

For His part, Jesus was not unaware that He was to

<sup>1</sup> *St. John* i, 31.

be presented to His people by the Precursor. Not wishing to penetrate into the fold without the assistance of the Baptist, the official porter of Judaism, nor Himself to proclaim Himself the envoy of God, He turned, as He came from the desert and before commencing His public life, toward him whose testimony He awaited. The natural way for Him to go back into Galilee was, doubtless, through Bethabara, where John was baptising.<sup>2</sup> But He came there with a special intention, for the Gospel says that John saw Jesus not as a chance passer-by like the others, but as one who came to him as to the consecrator of His priesthood.

At the same instant, the son of Zachary felt his soul seized by the Spirit Who long before had inspired the prophets. In his eyes and in the clearest light, the Messiah's character was sketched. While popular prejudice looked for a terrible warrior, a world conqueror, a king whose magnificence would overshadow the memory of David and of Solomon, he saw in the Desired of all nations only an expiatory victim, taking upon His own shoulders the iniquity of all in order to annul it. Then, putting aside the dangerous exclusivism that confined to Israel the circle of Messianic influence, he saluted in Jesus the Saviour, not only of Israel, but of the entire world: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world!" The Lamb is the symbol of perfect docility: he endures without complaint the evil treatment which the wicked heap upon him, and, in the words of the prophet,<sup>3</sup> he is dumb even when they lead him to the slaughter. However, this is not John's whole thought. According to him, Jesus in His mild submission resembles not only every

<sup>2</sup> Bethabara or Bethania, as we have said, was the ford where travellers crossed the Jordan.

<sup>3</sup> *Isa.* liii, 7.



lamb, but He is the personal and typical realisation of the *Lamb of God*,<sup>4</sup> that is, the Lamb which, offered in sacrifice, is to become the expiatory victim for the sins of others. This Lamb thus immolated was no other than that very one which, in the days of bondage in Egypt, had distinguished Israel from the idolatrous nations, and constituted the fundamental basis of the ancient alliance. The paschal lamb was, indeed, a victim of expiation: for it had been instituted to preserve the first-born of Israel from the sword of the exterminating angel. When Divine justice discovered the mark of the blood of the immolated lamb on a door-post, it passed on, respecting the life redeemed by the victim.<sup>5</sup> This blood, therefore, had reconciled with God and had protected against His wrath all who took refuge behind it. Its expiatory worth was so well recognised that the Israelite believed that each year he was purified from his sins by the immolation of the lamb at Paschal time. This, indeed, was the first and most necessary of sacrifices; and that the Precursor should salute Jesus as the great reality Whose figure was the Paschal victim is the less surprising, since after him the Apostles did not fail to repeat it in their writings. St. Paul, in particular,<sup>6</sup> declares that Jesus Christ was the Pasch immolated for the whole world.

It cannot be denied, however, that there was a natural relation between the Messiah and the other victims prescribed by Moses for the purification of the people. More particularly, perhaps, is it permitted to establish a mystical relation between the Saviour of men and the Lamb of one year which fell morning and evening beneath the sacri-

<sup>4</sup>The article *δ* indicates a lamb well known, awaited by Israel, a sacred lamb. On another occasion we shall see the Baptist designate Jesus as simply the *Lamb of God*. He supposes that it is a qualification reserved exclusively for the Messiah, and commonly understood and accepted.

<sup>5</sup> *Ex.* xii, 23.

<sup>6</sup> *I Cor.* v, 7.

ficial knife, as the necessary daily expiation for Israel.<sup>7</sup> But, for John the Baptist, it is evident that all these sacrifices, with their distinctive characters, were summed up in the most ancient, the most popular, the most important of all, that of the Paschal lamb. Isaias himself was thinking of this same lamb, the symbol or sacrament of the reconciliation between Israel and Jehovah, when he sketched the portrait of the just man in suffering.

Jesus, therefore, according to the prophecy of the Precursor, is the victim Who has taken upon His head the burden of iniquity that bears down the world, and Who, in His sacrifice, is to annul it. It would be but little for Him to combat universal malice with His doctrine or His example; He intends to accept by substitution the responsibility of all our crimes, and to pay for us the ransom demanded by Divine justice. Therefore, *to bear* and *to take away* at the same time the sins of the world is His mission and, as it were, naturally His work.

But Jesus is not merely an expiatory victim; He is the Son of God. To give complete testimony to Him, John, who has proclaimed Him Redeemer, must not leave His divine nature in obscurity. "This is He," he adds, "of whom I said: 'After me there cometh a man Who is preferred before me, because He was before me.'" The general testimony formerly rendered to the Messiah, Whom he did not know, was here applied to Jesus, in person, Whom he points out with his finger; so that his final words are the official recognition of Jesus as the Envoy of Heaven, and the Messiah awaited by Israel. For the Baptist, in fact, the young carpenter of Nazareth is not only an eminent man, ἀνὴρ, He is a pre-existing being and one Who has exercised His activity in the world, while he himself

<sup>7</sup> *Ex.* xxix, 38; *Numb.* xxviii, 3.

was yet unborn. This conviction, which was that of the advanced Jewish theology,<sup>8</sup> was more particularly inspired in John by the very text of Malachias<sup>9</sup> which he manifestly has in mind when he formulates his testimony: "Behold," Jehovah had said, identifying Himself with the Messiah, "I send my Angel and he shall prepare the way, before my face." Now, he who sends his own creature, who is become his messenger, exists before him who is sent. The Messiah was before the Precursor. He was his principle and is the purpose of his existence.

Therefore, in the idea of the Messiah as expounded by John the Baptist nothing is wanting. The Messiah is no longer to be awaited, no longer to be sought. Jesus of Nazareth is He. In declaring this John relies not on human reasoning, but on Divine revelation, immediate and undeniable. He has paid no attention, in fact, to the bonds of relationship that united him with Jesus, nor to the family traditions that told of the supernatural manifestations that occurred around his cousin's cradle: "And I knew Him not," he says to the Jews. For their lives, as we have said elsewhere, had at an early date become completely separated, and for the first time, perhaps, since their most tender infancy, they had just met in the waters of the Jordan.

God had reserved it for Himself to make Jesus known to the Precursor, that the Precursor himself might make Him known to Israel. The promised sign of revelation has been given; John *has seen it* with his own eyes, and that is why he speaks. What has he seen? We have learned it in the story of the Baptism, and he himself repeats it now: "I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove from heaven,

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Berthold, in *La Christologie Juive*, § 23, § 25, etc., and Schoetgen, ii, p. 6, etc.

<sup>9</sup> *Mal.* iii, 1.

and He remained upon Him.” This was exactly the sign agreed upon. “He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, He it is that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.”

Jesus, then, was to administer the Baptism of the Spirit; but is not the infusion of the Holy Ghost the prerogative of God? Had not God reserved for Himself the right to effect this outpouring upon all flesh in the days of the Messiah?<sup>10</sup> Let us repeat it—John then looked upon the Messiah as God, and he is right in his conclusion as to His Divine Sonship: “And I saw,” he says, “and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God.” After what precedes this, the title of Son of God must be understood here not in the sense in which it is applied at times to the Angels, or to the Judges or Kings of the Old Testament, but in its deepest sense and in its most vivid reality. It expresses all the divine nature of Him Whose pre-existence John has already proclaimed, and Whose life and activity he has identified with that of Jehovah Himself.

Thus the Precursor, come to give testimony of the light, has faithfully fulfilled his mission. It is for the people now to do their duty. He will disappear before that sun which he points out on the horizon. The herald has cried out, “Behold the Messiah,” and has only to retire from the scene. Make way for the Son of God!

<sup>10</sup> *Joel* ii, 28; *Isa.* xlv, 3.

PART SECOND  
THE PUBLIC LIFE OF THE SAVIOUR

## BOOK I

### *Period of General Exploration*

#### SECTION I

### *Jesus Reveals Himself as the Messiah*

#### CHAPTER I

## HE SELECTS SOME OF HIS DISCIPLES

THE PRECURSOR DIRECTS HIS DISCIPLES TO JESUS—ANDREW AND JOHN WITH THE MASTER—THE INTRODUCTION AND THE FUTURE OF SIMON—PHILIP IS CALLED—NATHANIEL UNDER THE FIG-TREE—THEY SHALL SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED ABOVE THE HEAD OF THE SON OF MAN. (St. John i, 35-52.)

As John had been sent to prepare the way for Jesus, it was easy to see that his first thought would be to direct toward Him the religious movement inaugurated through his zeal. On the other hand, after his solemn and oft-repeated declaration, it was quite natural that the slightest breeze should shake down the ripened fruits of the theocratic tree, and deposit them in the hands of the Messiah as the first-fruits of the New Covenant. Hence, instead of retiring, Jesus had only to await decisive events. They were not long in coming.

A few days later, John, who continued his ministry on the banks of the Jordan, saw Jesus as He passed. "Behold the Lamb of God!" he cried out in his enthusiasm. A look of deep meaning must have accompanied these words. Two disciples who had doubtless heard his former testimony, but who, through a sentiment of respectful tenderness, still followed their master, were moved by them. John's exclamation meant: "Go to Him Whom I point out to you." They obeyed, and began to follow Jesus. One of them was called Andrew, and the other, who modestly passes as anonymous, was John, the author of the fourth Gospel. Jesus heard them coming, and, turning, received them kindly as they hesitated to approach Him. "What seek you?" He said to them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), "where dwellest Thou?" It is the first word the beloved disciple spoke to the Master; and his heart has not forgotten it. He seeks to reproduce it, as in its original text, merely explaining to his Grecian readers the signification of the solemn title of Rabbi which their first enthusiasm gave to the Saviour. For Andrew and John, indeed, Jesus could not yet be the expiatory Lamb seen by the prophetic eye of John the Baptist; but He was the Master, the Teacher, He Who was to initiate them into the new life. This is why, though discreetly manifesting a desire for a special communication, they already presented themselves as disciples.

Jesus said to them: "Come and see." And they came and saw where He abode, in a cave in the desert, beneath the shelter of some leafy bush or in the hospitable home of a friend. It was about the tenth hour of the day, four o'clock in the afternoon,<sup>1</sup> that the disciples went to

<sup>1</sup> We follow here the Jewish and Oriental manner of counting the hours. Their day began at six o'clock in the morning and ended at six o'clock in

Jesus. It is evident that this was a decisive moment in the life of the Evangelist and that his memory of it is quite accurate. They spent the remainder of the day listening to the Master. We do not know the subject of this conversation; but its result is conclusive. His hearers knew that, despite His obscure past, His humble state, His simple manners, the Workman of Nazareth was, indeed, the Messiah announced by John the Baptist and impatiently awaited by Israel.

Filled with joy, each one<sup>2</sup> set out to find his brother, in order to share with him this good fortune. James must have followed John to the banks of the Jordan, as Peter had followed Andrew. These ardent, generous men all awaited and sought with impatience the Saviour of Israel. Andrew was the first to meet his brother. "We have found the Messiah," he said to him; this word, *εὑρηκα*, *I have found*, was an exclamation appropriate not only to science, but also to faith, in which, too, discoveries are possible and wherein the realisation of hopes is greeted with emotions. Andrew utters it in as great a transport as Archimedes, and his brother Simon is so greatly astonished that he hastens at once to behold, with his own eyes, the man who arouses such enthusiasm.

It was at eventide that Simon was brought into the presence of Jesus. The youthful Master looked upon this new disciple, and, discerning beneath the coarse exterior

the evening; the remainder of the twenty-four hours was called night. Those who prefer to explain this text according to the juridical practice of counting the hours from midnight, suppose, it was then ten o'clock in the morning. In this interpretation, which is the less probable, they find a more complete sense for the remark in the Gospel: "*They staid with Him that day.*" But *that day* merely signifies *the rest of that day*.

<sup>2</sup>We think this is the meaning to be given to this passage, on account of the expressions used by the Evangelist: "He findeth *first* his brother Simon." Others think that both sought Peter, but that Andrew, who knew best his own brother's habits, was the first to find him.



of the Galilean fisherman an energetic, generous soul, He declares to him: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter," or more exactly in Syro-Chaldaic, *a fragment of rock*. It was the word of God speaking a prophecy and creating! At that time its deep meaning was not understood. But Jesus will repeat it at a future time, and will announce to the son of Jona that by His omnipotence He has made him the *foundation stone* of the new society, the immovable *rock* destined to uphold the Church against the most violent storms. Meanwhile, this change of name signified that the Master took possession of the disciple, and that a new calling was to commence for Peter.<sup>3</sup> Thus it was that the Kingdom of God was inaugurated. It already counted three proselytes. The movement was to spread with rapidity.

The next day Jesus, having resolved to go back toward Galilee, where He had decided to enter upon His public life, met Philip of Bethsaida, in conversation perhaps<sup>4</sup> with Andrew and Simon, both of whom were his compatriots. "Follow me," He said to him, as if promising him that He would complete on the way the demonstration which his two friends had begun. Philip followed Him and, ere long, he, too, shared all their hopes and convictions and was impressed like them with the necessity of proclaiming the Great Tidings.

At the same moment, Nathanael of Cana, who was probably another of John's disciples, was returning to his own village, his heart filled with the religious feelings which he had experienced on the banks of the Jordan.

<sup>3</sup> Instances of like changes of name are not rare in sacred history: *e. g.*, Abram (exalted father) becomes Abraham (father of multitudes) (*Gen.* xxxii, 28); Jacob (supplanter) becomes Israel (the strong against God).

<sup>4</sup> Verse 45 seems to imply that Philip's call to follow Jesus was occasioned by his relations with his two fellow-countrymen.

Philip, who knew him more intimately, sought for him on the way and overtook him. "We have found Him," said he, "of Whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus, the son of Joseph of Nazareth." This gives us a key to the conversation Jesus had with Philip and his companions. Moses and the prophets are the sources whence, at the beginning as well as in the middle and at the close of His career, the Master seeks the demonstration of His Messianic <sup>5</sup> dignity. Philip is mistaken in designating Jesus as a Nazarene and the son of Joseph; He is neither. The prophecies, had he well understood them from the Master's lips, would have informed him otherwise. But he reasons here according to appearances and in keeping with public opinion. The Evangelists themselves, who know the history of His conception and birth, always call Him Jesus of Nazareth and son of Joseph; yet, though lending themselves thus to the language of the people, they never compromise the real facts of the Gospel history.

Nathanael had just then stopped beneath a fig-tree, perhaps in meditation on the deep truths presented to his mind by the preaching of John the Baptist. In the moral life there are such moments of delight when the soul in search of God meets Him in the midst of an outpouring of His grace, hears His voice, and shares in His life. In such a state was Nathanael, and we shall see his astonishment that Jesus should know of it. His surprise will be so great that he will declare Him to be the Son of God for the sole reason that He had the power of penetrating the secrets of his soul.

On hearing the explicit declarations of Philip, Nathanael, like a man of reflection, well versed in the Scriptures, makes this simple response: "Can anything of good come

<sup>5</sup> *St. John* v, 46; *St. Luke* xxiv, 27.

from Nazareth?" It was at Bethlehem, in fact, that the Messiah was to be born, and it was from Jerusalem that He was to go forth to the conquest of the world. Nazareth was nothing more than a market-town with an unsavoury reputation. "Come and see," returned Philip. This freed him from all argumentation. When one can ascertain a fact merely by opening the eyes, or by putting out the hand to touch it, it is superfluous to waste time in reasoning as to its possibility. Simply by manifesting Himself to an upright soul, Jesus proves His identity.

Nathanael no longer resisted Philip's urgent invitations. When Jesus beheld him approaching, He said aloud: "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom there is no guile." Nathanael heard Him; but as little moved now by the praise spoken of him as he was shortly before by his companion's enthusiasm, he coldly replies: "Whence knowest Thou me?" And Jesus, nothing hurt by this somewhat savage honesty, says: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." In this last word there was an allusion to some secret of conscience of which we know nothing, but which Nathanael saw at once, since he stood there amazed, troubled, transported. That Jesus should have seen him from afar, through many intervening obstacles, meditating or praying beneath the fig-tree, is not what surprises him most; he could, moreover, have demanded proof of this assertion; but that the Master's eye should in one instant penetrate into the depths of his soul and read there the cause of his emotion, a mystery of reconciliation, of love, or of sacrifice: this is superhuman and beyond the reach of all objections. "Rabbi," cries Nathanael, "Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel!" He Who has the same power of sight as God must be the Son of God. But the Son of God is the Messiah, and the Messiah is the King of Israel. Rightly,

then, does Nathanael, the true Israelite, according to Jesus, take pleasure in doing homage to his rightful king. The Lord says to him, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, thou believest; greater things than these shalt thou see." And so does He encourage his growing faith, assuring him of stronger motives in future time. Whoever receives the first ray of the light of God has only to remain with eyes ever open and one grace will bring another, until in the end the soul is flooded with fascinating brilliancy. "Amen, amen,<sup>6</sup> I say to you," continues Jesus, "you shall see the heaven opened and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." In Biblical symbolism, the opened heavens signify the assistance of God coming down to man,<sup>7</sup> while, on the other hand, the heavens closed represent the absence of all Divine aid,<sup>8</sup> and the approach of eternal justice.

The Messiah in making Himself known to the world is the manifest proof that the heavens, whence He has come down, are open above the head of mankind. We may even say that by His incarnation and life here below He has made earth the vestibule of heaven. Wherever He is, Angels surround Him, and, mounting up from the Son to the Father only to descend immediately, they disclose the perfect union of these two Divine persons to whom they do homage. It is this union of Jesus with His Father that the disciples will be called upon to contemplate during the

<sup>6</sup>This is the first time we meet with this formula, "Amen, Amen, I say unto you." The word *Amen*, from *Aman* (it has been established), is often used as an adverb and signifies "certainly"; or, again, "may it be so." We may remark that it is never used in the Old Testament to affirm beforehand what was about to be said, but to assert more roundly what has been said (*Numb.* v, 22; *Deut.* xxvii, 15, etc.; *II Esd.* v, 13, etc.). The innovation is made by Jesus, and it is only in the Gospel of St. John that the Amen is twice repeated, in order to remove any doubt that might remain in the mind of the hearer.

<sup>7</sup>*Gen.* xxviii, 10-17; *Ezech.* i, 1.

<sup>8</sup>*Isa.* lxiv, 1-4.

course of His public career, both in His miraculous works and in the charm of His discourses on truth. At this astonishing sight their convictions will be gradually strengthened until they are immovable.

Here, for the first time,<sup>9</sup> Jesus calls Himself the *Son of Man*. The signification He attaches to this title is, indeed, that of offspring of humanity, in contrast with the title of Son of God, which Nathanael has just given Him. But the offspring He means is not the ordinary, but the pre-eminent offspring, the Man awaited and foretold, the head of the new humanity, consequently the Messiah. Yet this title is the most humble and for us the most consoling of all that He can use to impress us with the superiority of His nature. It veils, as it were, His Divine essence, and discloses to us only that fraternity of nature that unites every man with the Saviour as with a companion in trial, as with a brother who comes to save, as with a model of sanctity.

The five disciples whom Jesus had just selected were to be ever faithful to Him; for we shall find Nathanael again in the Apostle Bartholomew. But it would not do to hasten events. Before giving them any definite part in His ministry, He desired that the leaven He had placed in their souls should ferment. When the proper time of grace is come, He will notify them, and they will leave their nets and their families to devote themselves wholly to Him Who has led them beneath His yoke.

<sup>9</sup> In the Synoptics he bears this title thirty-nine times, and it is chiefly in *Matthew* and *Luke* that one finds the term. It is employed ten times in *St. John*. To imagine that *Daniel* vii, 13, has suggested to Jesus the idea of this denomination and to rely on *Matt.* xxvi, 1-64, is to misunderstand even the meaning of this expression created by the religious soul of the Master, and which the theology of the Fathers has so admirably analysed.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WEDDING-FEAST AT CANA

THE WEDDING AT THE HOME OF SOME RELATIVES OR FRIENDS OF JESUS AT CANA—WHY THE MASTER AND HIS DISCIPLES ATTEND IT—THE INCIDENT OCCASIONED BY THEIR COMING—MARY'S PRUDENT REQUEST AND JESUS' RESPONSE—THE CHANGING OF THE WATER INTO WINE—VERIFICATION OF THE FIRST MIRACLE WORKED BY JESUS. (St. John ii, 1-12.)

MEANWHILE they directed their steps toward Galilee. The disciples no longer had anything to keep them on the banks of the Jordan, while Jesus was eager to go and present to His fellow-countrymen the first-fruits of the great revelation.

During the journey, at Nazareth perhaps, whither the little caravan must have gone directly, they learned that a family festival was in progress at Cana. It was a marriage; Mary had already gone there, and Jesus Himself had been invited. Nathanael being a native of Cana, and his companions for their part desiring to return to the borders of the lake where they dwelt, the group of friends readily decided to accompany the Master. The latter had taken the liberty of inviting them.<sup>1</sup> He could do so without any indiscretion; for, to all appearances, the wedding

<sup>1</sup> The verb *ἐκλήθη* in the singular indicates that they were invited only incidentally, and because they were already attached to Jesus who took them where He was to be welcomed Himself.

was being celebrated in a family most friendly, or perhaps related to His own. Hence it is that Mary had not awaited the arrival of her Son before going herself. Her nephews,<sup>2</sup> whom the Gospel calls the brothers of Jesus, were also there. It has long been supposed that one of them was the groom. Mary's evident interest, the responsibility she seems to assume, the familiarity with which she gives her orders to the servants, clearly indicate that she was as much at home in Cana as in her own house in Nazareth.

Jesus therefore decided to accept the invitation He had received. It was an opportunity to make known at the outset of His public life the tolerant spirit of His mission. Indeed, it was His intention to enter among the joys of the world to sanctify them, among its pleasures to make them wholesome, among sinners to convert them. John preached penance in the desert, he drew the guilty about him to terrify them; but He intends to advance upon them and to take hold of them in their merry-makings in order to touch their hearts and to transform their lives. To eat with publicans and to converse with fallen women, is not this the natural rôle of the good shepherd, who ought to pursue the straying lamb wherever it may be? Again, if His new proselytes, accustomed to hear only the echo of God's wrath from the lips of the man of the desert, are astonished at the kindness of their new Master, He is ready to prove by a miracle that, though ever kind and charitable, He is none the less Heaven's messenger, the authorised revealer of the mysteries of God.

Although, as the Evangelist seems to indicate,<sup>3</sup> the travellers had only three days for their journey from the

<sup>2</sup> This does not refer to Joseph, who must have been dead, nor to His "sisters," who probably remained in Nazareth.

<sup>3</sup> Ewald wrongly thinks that the wedding was celebrated on the third day of their stay in Cana. It was really on the third day after they had left the banks of the Jordan, or after they had met Nathanael on the road.

banks of the Jordan to Galilee, they must have reached Nazareth early on the third day. From Nazareth to Cana, whether it be Kana-el-Djelil or Kefr-Kenna, was not far—three hours to the first, two to the second,<sup>4</sup> where a charming little town, suspended from the side of the hill and built in amphitheatrical form, presents a most gracious aspect. Behind the hedges of nopals and pomegranates, an antique spring rises and forms a well into which young girls, with pitchers on their shoulders, descend by stone steps jutting from the walls, while on the road their mothers wash their linen in the basins fed from the same source.

Jesus and His disciples arrived at nightfall. The festival had already begun, perhaps, several days previously. The arrival of these latest guests served only to increase the joy of the occasion. Jesus, a friend of the family, came transformed into a teacher surrounded by His disciples. These latter found their pleasure in relating discreetly, but with sufficient enthusiasm to make known their own convictions, the Baptist's testimony, the miraculous occurrence at the baptism, and the story of their own vocation. A wave of religious joy prevailed, and exalted the earthly happiness of the noisy gathering.

But while they thus discoursed through the long evening, the wine had diminished in the urns. The presence of

<sup>4</sup> Since my visit to the site of Kana-el-Djelil in 1899, I would be less positive in my identification of Cana of the Gospel with Kefr-Kenna. True, Kana-el-Djelil seems to have nothing in its favour but its name, and insignificant ruins, tombs, the foundations of a large building (possibly a monastery), some wells, and grottoes in the rocks; but the less there is remaining, the more surprising is the retention of the name. Its situation to the north of the plain extending from Sepphoris to the Lake of Genesareth is, besides, not less in harmony with the Gospel story than that of Kefr-Kenna, and the Biblical name is more exactly preserved. I should not venture, therefore, as in the *Voyage aux Pays Bibliques* or in the article *Cana* in the *Dict. Biblique*, to give the preference to Kefr-Kenna over Kana-el-Djelil. The peasants, in fact, when asked where Kana is, unhesitatingly conduct you to the ruins of El-Djelil.



six new guests<sup>5</sup> had not a little aided in hastening its consumption. No one among them had foreseen such an accident, but men can easily be excused for lack of foresight when a woman, mother, sister, or friend watches for them. In this instance it was Mary, who, though ravished with joy at the news that took up the attention of all present, was no less attentive to the needs of the feast.

She knew immediately, from the signs of some of the servants, that the provision of wine was exhausted. For the master of the house it was a mishap of which the arrival of Jesus and His disciples seemed to be the chief cause. Turning then to her Son, Mary said: "They have no wine." Beneath this charitable manner of telling an annoying incident was veiled the most respectful of requests. In reality, Mary summoned Jesus to the assistance of His hosts,<sup>6</sup> and requested all that was needed, even a miracle. Jesus perceived it, and to show that the first duty of one who has received a Divine mission is to be ever without father or mother, deaf to the voice of blood, He replies coldly: "Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come,"<sup>7</sup> or, in other words, "Have no need-

<sup>5</sup> Wedding celebrations sometimes lasted an entire week. (*Gen.* xxix, 27; *Judges* xiv, 15; *Tob.* ix, 12; x, 1.)

<sup>6</sup> Exegetical authorities of some weight have given to Mary's remark a meaning sufficiently extraordinary to be worth noting; they say that what she meant was as follows: "The wine is giving out; rise from the table, so that the rest of the company may follow, and thus save the host the annoyance of being thus taken unawares"; and that Jesus replied: "Woman, our thoughts are not the same; it is not time for me to go; I have yet something to accomplish here." This certainly seems to be too far-fetched to have any semblance of truth. The expression "my hour" on the lips of Jesus always has a different meaning, and indicates something solemn.

<sup>7</sup> There are various interpretations of this passage. Some, placing the interrogation point at the end of the phrase, translate it, "Woman, what need have we to trouble ourselves? Is not my hour now come?" Others render it thus: "Woman, what have I in common with thee? This is not my hour." But most generally, *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί* in Scripture (*Judges* xi, 12; *II Kings* xvi, 10; *III Kings* xvii, 18; *IV Kings* iii, 13) signifies *leave me in peace, leave it to me*. The word *woman*, in the language Jesus spoke, was not unbecoming. It was synonymous with *Madam*.

less anxiety, wait and behold the end. When I shall put forth my hand, all will be well." Yet it cannot be denied that in the tone of His reply there was a something painful to Mary. It may be that in thus trying her character, and, particularly, the firmness of her faith, Jesus intended to show how prayer, when rising as a cry from a religious soul, ought never to be discouraged, but to hope against all hope.

But it is certain that Mary found in Jesus' response something which we ourselves cannot perceive, and without hesitation she concluded that her Son would act according to her desires. Then turning to the servants, she said: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Near by were six water-pots of stone for the accustomed purifications of the Jews. They were of large dimensions, each one holding two or three measures, that is, from seventy-seven to one hundred and sixteen litres.<sup>8</sup> Jesus said to the servants: "Fill the water-pots with water." So eager were they to fulfil all His commands, that they filled them to the very top. Six hectolitres of wine in a country where the vine can scarcely grow might well seem a gift of royal munificence. Jesus could not bear to be ungenerous with the family that had given Him such a welcome. He and His disciples had come to the number of six, and an offering of six water-pots of wine, it seemed, ought sufficiently to recompense the generous hospitality with which they had been honoured. If the quantity of wine had to be divided among several meals, as is probable, it was not too great. If it was for only one great banquet, then near its close, it is evident that Jesus acted with great liberality. Thus God

<sup>8</sup> According to the Septuagint the *measure* corresponded to the *bath* of the Hebrews (II Paral. iv, 5; III Esd. viii, 22); but according to Josephus (*Ant.*, viii, 20) the *bath* contained seventy-two Roman sextaries. A sextary is considered equal to fifty-four centilitres; hence a measure would be equivalent to thirty-eight litres and eighty-eight centilitres.

gives the germ of wine in our vineyards, paying no thought to the abuses which man's intemperance may at all times commit, but which His merciful goodness ought not to take into account. But, in this instance, Jesus' presence and the miraculous character of the gift He offers were to preserve the guests from any regrettable excess.

The servants had scarcely filled the water-pots when a singular prodigy was accomplished; the water became wine. The same power that had ripened the ruddy liquor upon the hillsides had now produced it in the amphoras. He Who transforms into delicious wine the rain that falls from the clouds had found no difficulty in submitting to the same change the water with which the servants had just filled the vessels at the banquet. In the vineyards, to be sure, the transformation is gradual, such that, before the inorganic substance, which passes from one kingdom to another, becomes vegetable, there is a complex series of phenomena in which the dew of heaven is changed. To produce the grape there are required earth, air, light, and the vine-stock that assimilates them all. The grape itself must undergo artificial operation before it finally becomes wine. But does all this mean that God, Who has determined the ordinary conditions for the production of wine, has no right to dispense with the laws assigned to nature? No, indeed; the sole Creator of causes, He can, when He will, create effects directly without recourse to the means which He, as absolute Master, may at will multiply, abridge, or suppress. Since every cause, furthermore, contains its effects, there is no doubt that He Who alone directly creates the vineyard can also directly create the wine.

Moreover, those who witnessed and those who were the instruments of this prodigy abstained from all these useless considerations. To Jesus, these servants were unknown, and consequently they had no reason for assisting Him, as has

been averred in a bit of joyous pleasantry. Astonished and disinterested witnesses, they were simply to verify this miracle. "Draw out now," said Jesus in that gentle tone that spoke His pleasure, "and carry to the chief steward of the feast." His object was to prove thus in the eyes of those present that, all at once, as the water was being poured, He had produced not only a great quantity of wine, but also a wine of excellent quality. They did as they were ordered.

In public banquets, given by well-to-do families—as in this instance—there was appointed over the ordinary domestics a chief who gave orders and presided over the distribution of the meats and drinks.<sup>9</sup> He did not sit with the guests at table, but went and came, overlooking all and directing the service according to the needs of the assembly. It was to this chief of the banquet that the servants brought what they had drawn from the water-pots. As soon as he tasted of the wonderful liquid, the chief steward, not knowing whence it had been drawn, called to the bridegroom, and privately, but with the self-importance generally assumed by men of his class, said to him: "Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk,<sup>10</sup> then that which is worse.<sup>11</sup> But thou hast kept the good wine until now." It was found that he was right. But where was this exquisite wine discovered? It was not placed in the water-pots by fraud. The waiters were certain that they themselves had filled them with water. Yet it certainly was drawn from these pitchers into which they had poured only water. The conclusion, then, was forced

<sup>9</sup> Pollux, *Onomast.*, iii, *segm.* 41; and again lib. vi, *segm.* 13. Heliod., vii, 27.

<sup>10</sup> The words used by the steward, *ὅταν μεθυσθῶσιν*, with misplaced pleasantry, ought to be translated: *When they are drunk.*

<sup>11</sup> Pliny, *H. N.*, xiv, 13, and Martial, *Epig.*, i, 24, mention this custom of the ancients, which in our days is quite modified.

upon them that the water had become wine, delicious and abundant. But here was a fact beyond the laws of nature, a miracle, a sign that showed forth the glory of Jesus. It was the first of them all. The disciples were deeply moved by it, and believed in Him.

The rest of the assembly were too boisterous or too frivolous to attach to the event the importance it deserved. After their first emotion of joy and gratitude, they applied themselves particularly to do honour to the gift thus miraculously presented. So do the generality of men each day eat and drink what God brings forth, with no thought even of looking up in token of gratitude to contemplate the hand that so liberally bestows upon them such great benefits.

## CHAPTER III

# JESUS AFFIRMS HIS AUTHORITY IN THE TEMPLE ON THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER

JESUS A GUEST AT CAPHARNAUM AND A PILGRIM TO  
JERUSALEM—THE SELLERS IN THE TEMPLE—HIS ACT  
OF AUTHORITY—THE IMPRESSION MADE ON THE DIS-  
CIPLES—OBJECTIONS OF THE JEWS—THE SIGN OF THE  
CHRIST: "DESTROY THIS TEMPLE"—THE ATTITUDE OF  
THE JEWS A PRESAGE OF THE FUTURE. (St. John ii,  
12-22.)

THE newly chosen disciples, as we have said, lived on the western shore of the Lake of Genesareth. This district, the most thickly populated and most fertile portion of Galilee, was at all times thronged with the travellers who came and went from Syria to Palestine and from Auranitis to the sea. Jesus, preaching the Good-Tidings there, was certain to see His words eagerly seized upon and swiftly borne away on the four winds of heaven.

He, therefore, decided to go toward the shores of the Lake with His disciples. His own family, desirous of seeing what He would do, followed after Him. The relations that had sprung up between them and the disciples were sufficient reason for their action.

Lodgings were found at Capharnaum. It is probable that Peter, who was married there, had the pleasure of

offering them the hospitality of his mother-in-law's house. They remained there, however, only a few days.

The fig-tree in whose shadow we found Nathanael reposing is proof that it was now spring-time and consequently about the time of the Paschal feast. Everything made it a duty for Jesus to go and celebrate this feast in Jerusalem, not only as a pilgrim, but as Messiah. It was part of Jesus' plan to test without delay the religious dispositions of the people whom He came to evangelise. Galilee was soon to hear the Divine summons. But the preponderating influence in religious matters did not belong to Galilee. It was to the sacerdotal hierarchy and to the Jews of Jerusalem, ordinarily, that the first intimation in such affairs ought to be given. Jesus, therefore, determined to turn His steps toward the Holy City, though well aware of her unfavourable dispositions; He intended to pay homage to her primacy and to her traditional pretensions.

Therefore, joining the numerous caravans that were going down from Galilee, He departed for the celebration of the Passover. The prophet<sup>1</sup> had said of Him: "And presently the Lord whom you seek . . . shall come to His temple. Behold He cometh . . . and who shall be able to think of the day of His coming? . . . For He is like a refining fire . . . He shall purify the sons of Levi, and shall refine them as gold, and as silver." The young carpenter of Nazareth had, indeed, often gone up to the Temple, and had seen the abuses, the sight of which was now to rouse His indignation; but at that period of His life He went only as a pious Israelite without any mission to purify the sons of Levi, the natural guardians of the house of God, and still less with the thought of taking upon Himself their authority. To-day it is the Son of God

<sup>1</sup> *Mal.* iii, 1-8.

Who comes to visit His Father's palace, the Master Who comes to claim His own house. He will have to denounce the abomination of desolation in the holy place, and to vindicate God's rights, so shamefully disregarded.

The Temple, as we have said elsewhere, was made up of a series of enclosures or courts, the first of which only was open to the proselytes from among the nations, who came to give homage to Jehovah. In that enclosure, along the whole length of an extensive colonnade, whose southern portion was particularly rich and spacious, a veritable market had been established with the approbation of the sacerdotal authority. Beneath roofings of highly polished cedar-wood, on the bright-coloured flagstones, among the double and triple rows of marble columns were seated the merchants and the money-changers.<sup>2</sup> They had begun by selling only the incense, wine, oil, and salt needed for the sacrifices, but they had now gone so far as to offer for sale even the victims that were to be sacrificed. So that this place, the only one reserved for the Gentiles in the house of the living God, was now invaded by herds of oxen, flocks of sheep, and heifers, was filled with the cries of avaricious speculators, and desecrated by their vile dealings.

Such was the spectacle that greeted the religious soul of Jesus. No one could feel more deeply than He the indecency of this profanation. Suddenly His eyes fill with the brilliancy of lightning, His awful voice rings above the noise of the multitude, and His hand, armed with a scourge of cords roughly tied together, rises in menace against the profaning throng. None can resist His holy wrath; He drives the herds of oxen and the flocks of sheep out from

<sup>2</sup> The money-changers placed all kinds of money at the people's disposal in order to promote commercial operations. But they were more particularly engaged in changing foreign coins into sacred money, the only kind received by the priesthood in the name of Jehovah, as the tax imposed by Moses. (*Ex.* xxx, 13.)



the Temple; He throws to the ground the money of the changers, and overturns their tables. In this confusion the sellers of pigeons alone are treated with less severity. They were there for the benefit of the common people, and Jesus merely says to them: "Take these things hence, and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic."

Such was the power of conviction and such the authority of Him Who caused this demonstration, and, too, so natural were the shame and confusion of those who had permitted themselves abuses so lamentable, that none even thought of resisting. If the perfect sentiment of his rights increases a man's moral and physical strength, we must admit, too, that the consciousness of a palpable wrong makes others timid and cowardly. He Who demanded respect for the house of His Father stood alone, and He triumphed over all the multitude.

When His disciples beheld Him so courageous and so redoubtable, they recalled the Just One of the theocracy of Whom the psalmist<sup>3</sup> sang, and Whose spirit the terrible sect of Zealots sought to revive and impose. They thought that His device, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up," peculiarly fitted Jesus; for, in truth, the prophetic type of this zealot of the Lord found in the Messiah its most perfect realisation. A resemblance so natural must have strengthened the faith of those who had perceived it.

The Jews, on the other hand, after their first movement of surprise or even of admiration, took up their position in the dangerous dead-lock of reasoning and objection. They could not doubt that the act of purification just

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxxviii, 10. Not that this psalm refers directly to the Messiah, since v. 6 also says: "O God, thou knowest my folly, and my offences are not hid from thee," but the Just One of the theocracy here mentioned bears a certain resemblance to the Messiah and is in part His prophetic type.

accomplished by Jesus was above all a religious act and that it immediately recommended itself to conscience. It required no justification; but these casuists, lovers of trickery, will not be content with the evidence of justice; they demand something more to sustain this evidence, a sign, so that they may afterward discuss the sign itself and thus lose sight of the light that required no proof. "What sign dost thou show unto us, seeing thou dost these things?" they said. And Jesus, with a depth of gaze and inspiration beyond the understanding of His hearers, replied: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." At no time has He promised to the incredulous any sign but that of the prophet Jonas. He has granted this because it entered into the divine plan, and in doing so He yielded to no solicitations such as He had endured from Satan in the desert, but rather did He define before the event and prophetically what God had decreed as an integral part of the Redemption. Nothing in the life of Jesus could be more decisive than the act of omnipotence by which, after remaining three days in the tomb, He rises again to life. To seal His whole mission with such a miracle proves that this mission is authentic and Divine. He Who holds power over death may well claim power over the Temple, and He Who shall regain life in the depth of the tomb has, indeed, some right to believe that He is strong enough to rebuild His Father's house.

But His auditors did not comprehend His response. As they were at that moment in the Temple, they thought that Jesus spoke of the material edifice, the profanation of which He was avenging. The thought that man's body is a temple was beyond the conventional concepts of the Pharisees. Much less could their errant minds perceive that the body of Jesus was the most real and most august of all temples, for they never even suspected that it sheltered the

Divinity personally present and living.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, too, the gesture by which Jesus designated Himself as the temple of which He spoke passed unnoticed. All minds were immovably fixed on the first idea of a material temple evoked by His enigmatical words; they could not get rid of it.

This reply, then, seemed to them vain bravado, and, as they could not and would not destroy the sacred edifice for the sake of proving whether the young Carpenter of Nazareth could rebuild it in three days, they simply retorted: "Six and forty years was this Temple in building, and wilt Thou raise it up in three days?"<sup>5</sup> Jesus apparently says nothing more even to check their scorn. To those who question Him with malignant intention, He almost always responds in language difficult to comprehend. To penetrate its meaning, the heart must be pure; then His words lose all that makes them obscure, and stand as lightsome as truth to the pure eye that looks upon it.

In the meantime, both friends and enemies hold this singular response deeply graven in their memory. We shall see how the Pharisees fling it in reproach against Jesus before the tribunals, and even at the foot of the cross, as a veritable act of impiety.

<sup>4</sup> *St. John* i, 14; *Col.* ii, 9.

<sup>5</sup> We know, according to Josephus (*Antiq.*, xv, 11, 1) that Herod the Great undertook to restore or reconstruct the Temple in the eighteenth year of his reign. He began to reign in the year 717 of Rome. It is, therefore, in the autumn of 735 that we must place the beginning of this work. According to the same historian (*Antiq.*, xx, 9, 7), it was under Herod Agrippa II. in the year 64 A.D., that it was finished. If, as seems natural, we take literally the forty-six years alleged by the Jews we may conclude that the first year of the public ministry of Jesus coincided with the year 781 of Rome. But since the young prophet was then about thirty years old, his birth must be put back to the year 750, about two or three months before the death of Herod, which happened during the paschal festivities of that year. We have already said that, although not certain, this date appears to be the most probable. One may, in truth, say of a man of twenty-nine that he is about thirty, or else take the information, probably faulty but actual, of Josephus, saying (*B. J.*, i, 21, 1) that Herod had begun the repairs of the Temple not in the eighteenth but in the fifteenth year of his reign.

Nor did the disciples forget it; <sup>6</sup> on the contrary, having long preserved it as a question to be solved, they finally saw its full meaning when Jesus rose again. They saw in the Scriptures, the key to which was given them by the Holy Ghost,<sup>7</sup> that there was perfect agreement between the prophecies, the word of the Master, and the events which came to pass. Their faith understood, among many other mysteries, that the Saviour's body had been the true temple of the Godhead destroyed on Calvary and rebuilt three days after, when it regained its life.

Even at that time, it might have been understood how, from another point of view, Jesus's death, by tearing aside the veil that hid the Holy of Holies, in fulfilment of the ancient prophecies put an end to the Jewish Temple, left the law of Moses in ruins, and, at the first tidings of His resurrection, laid the foundation of the nascent Church. This was, as it were, a second realisation of the Saviour's word; but whatever may be said of it, it was less direct than the former and more exposed to discussion in the circumstances of its fulfilment.

If the Messiah, manifesting Himself clothed with His royal authority, had been received by Israel with loud acclaim, this purification of the Temple would have been the signal for the general purification of the entire nation, and the Saviour's public life would have assumed an aspect wholly different. But the violent opposition which He encountered was a proof that the Messianic kingdom was not to be established by a brilliant stroke, but in humble circumstances, after long-continued strife, in patience and in affliction.

<sup>6</sup> According to *Acts* vi, 14, St. Stephen had repeated it, and it was one of the accusations against him.

<sup>7</sup> *Ps.* xv, 10; *Isa.* viii; *Osee* vi, 2; *Jonas* ii, 11. Comp. *St. Luke* xxiv, 26; *Acts* xiii, 33; *I Cor.* xv, 4, etc.

CHAPTER IV  
CHRIST'S DISCOURSE WITH  
NICODEMUS

JESUS CONTINUES HIS MINISTRY OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE—  
THE LIVELY IMPRESSION UPON THE MULTITUDE—  
NICODEMUS—THE VISIT DURING THE NIGHT—THE  
DISCOURSE ON THE SECOND BIRTH—WATER AND THE  
SPIRIT—REVELATION OF GREAT MYSTERIES—THE  
BRAZEN SERPENT—THE REDEMPTION BY THE SON—  
THE EFFECT OF THIS CONVERSATION ON NICODEMUS.  
(St. John ii, 23-35, and iii, 1-21.)

THE rôle of Jesus is, therefore, to be one of reserved activity. The hostility He has encountered in the hierarchical party is a presage of the most insuperable obstacles. He has failed to take the mass of this theocratic people by assault in the impulse of a first enthusiasm; therefore He will with patience undertake a regular siege.

Henceforth He establishes the centre of His Messianic action no longer in the Temple, but in the street, in the midst of the multitude. There He speaks and there He acts, and the many miracles<sup>1</sup> with which He sustains His assertions produce a most vivid impression on the crowds who are come to participate in the feast of the Passover. His name is on the lips of all; many even have faith in

<sup>1</sup> These miracles are not otherwise specified, but reference is made to them later on, *St. John* iv, 45.

His mission; but, as the Gospel says, He places no trust in these first declarations of faith. Closely acquainted with the souls that now hail Him, as the farmer knows the land he tills, He is quite well aware that the most alluring appearances may often lead to a most sorrowful deception. This fertile layer has no depth, and one cannot rely on superficial impressions. Yet, if, in that multitude, any one appears to Him better disposed, He will hasten to welcome him with love, and to acquaint him with the most profound secrets of this religious renovation.

Thus, to Nicodemus, who is come to consult Him, and perhaps to learn if He is the Messiah announced by John the Baptist, He opens up the broad horizon of His doctrine.

Nicodemus was one of the chief personages<sup>2</sup> in Jerusalem. A member of the great council, and belonging to the powerful sect of the Pharisees, the first theologian of Israel, he, indeed, had some merit in presenting himself as a proselyte and in risking, through his visit to Jesus, the popularity he enjoyed.

As a matter of fact, his was only a half-measure bravery, for in order not to compromise himself he came at night. Jesus was then alone with His chosen disciples, and it is, no doubt, as an eye-witness that one of them, John, has given us an account of this conversation. "Rabbi," said Nicodemus, as he introduced himself, "we know that Thou art come a teacher from God: for no man can do these signs, which Thou hast, unless God be with him." Therefore, from the miracles which they beheld, Nicodemus and several

<sup>2</sup> The word ἀρχων indicates this. The Talmud speaks of a Nicodemus, also called Bounai, who, though the head of one of the most powerful families in Jerusalem, became a disciple of Jesus, and, having survived the destruction of the Holy City, was finally reduced with all his family to great misery. (Cf. Delitzsch, *Zeitschr. f. Luth. Theol.*, 1854, p. 643.) Is this the same man? One of the Apocryphal Gospels containing the *Acta Pilati* and the *Descensus Christi ad inferos* is called the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.

of his friends have concluded that the teaching of Jesus was of Heaven. And rightly so, for a miracle is a sign from God, and when it is placed as a Divine seal upon the discourse of man, it is God that assumes the responsibility of that discourse. Hence Nicodemus had no difficulty in acknowledging that beyond and above the official doctorate of the rabbis, there may be a doctorate of exceptional and transcendent character conferred by God without the use of pedagogical forms. This again is the reason why Nicodemus salutes the Carpenter of Nazareth with the title of *Rabbi*, and comes to consult Him as a Master.

If Jesus had been a mere youthful enthusiast, He would surely have felt and manifested a lively joy in receiving the homage now done Him by one of the most important personages in Jerusalem in his own name and in the name of his colleagues. It was an opportunity that called for the exercise of every manner of policy to secure a proselyte of such importance.

But He was a stranger to the practice of these tricks of mankind. With full consciousness of His mission, rather than suppress the truth, He intends boldly to confront those very ones whom prudence would move Him to lead on by allurements. Nicodemus, therefore, who presents himself as a disciple, has only to stand with ready ear to receive the teachings he has come to request. "Amen, amen, I say to you," responds Jesus, "unless a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." By this general declaration He seizes His questioner's every thought. The theory is a radical one. Nothing should remain of any man, and particularly of Nicodemus who was so pious, of this Pharisee who was so respected, of this prominent man who was esteemed of all. He must be born again, must be made anew, in order to behold with profit and to enter into the Kingdom of God. For, this extraor-

dinary sense of spiritual sight shall be granted only to those who are already born into the new life.

In the ears of a Pharisee this teaching must certainly have sounded very strange. To admit that one was not capable of seeing the Kingdom of God, when he believed himself already officially inscribed and even incorporated therein; to condemn one's self not only to new practices of perfection, but to a life new from every point of view; in fine, to confess that one was in the midst of evil and darkness, when he looked upon himself as pure and filled with the light of God, was this not, in truth, too much? So Nicodemus, unable to understand Jesus' theory, sought further enlightenment, and with a sort of ironical good-nature, retorts: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born again?" The impossibility is the more evident, since, if he is old, his mother is no longer alive. But Jesus, ignoring his objection, continues His thought and clearly defines the two real elements of regeneration. "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." The first life of the world had come from the Spirit who moved over the waters in the days of the creation; this new life, again, is to be the product of water and the Spirit.

Baptism, in fact, is the entrance-gate of the Christian society. It is the external sign with which the Church marks her children. The neophyte, who buries himself in the lustral waters, will be reputed dead to the world and to its spirit, and at the threshold of a new life. In reality, he will come forth in a condition quite different from that in which he entered, freed from his evil aspirations and transformed by repentance; for baptism is not only the sign of purification, it is also the symbolical expres-



sion of penance. Thus far this was only a negative birth, or, better, simply death. The Spirit of God must needs assist and breathe life and virtue and new ability into the soul in which repentance has blotted out the past, and which, dead to sin, asks life in grace and sanctity. Thus are water and the Spirit the two principles of spiritual regeneration. The former signifies the disposition required in the soul of man; the latter is the creative agent that endows it with life. Through the means of both, man will be born again. As there are in us two lives, one carnal, the other spiritual, nothing is more logical than the distinction of a twofold birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," says the Saviour. But such being the truth, as Nicodemus knows not what he is capable of doing personally for his own regeneration, since from the Holy Spirit alone it is to be sought, Jesus continues: "Wonder not that I said to thee, you must be born again. The Spirit breatheth where He will, and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence he cometh or whither he goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Human liberty does not suffice to effect our regeneration; the breath of grace must come to second its efforts. Like a strong wind, the Spirit of God enters in to give growth to the supernatural life. It is impossible to know whence He comes or whither He goes; but He is felt and heard in the depth of the heart, and, all unawares, the well-disposed man is transformed and regenerated. The work is done; how, is beyond our ken.

At this moment Nicodemus, whose comprehension of these transcendent theories is ever less and less, can no longer withhold his astonishment. "How can these things be done?" he cries out. And Jesus, with deep compassion, says to him: "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not

these things?"<sup>3</sup> By this slight stroke of irony He teaches him that it is beyond the limits of the puerile dissertations in the synagogue, and above the vain science of the rabbis, that he must seek for the true notion of the new life. One may be the most revered doctor of Jerusalem and not know the first word of the question that surpasses all others in the Kingdom of God.

Yet, many have this knowledge, and however humble and ignorant the world may find them, they are none the less acquainted with heaven's secrets. In them the Kingdom of the Father is already personified. Behold them faithfully grouped about the Son. More progress has been made than Nicodemus suspects. The new Church is founded and she is better instructed than the doctor of the Sanhedrim. "Amen, amen, I say to thee, that we speak what we know, and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony." Thus does the Master express all the joy He feels in being no longer alone to represent the nascent Church. He makes all who have joined themselves with Him by faith, speak with Him. The comparison and the contrast He draws between them and the Jews become a peremptory argument. Nicodemus, the learned man, the doctor, is still seeking for light, while the poor fishermen of Galilee, gazing into the depths of the heavens, have already beheld it and are now propagating it. Simple and humble men, they believed unquestioningly.

The proud doctors of the synagogue are incapable of understanding and of accepting even those religious truths that are supported by the human conscience and the deep-felt experience of devoted hearts. What will be their conduct when there is question of heavenly secrets which must be admitted upon a simple affirmation and without

<sup>3</sup> They are indicated in *Ps.* cxlii, 10, 11; *Jer.* xxxi, 33; *Ezech.* xxxvi, 26-28, etc.

any possibility of grasping the unanswerable why and wherefore? "If I have spoken to you of earthly things and you believe not," says Jesus, "how will you believe if I shall speak to you heavenly things?" For such discourse can suffer no control, since "no man hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended from heaven, the Son of Man, Who is in heaven."

Nicodemus, surprised at this supremely authoritative language of Jesus, has no more to say. He seems to murmur with Job before Jehovah: "What can I answer, who have spoken inconsiderately? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." So Jesus, moved by his humility, determines to reveal to him those truths that constitute the sum of the Gospel. He has already mentioned the Divine nature of the Messiah, His eternal pre-existence, and, consequently, the Incarnation of the Word. He has now to speak of the Redemption, and of the final fulfilment of God's intentions concerning the two great groups of mankind, believers and unbelievers. "And," He continues, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must<sup>4</sup> the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."

If Nicodemus, like all his colleagues, has dreamed of a Messiah more exalted in glory and power than Solomon, he is now to learn that this Messiah shall, indeed, be exalted, but that His exaltation shall be upon the cross. There, only, in deepest ignominy, God's envoy shall attain the truest glory. The characteristic and striking analogy between the symbol of the serpent suspended from a stake in the desert and the Son of Man crucified cannot be ignored. As the brazen serpent was merely an image of a real serpent, so the Son of Man was to be but the image of

<sup>4</sup> Here for the first time we meet the inexorable *must*, *δεῖ*, imposed by divine justice. We shall find it again in *St. Matth.* xvi, 21; *St. Luke* xxiv, 20.

a sinner and not really such. The serpent evoked the idea of evil for the suppression of evil; the Son of Man upon His gibbet will assume the load of sin for the suppression of sin. The Israelite who gazed upon the brazen serpent, was cured of the mortal wounds he had received; the sinner who with the eye of faith looks upon the Son of Man *become sin* for humanity, is freed from his own sins and recovers life.

What a cry of gratitude and, above all, what an amount of virtue such generosity should draw from earth! "For God," adds the Master, "so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." Salvation, therefore, is the Father's gift. The Son need use no violence to procure the Father's forgiveness; the Father's heart has ever longed to be able to grant it. For the Father has ever loved the world as a child that had gone astray. His love for it was not confined to one race or one nation, but was universal, and He has loved it so much that to secure its salvation He has given His own Son. Abraham had made to Jehovah the offering of his only offspring, but Jehovah had not accepted it. But now it is Jehovah that presents His Son to the world, and the world takes Him and puts Him to death, that by this crime it may insure its own redemption; for so great is the mercy of God that the world by joining itself in efficacious faith to the very one it immolates, prepares for itself eternal life! "For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him."

The Jews, taking certain passages of Scripture<sup>5</sup> in a material sense, believed that the Messiah would come to judge and to destroy the nations. Jesus declares that

<sup>5</sup> *Ps.* ii, 9; *Mal.* iv, 1, etc.

such is not His mission. He comes for the saving of all, and only those shall fail of salvation who will not receive Him. It is for men, therefore, to elect their own destiny by the giving or the refusing of their faith; the distinction then will become quite easy, and there will be nothing odious in the Messiah's rôle.

“He that believeth in Him, is not judged. But he that doth not believe is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the Only-begotten Son of God.” The unbeliever proves by his incredulity that he has abandoned his heart to evil and to error. For ordinarily one's moral state determines his attitude toward the light, and, consequently, distinguishes the two classes of men of which humanity is made up. Those who fly the light show that they have need to bury their iniquitous works in darkness, while those who seek after it make plain that they find nothing shameful in their aspirations or in their actions. “And this is the judgment: because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprovèd. But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God.” It was easy for Nicodemus to find some consolation and even some praise in these words that described his moral state; for he had come, a pious Israelite, to seek for light, and he stands before it, despite all he may have heard contrary to his notions or humiliating to his person. It was a proof of the uprightness of his soul and of his thirst after truth and justice.

The sublime discourse was ended; and Nicodemus took leave of Jesus. The Evangelist says nothing of his final disposition and impressions, but we are inclined to believe that he went away deeply moved. Unfortunately, like

many virtuous souls, he had no great courage, and never in public did he venture to declare what he thought of Jesus. And later on, it is only with difficulty, in order to save His life, that he utters a few kind words before the Sanhedrim; on these he does not insist, but says them with a kind of indifference very non-committal. His weak and forceless character will be transformed only by the catastrophe of Calvary. And then, as if in shame for his weakness in the past, this man who came secretly to speak with Jesus living, will claim Him dead from His enemies, and, with some degree of courage, he will share with Joseph of Arimathea the honour of interring Him. The sight of the cross must have been to him an awful reminder of the brazen serpent raised up between heaven and earth, and the bloody realisation of the symbolic figure, long before held up to him by Jesus, finally confirming his faith, he proved his affection at the very moment when the others made known their unbelief and their ingratitude.

## CHAPTER V

# JESUS IN THE LAND OF JUDEA—THE FINAL TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

**JESUS' DISCIPLES BAPTISE IN JUDEA—RECRIMINATION ON THE PART OF THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN, WHO IS BAPTISING AT ENNON—THE PRECURSOR'S NOBLE RESPONSE—HE IS THE PARANYMPH AND JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM OF THE NEW SOCIETY—HIS CLEAR AND AUTHENTIC TESTIMONY BEARS UPON THOSE WHO WISH TO ESCAPE GOD'S WRATH. (St. John iii, 22-36.)**

How long Jesus remained in Jerusalem after His discourse with Nicodemus is unknown. The Evangelist simply says that, followed by His disciples, He went into the land of Judea. It was natural, indeed, that, after having evangelised the capital, He should desire to exert His influence over the honest dwellers of the rural districts. Since baptism was the sign of penance, and penance the entrance-gate into the Kingdom of God, Jesus commanded His disciples to baptise, as John was doing. Thus all would contribute simultaneously to develop the religious agitation and to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

The disciples alone baptised, according to the counsels of the Master, Who Himself did not baptise. He was not to participate directly in a baptism not His own, but which was merely the repetition of that of the Baptist and the

figure of that which He was to institute later on. Only after His resurrection, in fact, did Jesus prescribe baptism of water to which was inseparably united baptism of the Spirit, and Pentecost witnessed its solemn inauguration.

John had left the banks of the Jordan, and had retired to Ennon<sup>1</sup> near Salim, both sites uncertain, but which it seems unreasonable to look for outside of Judea. There were in that place some fine springs, and he could easily administer there his symbolical ablutions. It may be, too, that he sought to avoid the anger of Herod, whose incestuous conduct he had courageously condemned. Jesus had

<sup>1</sup> Authorities are not agreed upon the geographical position of Ennon; the indications given by the Evangelist are insufficient to decide it. There are many sites which must first be eliminated; for example: all those in Peræa, for, the disciples in addressing themselves to the Baptist, indicate that Ennon was on the opposite side of the province and in those parts west of the Jordan (*St. John* iii, 26. Compare with i, 28); also those which had not an abundance of water, because, he says, there was much water in the place. This very detail, given as characteristic, seems to exclude all those springs to be found on the banks of the Jordan. Moreover, if the Baptist happened to be in the near neighbourhood of the river, one naturally asks why he did not baptise in it? It is, therefore, in the interior of the country—despite the information of Eusebius, St. Jerome, Onomast., and *Epist. lxxiii ad Evang.*, and of St. Sylvia, *Pereg. ad Loc. S.*, which place them eight miles south of Scyphopolis—that we must look for Ennon and Salim. Is it possible to believe with Robinson and Conder that Salim and Aïnoun, to the east of Naplouse, in the very heart of Samaria, are the places we seek? Not to speak of the distance (7 kil.), which will not allow us to put Aïnoun and its springs near Salim, it is evident that John could not have transferred his ministry to a people especially hated by the Jews, without rendering that ministry fruitless in Israel. We must, then, since we cannot do so in Galilee, look for Ennon in Judea. Silhim-Aïn has been thought of (*Jos.* xv, 32; xix, 7). But on the southern frontier of Judea we find only wells, and these very rarely. The *πολλὰ ὕδατα* could not be there. Why not accept those splendid springs which, eight kil. to the south of Bethlehem, feed the basins of Solomon? One of them bears the name of Aïn-Saleh, preserving, perhaps, the memory of Aïnoun and Salim. The waters there, as is well known, are very abundant, and in this place John would have been on the caravan road and safe from the wiles of Herod. In this case, Ennon is really, according to the Gospel data, on the other side of the Jordan (v. 26) in Judea, where Jesus is baptising (v. 22), and the reader sees how a discussion arose with the Jews (v. 25). If we accept this identification, which we are perhaps the first to put forward, Jesus would have evangelised Southern Judea, Bethlehem, Hebron, and we could say that no part of Palestine had been untouched by His religious activity.



come into the neighbourhood where John was, to support him, perhaps, in the struggle he had undertaken, and in the persecution he was undergoing; perhaps, moreover, to provoke the last testimony of John, who was now near to the close of his mission.

The two preachers being in close vicinity of each other, and their baptism being simultaneously administered, feelings of jealousy were roused in John's disciples, and they called upon several of the Jews<sup>2</sup> to declare their reasons for preferring the baptism of Jesus to that of their master. The discussion was necessarily a lively one, and it was easy to cause the disciples of John great embarrassment by raising the objection that, according to the Baptist himself, Jesus was the great worker of purification for mankind. They, therefore, sorely vexed, betook themselves to the Precursor's presence and said to him with bitterness: "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold He baptiseth and all men come to Him." But their recriminations had not the result they desired. John was far from sharing their anxiety. As he listened to them, his soul was stirred not with indignation, but with joy. What wish could he have more ardent than to see the Messiah inaugurate His Kingdom and enter into the fields which he had made ready for Him? He replied, "A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven." The wish to usurp what is not one's part, would be a crime. John was born to make straight the way for the Messiah, not to be His rival. Between him and Jesus there can be no opposition, no comparison. The distance that separates them has long been marked out. "You yourselves do bear me witness," he goes on, "that I said, I am not Christ, but that I am

<sup>2</sup> Readings vary between the singular and the plural. The Vulgate translator has read *'Ιουδαίων*, but good authorities read *'Ιουδαίου*.

sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy, because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled."<sup>3</sup>

The Baptist here borrows the image, in which he expresses his thought, from the customs of social life; and he does it with a boldness worthy of Ezechiel or Jeremias.

In the Jewish customs there was established between the betrothed couple an intermediary (*shoshben*) who was to assist them in their affectionate relations. The *shoshben*, in reality, prearranged the marriage and brought it about. His part began by bearing to the young maiden the first expression of affection on the part of the intended groom, and ended only with the solemn introduction of the happy couple into the nuptial chamber. Then standing there, near the door, listening to the loving talk of the married couple, he took credit to himself for his work and made known to all what joy it was to have so well succeeded in making people happy. This rôle of *shoshben*, the friend of the groom, was that of the Precursor. The new religious society, for which he has made ready, is nothing more nor less than the spouse of the Messiah. Between them both, he stood an intelligent and devoted mediator, and when, by his oft-repeated testimony, he had turned over to Jesus the new disciples who were the nucleus of the Church, he claimed the credit of his work. Then, standing behind the door, he sought to hear amid the stories of his old disciples, John, Peter, and Andrew, the words of love that passed between the Messiah and the Church, and he was filled with joy at a labour so well accomplished.

<sup>3</sup> Jehovah's union with His people had often been likened to the conjugal union (*Isa.* liv, 5; *Os.* ii, 21). This idea reappears frequently in the New Testament (*Eph.* v, 32; *Apoc.* xix, 2-9) and fully corresponds to the living reality. Jesus alludes to it in *Matt.* ix, 15, and xxv, 1, in the parable of the Virgins.

Now it remains for him only to retire and to leave them to their effusions of joy: "He must increase, but I must decrease." Such is the providential and logical order. His disciples must now make their choice: "He that cometh from above, is above all," he continues; <sup>4</sup> "he that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh." By His origin, by His nature, by His speech, is Jesus separated from all that is of earth. He is of heaven, and it must astonish no one to see this superhuman figure increase until it eclipses all others. "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony."

The disciples, giving ear only to their own jealousy, had said that all were hastening to His side. John, giving ear to his affection alone, declares that none do so. For the religious movement that he looks upon appears insignificant in comparison with what he would wish. It angers him to behold a witness from heaven received with such indifference and incredulity. Yet what honour there is for the man who believes in the words of Jesus! "He that receiveth His testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God." The act of faith with which His teachings are received directly honours God, Whose veracity is thus acknowledged. The messenger is simply the voice of him who sends him.

<sup>4</sup>Some think that it is no longer John that speaks, but the Evangelist who adds his own reflections. It is true that there is a surprising similarity in style and in thought between the end of this discourse and the conversation with Nicodemus. But, besides the fact that the reporter of a conversation involuntarily inserts something of his own personality, as, for example, literary phrasing, into a work otherwise conscientious, it may easily be supposed that John, Andrew, and Peter had more than once repeated to their master the teachings of Jesus, and that the Baptist was fully acquainted with the Saviour's doctrine. This is why he reproduces naturally, as it were, many of His ideas and makes them the complement of the testimony he renders to the Messiah-King. Moreover, part of the testimony contained in the close of this discourse agrees with *Matt.* iii, etc.

This is especially true in the present instance. Others may have received the Spirit of God only in an incomplete manner, for a time and with limitations. To Jesus, God has given the Spirit without limitation; "the Father loveth the Son, and he hath given all things into His hand." None can affirm this more strongly than John, before whose eyes was accomplished the sovereign manifestation at the baptism. Therefore he draws his conclusion with the tone of threatening severity that is characteristic of the new Elias: "He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him."

Such is the Precursor's final testimony, which the Evangelist gives here in the hope, perhaps, of bringing back the disciples of John who were scattered wherever there dwelt Jews of the Dispersion, and especially at Ephesus, where the fourth Gospel was published; it is explicit, and duly so. If Israel hears it not, his ears have been closed by malice.

John will continue for a few days valiantly to fulfil his part; but, as his closing words imply, his end is not far off.

## CHAPTER VI

# JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

JESUS RETURNS TOWARD GALILEE—SICHAR IN SAMARIA  
AND JACOB'S WELL—CONVERSATION WITH A WOMAN—  
THE GIFT OF GOD—THE LIVING WATER—AN UNEX-  
PECTED REVELATION—THE CONTROVERTED QUESTION—  
THE MESSIAH IS JESUS—THE LESSON GIVEN TO THE  
DISCIPLES CONCERNING THE HARVEST AND THE REAP-  
ERS—THE FAITH OF THE SAMARITANS. (St. John iv,  
1-42.)

THE hostile attitude which was assumed by the disciples of John and which was never completely changed even by the most explicit testimony of their master,<sup>1</sup> might have become a serious obstacle to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. Hence Jesus, who wished not to endanger by means of irritating discussions the good that the Baptist's followers were to accomplish in the holy cause, resolved to yield to them and to put an end to all jealousy by His sudden retirement. The Pharisees, who sought to draw some profit from this delicate situation by representing to John's disciples their inferiority to the disciples of Jesus (who were baptising more than even the Baptist himself), must have been greatly disappointed at this unexpected retreat. The two parties they wished to destroy, separated

<sup>1</sup> The disciples of John the Baptist later on formed a lively sect in opposition to the Christian Church.

without an encounter and formed two redoubtable armies, that of John, guarding the southern portion of Palestine, and that of Jesus, which set out to occupy the north.

The Saviour proposed to return toward Galilee, and He must, indeed, have been eager to return into this the first field of His labours to cultivate the seed He had already sown there.

The most direct road from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria. However, through fear of foul treatment at the hands of the inhabitants of that country, the majority of travellers of Jewish nationality avoided this route, and chose, in preference, that which led through Perea. Jesus was not deterred by any such apprehensions, and the Good-Tidings which He bore being for all men, with no distinction of race, He entered Samaria. When He arrived in the neighbourhood of a city called Sichar<sup>2</sup> near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph, He made a halt in His

<sup>2</sup>A common opinion is that Sichar and Sichem are identical, Sichar being a malicious change, a bad surname of Sichem. Its derivation is sought in the word "Secher," a lie, referring to the passage of *Habacuc* ii. 18, or, more probably, from "Sichar," a drunkard, in remembrance of the drunkards of Ephraim, of whom *Isaïas* speaks (xxviii. 1). But no proof can be found to support the supposition of a change, and St. Jerome deems it simply an error of the copyists, who wrote "Sichar" instead of "Sichem." On the other hand, there are difficulties that withhold one from admitting that Sichem is here meant. In the first place, Sichem was two miles distant from Jacob's well, and contained a sufficient number of flowing springs to prevent the women from having to come so far for water. Again, it does not seem probable that an entire city the size of Sichem should have come out to Jesus on the information of a woman, and less so that it should have accepted the Good-Tidings as a whole, which, in truth, would have been a decisive event. Some have, therefore, concluded that the locality here indicated was one of less importance than Sichem and nearer to Jacob's well. It could not have been the present village of Aschar, which is at the foot of Mt. Ebal, and through which flows a clear and abundant stream. It is on the northern slope of Garizim that we must look for Sichar, amid the ruins of ancient and wretched buildings, or in the fields of the valley of El-Douar, two kil. to the south-east of the patriarchal well. There are no springs there. The ruins of the latter locality were already disappearing in the year 1888 (see *Voyage aux Pays Bibliques*, vol. ii, p. 152). We saw in 1899 that they had entirely disappeared.

journey.<sup>3</sup> It was in the summer season<sup>4</sup> and about mid-day. The heat was drying up the country, and the Master, wearied<sup>5</sup> by His journey, sought the coolness of the shade. Near by was a well, the origin of which dated from the time of Jacob,<sup>6</sup> and about it must have been a grove of trees. Jesus seated Himself upon the brink of the well, while the Apostles went on into the city to procure some food, eggs, fruits, or vegetables, which the Rabbis permitted them to accept from the Samaritans.

While he was resting there, a woman of that country<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Jacob, on his journey from Padan-Aram, had placed his tent near the city of the Sichemites, and had bought a portion of the land he occupied from the children of Hemor (*Gen.* xxxiii, 18-19). Later on, Simeon and Levi, by an act of violence, confirmed by right of conquest this, at first, peaceful acquisition, and Jacob, when dying (*Gen.* xlviii, 22), said to Joseph: "I give thee a portion (Schemem) above thy brethren, which I took out of the land of the Amorrhite with my sword and bow." Here the patriarch makes a play upon the word "Sichem," which he gives as a portion (*schemem*). It is wrong, therefore, to claim that the Evangelist here relies upon false tradition, which had its origin in a false interpretation of the Septuagint. The sons of Jacob understood their father so well that on their return from Chanaan they deposited Joseph's remains near Sichem in Jacob's field, and assigned the country to the tribe of Ephraim.

<sup>4</sup>At least according to the chronological order which we are following. The words in iv, 35, "See the countries, for they are white already to the harvest," are a proof of this.

<sup>5</sup>The Evangelist shows by the word *κεκοπιακός* that He was very much fatigued.

<sup>6</sup>The Book of Genesis (xxi and xxvi) speaks of the wells dug by Abraham and Isaac, but not of that dug by Jacob. Yet the oldest tradition of both Jews and Samaritans ascribe this well to Jacob. It is situated a half-hour's distance from Naplouse. Though dug in a rocky place, it is eighteen metres in depth and over two in diameter. They have recently cleared away the soil and rubbish which had accumulated at the bottom, and the clear, limpid water we drew from it in 1899 was excellent. The remains of the church built in the Middle Ages and of the crypt have also been cleared out. You go down by a staircase to the margin of the spring, the same on which Jesus sat. By the light of candles attached to crossed planks of wood, it is easy to see with what skill the work was accomplished and dug to its lowest depths. Although other springs were in this vicinity, Jacob thought it would be useful to have a well on his own land to preserve his absolute independence of the natives.

<sup>7</sup>The words *ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρείας* do not mean that she came out of the city of Samaria, which is eight miles north-west of the well, but that she was of the Samaritan race.

came to draw water. As He looked at her, Jesus, full of merciful kindness, said to her, "Give me to drink," with amiable familiarity. Often a soul is gained by the request of a favour. Flattered at having to oblige, it lends itself without distrust and listens with profit. Yet, it may be, that Jesus was really thirsty; but, in addressing the woman of Samaria in this way, He afforded her a mark of consideration that was quite astonishing on the part of a Jew. With one word, in fact, the traveller overturned the time-honoured wall that separated two nations that were neighbours and almost brothers. The woman was amazed. By His costume and by His accent she immediately knew His nationality.<sup>8</sup> "How dost thou," she said, with a provoking air quite in harmony with her character, "being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman?" We must remember what has been said elsewhere of the hostility that divided these two peoples. The woman maliciously brought into relief this deep division, although, being frivolous and sceptical by nature, she cared but little about it. Jesus does not repeat His request; material thirst is an incident that annoys Him not at all. To speak to a soul and enlighten it, is His true object. With dignity, then, in a mildly reproachful tone, He says: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee, 'Give me to drink,' thou, perhaps, would have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water." Such a declaration coming from the holiest and tenderest soul immediately transforms the picture before our eyes. It is no longer a man and a woman conversing in the depth of a solitary landscape; it is an apostle and one whom he is instructing, a priest, and a sinner who is about to hear

<sup>8</sup> In the words that Jesus uttered (*teni lischekoth*) was the very letter which the Jews, according to Judges xii, pronounced *sch* and the Samaritans *s*. By this sign alone the woman might know that He was not of that country.



judgment passed upon her and to be converted. Unfortunate woman! Would thou didst know the gift of God, that is, the mercy the Father has shown to the world in giving it His Son, a mercy the effect of which thou thyself shalt feel! Would thou didst know how carefully divine favour has prepared thy salvation! Why art thou come at this hour, no earlier, no later, to draw water at the patriarchal well? Assuredly it is not thou alone that hast chosen this moment; it is, too, the favour of heaven that has guided thee, and if the Messiah rests here to wait for thee, if He is thirsty in order to speak to thee, this again is the gift of God.

The woman, indeed, begins to perceive in herself the divine grace with which this traveller's penetrating word is laden. She does not clearly comprehend what He is saying, but she dimly sees the superior morality of Him Who speaks, and more respectful now than at first, she responds, "Sir, thou hast nothing wherein to draw,<sup>9</sup> and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself and his children and his cattle?" Jesus, Whose custom is gradually to lead up the soul to which He speaks through ideas of sensible things to conceptions of the most sublime spirituality, pursues His pictured and symbolical exposition. "Whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again: but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst forever. But the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting." The woman does not yet understand, but, thinking that He speaks of

<sup>9</sup> It is customary for caravans in the East never to travel without a bucket for use in drawing water from the cisterns on the road. The disciples had probably taken it with them. That is why the Evangelist remarks that Jesus asks the woman to give Him to drink, *because* the disciples were not there.

something very desirable, she manifests a desire to profit by it. Was it possible by some chance to be freed henceforth from the necessity of coming to draw water from this well and to find in herself and at will a refreshment that would be perpetual? This would be most fortunate. "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come hither to draw." There is something amusing in this seeking after ease in life, which she manifests here so naïvely. Still it is clear that the woman takes Jesus for a man capable of doing wonders. He will reward this germ of faith by manifesting to her that He has knowledge not only of the creation of life, but also of the secrets of all lives and of hers in particular. "Go call thy husband and come hither," He says to her. Not that Jesus hopes to find in the husband a nature more open to the reception of His teaching; no, He wishes to let this woman see that He knows her, in the most secret details of her life, with a knowledge more than human; and in this way He will render His words more acceptable.

Surprised at such an invitation, yet not daring to confess that anything was wrong in her conjugal relations, she replies evasively: "I have no husband." Jesus said to her: "Thou hast said well, 'I have no husband.' For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. This thou hast said truly." This lightning-stroke was as terrible as it was unexpected. It must have cast a saving light amid the darkness of that poor soul. Jesus, therefore, knows her sufficiently well to complete the details of her life which she had left unmentioned; He pertinently discloses them; but in plunging the sword again into this diseased heart, He acts with a desire to save it by humiliation. Her pretence that she has no husband, when in reality she has had five from whom she has been separated, probably for misconduct and by divorce, is somewhat

strange, and yet it is true, for the man with whom she is at present living is the husband of another. She, therefore, is an adulteress. The unhappy woman does not deny it, nor does she even offer an excuse. A sincere avowal is the beginning of the resurrection of a dying soul. In a voice of profound sadness, the humiliated woman confesses her crime and does homage to her accuser. "Sir," she says, "I perceive that thou art a prophet." Then immediately, as if unable to bear longer the weight of her shame, with the adroit inconstancy ever employed by woman as a last resource, she checks by a bold diversion any further revelations on the part of Jesus. "Our fathers adored on this mountain (pointing out with a gesture Garizim, at whose foot they were), and you say that at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore." Thus, to prevent humiliation, she enters into a controversy; and with admirable gentleness Jesus is willing to follow her upon this new ground and to reveal to her an unlooked-for horizon. "Woman, believe that the hour cometh when you shall neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem adore the Father." Yes, the national religions shall come to an end. For God is the Father of all humanity. After the Redemption man may speak to Him in all places. But, if it be absolutely necessary to compare the religion of Samaria with that of Jerusalem, there is no doubt that the Samaritans are farther from the truth than the Jews. "You adore that which you know not; we adore that which we know, for salvation is of the Jews." They alone possess both the complete revelation and the Temple to which the Kingdom of God is bound. The Samaritans have accepted only the books of Moses, and they have thus withheld themselves from the full development of the religious idea which must be sought in the Prophetic and Sapiential Books. Their first notions of the true worship, derived from the Pentateuch, had themselves

been strongly tainted by an intermixture of Assyrian theogonies. So that their inferiority, in comparison with the theocratic people, was most astoundingly in evidence.

However, the superiority of the latter shall itself soon reach its end, and its ancient privileges shall cease. "The hour cometh and now is," continues Jesus, "when the true adorer shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore Him. God is a spirit, and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth." This, therefore, is the fundamental character of the new religion; it will be above all a religion of souls. Not that the exterior worship will be proscribed; there will still be material temples, ceremonies, a priesthood; but all this will be solely for the development of that adoration in spirit which is the very basis of the religious life. Israel believes that God can be found only in the Temple; henceforth man shall know that to meet Him and to honour Him in his heart, he has only to enter into himself. There, too, shall immolations and sacrifices be offered; there, like incense from the altar, shall prayers ascend; there shall we sacrifice our pride, our egotism, our passions; there shall we make the offering of our charity and our virtues. That is all God wants. A spirit, He needs not the blood of victims; He calls for spiritual holocausts. In truth, man can make no greater immolation to God than the immolation of his own soul.

So pure and so sublime a doctrine bore away the woman's thoughts to the happy days of the Messiah impatiently awaited in the desires of all. Might not this very man, who speaks with such authority and with such charm, be the Expected of all nations? She does not ask it directly; but with as much simplicity as address, she chances a word and seems to hope that Jesus may take it to Himself. "I know," she says, "that the Messiah cometh (who is called

the Christ); therefore, when He is come He will tell us all things." Hers was a willing soul, and in spite of her weaknesses, she deserved to hear the truth. Jesus then replied: "I am He, Who am speaking with thee." This was an explicit declaration. In the presence of the Jews, who hoped for a temporal Messiah, He would have clothed it in other terms, in order not to excite their dangerous envy and ruin His own authority by failing to furnish what they looked for. But to this woman of Samaria, who salutes in the Messiah the representative of religious truth, He willingly reveals Himself.

We shall frequently have to notice that in these poor women whose weakness has been the cause of their hearts' long wanderings, there is a wonderful religious flight. One might say that in them love, suddenly led back to its proper centre, finds in what is good all the warmth it had known in evil. Nicodemus, after he had heard Jesus, went away without noise and without enthusiasm. This Samaritan woman, transported with happiness, hastens away, preaches, and stirs up the whole town. It is a detail, quite natural and truthful, that she had left her pitcher at the well, as a guarantee that she would soon come back and in order that she might reach the city sooner. "Come," she cried, with no fear of rousing publicly the memory of her disorderly life, "come and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not he the Christ?" The woman's story ran swiftly from mouth to mouth, and the excitement became general.

In the meantime, while Jesus was conversing with the woman, the disciples had returned. It was an ancient rabbinical prejudice that woman was absolutely beyond all deep religious refinement. "Burn the words of the law rather than lose time in teaching them to a woman."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Lightfoot and those remarkable passages of the Talmud, *Kidushim*, lxx, 1; *Berachot*, xliii, 2, etc.

The disciples, educated in the severe and entirely Jewish school of John the Baptist, shared this sentiment. They were astonished to see their Master talking with a woman; yet not one of them said: "What seekest thou or why talkest thou with her?"<sup>11</sup> He was silent and meditative. He was contemplating the truth as it came forth out of Judaism to take its flight toward the nations to transform them. When the repast was ready, the disciples sought to take Him out of His reverie. They besought Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." And He replied to them: "I have meat to eat, which you know not." Duty to fulfil, victory to attain, good to do are nourishment that no great soul disdains. The disciples, far from divining this, said to each other: "Hath any man brought Him to eat?" It was certainly so, for the woman, with whom He had conversed, had prepared Him one of the sweetest consolations of His ministry. "My meat," He says, "is to do the will of Him that sent me, that I may perfect His work." The apostle, who has fulfilled his mission and has been successful, feels himself replete with happiness; his nourishment is joy.

At the same moment, from the town, hastening toward Jesus, there came a crowd of Samaritans, and their heads, moving hither and thither amid the fields of ripened wheat, looked like a second harvest; and so it was, a living, all-spiritual harvest, the first to be gathered into the storehouses of the Father. It sprang up and ripened promptly, like all that are cared for and enlivened by the Holy Spirit. The disciples had no suspicion of this.

To awaken their enthusiasm, Jesus describes the joyful surprises of the apostolate: "Do you not say," He cries to

<sup>11</sup> This reflection shows that their surprise was not that Jesus was speaking alone with a woman; naturally, in that case, they would not even think of asking Him what He was saying. The cause of their astonishment was that a *doctor* of the law should be in conversation with a *woman*.

them, "there are yet four months and then the harvest cometh?"<sup>12</sup> Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and see the countries, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

How speedily all moves for the Gospel-worker, when grace has prepared the way! All at once, the harvest is ripened, reaped, and stored. In one instant, while they were going to the city, the work has been accomplished. Jesus, the reaper, is already enjoying His reward, as if He had completed His day's labour. In His joy, it seems to Him that this living harvest is gathered into His Father's house, and He joins His exultation to that of God; He experiences all at once the satisfaction of the sower, of the reaper, and of the landlord.<sup>13</sup>

It shall not be so, in truth, with the disciples; for they shall not sow the seed; that is the privilege of the Word Incarnate; but theirs shall be the pleasure of gathering in the harvest. The two functions of sower and reaper, though quite distinct, have a common object, the satisfaction of the householder. The latter has a greater consolation than the former, since it consists in reaping the work of others. This will be the consolation of the Apostles. "For in this is the saying true," Jesus continues, "that it is one man that soweth and it is another that reapeth. I

<sup>12</sup> This was a popular proverb to which Jesus alludes. It has been foolishly objected that His words were not in harmony with facts, because, it is asserted, the seed is sown in October and reaped six months afterward, in mid-April. Yes, but there are two seed-times as there are two rain-seasons. What is sown at the end of January, after the first and before the second rain, is gathered at the end of May. We have observed in Samaria and Galilee that the wheat and barley, sown late, arrive, notwithstanding, at maturity in the beginning of June.

<sup>13</sup> This visible joy that Jesus experiences here is also found in *St. Luke* x, 17-24.

have sent <sup>14</sup> you to reap that in which you did not labour; others have laboured and you have entered into their labours."

The disciples had not long to wait for their first experience of the abundant harvest reserved for the apostolate. The Samaritans, who had come in crowds on the testimony of the sinful woman, beheld near at hand Him of Whom she had spoken. They besought Him to remain with them, and He consented for the space of two days. In this well-disposed multitude His discourses bore fruit, and it became evident that the Good-Tidings of the Redemption of the world would find an echo more prompt in the hearts of the Gentiles than in the cloyed souls of the Jews. A vast multitude believed in Him, not only for what had been related by the woman, but for what they had heard themselves. "We . . . know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world," they cried. The terms of this profession of faith show us that Jesus, in His preaching, had insisted on two points, namely: the expiatory character of the Messiah and the universality of His work. That is why they no longer look upon Him as a teacher Who is instructing, but as a Saviour Who is rescuing, and Whose saving action will embrace the human race entire. In Him they saw without a doubt the fulfilment of the promise God gave to Abraham, which was written down in one of the books of Moses, the only ones they had preserved: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

It is difficult to say with accuracy what became of these germs of faith thus laid in a soil of such apparent fertility. It is probable, however, that the religious movement, which occurred in Samaria a few years later, was connected with

<sup>14</sup>Though the text here has the perfect *ἀπέστειλα* (*I have sent you*), and *εἰσεληλύθατε* (*you have entered*), it should be rendered by the future. Nothing is more common in Hebrew than this transposition of tenses. (Cf. Glass, *Phil. S.*, p. 302.)



this first preaching of the Word. Yet this unfortunate people, impatient in their hopes, became the dupe of false prophets who assigned themselves most ridiculous missions. They were led into ill-starred adventures, and fell a victim of their own credulity and imprudence.

Under Vespasian, Sichem became a Roman colony, Flavia Neapolis. Justin the Philosopher was born there. We know with what eloquence this illustrious Christian apologist defended the faith which he sealed with his blood.

To-day the old Samaritan race still lives, but in its ancient errors. It is said that the traveller who wanders in the fields of ancient Sichem may come across more than one aged man with trembling hands prostrate before the holy mountain, to which he lovingly turns his eyes. The Samaritan always offers the paschal sacrifice on lonely Garizim; <sup>15</sup> his lips mumble prayers and his heart awaits a better future. He sadly asks of the passer-by who speaks to him, if he knows of the whereabouts of his exiled brethren; and he begs him to summon them to hasten their return, since the last representatives of his race are disappearing day by day, and the tombs of the patriarchs shall no longer have their guardians; Jacob's terebinth shall lose its glory, and the holy mountain its adorers.

<sup>15</sup> I was at Naplouse in 1899, the very day when the Samaritans were celebrating their Passover. They said to me with tears in their eyes: "Alas! alas! this is the end. There are only one hundred and twenty of us now, and we have no women to marry our sons."

## SECTION II

### *First Results of this Revelation*

#### CHAPTER I

### THE FAITH SPRINGING UP IN GALILEE—THE SECOND MIRACLE AT CANA

JESUS RETURNS TO GALILEE, WHERE HE WAS EXPECTED—AN OFFICER OF CAPHARNAUM COMES TO CANA TO ASK THE HEALING OF HIS SON—JESUS' RESPONSE—THE CURE FROM AFAR OFF—THE OFFICER WITH ALL HIS FAMILY BELIEVES IN JESUS. (St. John iv, 43-54.)

AFTER this stay in the city of the Samaritans Jesus again set out and turned His steps toward Galilee. Knowing well that a prophet is without honour in his own town, He turned aside from Nazareth and went straight in the direction of the Lake of Genesareth. An enthusiastic welcome awaited Him. The people of Capharnaum and of the other cities had seen Him during the festival at Jerusalem; they knew of His wonderful works, talked of them and boasted of them. The independent and even superior attitude He had assumed before the religious authority had flattered the Galileans, who were so long accustomed to submit to the overweening influence of the capital. They

were eager to attest their admiration and their gratitude to Him. Besides, the first miracles they had witnessed be-  
got in them a desire to witness others. The wonder-worker was at least a prophet, if not the Messiah Himself. His name was in every mouth, and the wish to possess Him in every heart. And so, scarcely had He arrived at Cana, where He had worked His first miracle, when the inhabitants of Capharnaum were informed of His presence. In fact, from Capharnaum there came a royal officer,<sup>1</sup> Chusa, per-  
haps, Herod's steward,<sup>2</sup> or Manahen,<sup>3</sup> Herod's foster-brother, hastening to make known to Jesus the sad plight of his young son, who was ill, and to supplicate Him to save him from death.

The father's story left no doubt that the child was in the last extremities. But since Jesus had effected other miraculous cures, He could surely do so in this case. The officer, however, supposed that the influence of this worker of miracles had to be immediate in order to insure success, and so he requested Him to come down in person to Capharnaum, at a distance of twenty-five miles from Cana. It was evidently a wish formulated by an incomplete and ill-enlightened faith. The miraculous power of Jesus, as already revealed, could not but be absolute. All nature was subject to it, and, like a docile slave, nature received, bore to a distance, and fulfilled His sovereign commands. To cure means to put an end to sickness by the suppression of its cause. This cause, on the other hand, is the result of one of the manifold phenomena that depend on the general and providential laws of nature. Hence nothing was easier for Jesus, and the officer should have known it, than to express His will to the illness, instead of going in person

<sup>1</sup> Herod Antipas was called king by the people, although he was only tetrarch, and his representatives held the title of royal officers.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Luke* viii, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts* xiii, 1.

to touch and heal the sick boy. This imperfection in a faith which, however, really existed in a man otherwise well educated, seems to have given Jesus a feeling of sadness.

To this first painful impression was joined another, the knowledge of the immoderate desire to behold miracles that was deep in the souls of all those present. The Samaritans had not been so exacting. They had sought, above all, truth upon His lips, mercy in His heart, and, through truth and mercy, salvation. The Jews of Capharnaum desire miracles first of all. They make it a condition of their faith. They must be satisfied; yet how much better it would be to believe on His word alone, inasmuch as His word has in itself most evident signs of a mission from God! So He said with some bitterness, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not!" It was a reproach to the universal condition of minds, but the officer was the first to receive it. Nothing daunted, however, he reiterates his request: "Lord," he says, "come down, before that my son <sup>4</sup> die." Jesus saith to him: "Go thy way, thy son liveth." This speech was so authoritative and so reassuring, that the father believed in its all-powerful efficacy.

It might have been about one o'clock in the afternoon. Without delay the officer set out for Capharnaum. On the way, when the sun had already set, he met his servants, who were hastening after him, eager to announce the child's sudden and complete recovery. The father at the very height of joy, yet not forgetting the gratitude he owed to Jesus, asked at what hour his son had been cured. His

<sup>4</sup>The three words *παῖδιον*, *υἱός*, *παῖς*, employed in this narrative in speaking of the child, admirably correspond to the intentions and character of those who use them. The father says *παῖδιον*, my dear child; Jesus says *υἱός*, son, heir, representative of the family; the servants say *παῖς*, which is a word neither of tenderness nor of dignity, but of the family life. Such distinctions are not the result of invention; they are the expressions of nature and of truth.

servants tell him: "Yesterday at the seventh hour." In our language we should have said, "This afternoon, at one o'clock." Day commenced for the Jews at six o'clock in the evening. So, at seven o'clock they spoke of *yesterday*, as we do of the hour that precedes midnight.

This was exactly the moment at which Jesus had said: "Go thy way, thy son liveth." The evil had been exorcised from afar. All was due, without a doubt, to the Master's miraculous intervention. The happy father now had faith in Him, and all his house believed with him. Thus did the faith begin to spread in that land of Galilee; and Jesus was filled with great joy.

We shall meet again later on with the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, among the faithful servants who followed Jesus Christ and aided Him with their resources. If she was the mother of the child thus miraculously cured, we may understand that she earnestly desired to requite with touching and faithful gratitude the incomparable mercy she had received.

For the second time, in that same city of Cana and again on His return from Judea, Jesus had proved His omnipotence by a miracle.

## CHAPTER II

### OPPOSITION IN JERUSALEM—THE PARALYTIC OF BETHSAIDA

JESUS GOES TO JERUSALEM ON THE OCCASION OF A FESTIVAL—THE PISCINA OF BETHESDA AND THE PARALYTIC OF EIGHT-AND-THIRTY YEARS—HIS MIRACULOUS RECOVERY—DIFFICULTY ON ACCOUNT OF THE SABBATH—JESUS EXPLAINS THE LAW OF REST—HE LIKENS HIMSELF TO HIS FATHER—HIS HEARERS ARE SCANDALISED—JESUS' SUBLIME THESIS—THE SON GIVES LIFE, AND JUDGES—HE HAS RECEIVED THIS MISSION—NUMEROUS PROOFS; JOHN'S TESTIMONY, THE MIRACLES, AND THE WORD OF THE FATHER—WHY THESE PROOFS ARE NOT ACCEPTED—MOSES SHALL BECOME THE ACCUSER OF ISRAEL. (St. John v, 1-47.)

IN Galilee, Jesus' first miracles were bearing fruit, and it was easy to see that religious fervour had been aroused wherever the Wonder-Worker had made known His divine mission.

But how was it in Judea? Was this land of Pharisaism and of high rabbinical culture disposed to receive the Good-Tidings with a like enthusiasm? This was improbable; Jesus desired to prove this at the very outset of His public life, and so to justify before all the preference He was to show for Galilee by making her mountains the cradle of the Kingdom of God.

At the very first festival that occurred, that of Pentecost, or, at the latest, that of the Tabernacles,<sup>1</sup> He again set out for Jerusalem. Already He had made Himself known in that city in a remarkable manner in the Temple. But now He seemed resolved to be simply a pilgrim mingling in the crowd, when an occasion presented itself for the exercise of His mercy and omnipotence. He did not neglect it.

Near the Sheep-Gate,<sup>2</sup> at present probably the Gate of

<sup>1</sup> This question has been a very absorbing one to exegetes. Those who read ἡ ἑορτή, the festival of the Jews, claim that by this is meant the Passover, the greatest of Jewish festivals. There would thus have been four Passovers during the public life of Our Lord. However, even if the reading ἡ ἑορτή were the more probable, which cannot be claimed, since the article ἡ is wanting in the best manuscripts, there are many decisive reasons for rejecting the hypothesis that makes this the Feast of the Passover. For why should the Evangelist have designated in this passage, in so general and inexact a way, a solemnity which everywhere else he names very particularly (chs. ii, vi, and xii)? If this were the paschal feast it would follow that between ch. ii and ch. v one year had elapsed, and from ch. v to ch. vi another. Hence, if we already had reason for surprise in the fact that St. John had assigned so few events to the first twelve months of Jesus' ministry (from ch. ii to ch. v), we should have far greater grounds for complaint in finding still fewer in the second twelve months (ch. v to ch. vi). He certainly did not intend to describe two years in four pages; and when he places Jesus before us (ch. vii, 19-24) justifying the cure we are about to recount, he does not suppose (what, indeed, would be true if this were the feast of the Passover) that between these two events there is an interval of a year and a half, for after such a lapse of time the conflict would probably have been forgotten.

There were, therefore, but three Passovers in Our Lord's public life: the first, that with which His public life begins; the second, at which He was not present; the third, that with which His public life comes to its close. His public life lasted only two whole years; and between His baptism and the first Passover there were only two or three months.

Exegetes, reduced to hypotheses, have applied this festival, according to their chronological preferences, to each of the solemnities scattered throughout the Jewish year. We believe there is a question here of the Feast of Pentecost, or of the Tabernacles, so that there remain fifteen months, or at least one whole year, in which to classify the events which the Synoptics place in Galilee before the period of struggle in Judea.

<sup>2</sup> We understand πύλη before προβατικῆ with the Syriac version of Jerusalem and others, because we know from *2 Esd.* iii, 1, 32; xii, 39, that there was, toward the north-east of the Temple, a gate of that name, Saar-Hatson, mentioned with precision in the Septuagint, πύλη ἡ προβατικῆ. It was thus named, perhaps, because, being on a level with the platform of the Temple, it seemed most handy to introduce the victims for immolation.

Sitti-Mariam, there was a pond or piscina, called Bethesda, or "House of Charity." Around this basin, benevolence (whence no doubt the name "Beth-Chesda"<sup>3</sup>) caused to be erected an edifice with five arches,<sup>4</sup> within which many sick, blind, lame, and withered had taken refuge. The public belief was, that from time to time an angel came down into this pond and moved the waters. The first who then entered the health-giving pool would be cured of whatever malady afflicted him. This periodical miracle could not be denied, if the passage that relates it were authentic. But the four most ancient manuscripts have suppressed it, and many others have kept it marked or overladen with such variations as render its authority very doubtful.<sup>5</sup> So that here we are inclined to re-

Near it was the market where these latter were sold. We must observe, moreover, that several commentators with St. Jerome, Eusebius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, etc., in agreement with the Sinaitic manuscript, cutting off ἐπὶ τῆ, make of προβατικῆ the qualificative of κολυμβήθρα, and translate: "There is at Jerusalem, at the pool of the sheep, a building called in Hebrew Bethesda"; or, again, with M. de Saulcy, *Voyage autour de la Mer Morte*, p. 367, the word κολυμβήθρα, forgotten perchance by the copyists, reads: "Near the pool of the Sheep there is a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda." St. Jerome, after Eusebius, *de Situ et Nom.*, at the word "Bethesda" says, in fact, that "they show at Jerusalem two twin basins of which one is filled with the winter rains and the other with red, and indeed blood-red, water, the vestiges of its ancient use, for the priests came there to wash their victims. Hence its name."

<sup>3</sup> Delitzsch proposes as etymology *Beth-estav*, or the House of Pillars; others, *Beth-Aschada*, or the Place of Effusion, that is to say, where the blood of the victims was thrown.

<sup>4</sup> A passage of St. Cyril compels us to abandon the idea of the circular form that we had at first attributed to this portico. This doctor, well able to describe this holy place to us, since he was Bishop of Jerusalem, tells us: "Bethesda having five porticoes, four around it and the fifth in the middle" (*Hom. in Paral.*, ii).

<sup>5</sup> It is wanting, in fact, in the Sinaitic manuscript and in that of the Vatican, which date back to the year 350; in the codex of Ephrem, transcribed a century later; in that of Cambridge, later still by a hundred years, and in many others, too numerous to cite. The Coptic and Sahidic versions, undertaken about the end of the third century, and the Syriac manuscript of Cureton, also omit this passage. The Alexandrine manuscript in the British Museum, which was written in the second half of the fifth century, the *Peschito*, and Tertullian, *de Bapt.*, c. v., alone defend its authenticity.



gard it as a copyist's pious explanation insensibly transferred from the margin to the text. Hence the piscina of Bethesda was simply a basin of mineral waters, like those found in Palestine at Callirrhoë, for example, near the Dead Sea, in the thermal baths of Ibrahim near Tiberias, or even in Jerusalem, at Aïn-es-Schifa. This spring has disappeared. There, waited the infirm looking for the propitious moment when the subterranean caloric, suddenly breaking loose, caused considerable agitation on the surface of the water and stirred up the metallic salts that gave efficacy to the bath. It may be, also, that the spring was intermittent, like that of the Virgin at the present time, and we can thus understand why the infirm should hurry to dip themselves in the pond when the waters began to rise. At that moment they were particularly disturbed, being warmer and more abundant.<sup>6</sup>

Among the unfortunates who awaited their cure, there was a man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years.

But the celebrated African apologist, mentioning the fact of the Angel who stirred up the waters of Bethesda, alludes, perhaps, only to the explanation, written at an early date, beside the text. For he does not cite the Evangelist's authority. Origen does not appear to have read the passage spoken of in St. John. But, in such matters, an addition is better explained than a suppression.

<sup>6</sup> That accounts for the uncertainty in marking out the site of Bethesda. The common opinion seems to be that of M. de Saulcy that there were two piscinæ, the Probatæ, or that of the Sheep, and that of Bethes, or the House of Charity. The Greek text (*St. John* v, 2) strongly favours this opinion, which is accepted by Eusebius and by St. Jerome, who speak of twin basins, *λίμναι διδυμοί*, *gemini lacus*. The Pilgrim of Bordeaux says that on arriving he beheld two great reservoirs near the Temple, one on the right and one on the left. If he entered the city through Sitti-Mariam gate, we must recognise one of the two piscinæ in the Birket-Israel, and the other must be looked for near the Church of St. Anne, where the White Fathers, in fact, are completing its excavation with the series of superimposed sanctuaries erected by the piety of the faithful. In the Jewish Museum in the Louvre is a marble foot found in the excavations. The Greek inscription it bears, ΠΟΝΗΘΙΑ ΛΟΥΚΙΑΙΑ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕΝ, shows that the custom of *ex-voto* offerings is an ancient one in the Church and that Christian paralytics also came to Bethesda to ask miraculous cures, not from the waters of the piscina, but from the mercy of Jesus.

From his appearance of discouragement and suffering it was easy to see that he had long sought recovery from an illness as violent as it was deep-rooted. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Jesus said to him. "Sir," replied the sick man, "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me in the pond. For whilst I am coming another goeth down before me." The unfortunate man supposed there was no efficacy in the agitated waters except for the first sick man that reached them. This was a mistake, and if all were not cured, it may be accounted for by the slowness of some in plunging in, and by the fact that others sought an impossible cure. Jesus saith to him: "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." On the instant the man was cured; he took up his bed and went his way. Now it was the Sabbath-day. The Jews, who saw him as he passed along the streets, cried out to him: "It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed." Pharisaical rigorism hardly allowed a small cushion,<sup>7</sup> *pulvillum*, to be borne upon the head, provided it was of a certain insignificant weight. But the sick man was carrying a bed. Hence the reason why the Jews paid no attention to his cure, but took pains to reprimand him for his trespass of the law. He replied quite naturally without annoyance, but sheltering his unlawful conduct beneath the responsibility of Him through Whom he had regained his health: "He that made me whole, he said to me: 'Take up thy bed and walk.'" Then they asked who was this man, but he did not know his name. Jesus, wishing to escape the noise and the mob, had promptly slipped away through the multitude. The disciples were probably not with Him.

When the Saviour discovered the sick man later on in the Temple, whither he had come to thank God for his

<sup>7</sup> Maimonides, *Hilcoth Schabbat*, ch. xix, 17.

cure, He said to him: "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." This seems to imply that the paralytic's infirmity had been caused by his excesses and was a punishment of misconduct. Jesus, Whose divine eye penetrates the inmost regions of the human conscience, knew not only the body, but even the soul of the man He had cured, and He intended to complete His work of mercy by giving him a salutary lesson. Immediately the paralytic inquired the name of Him Who addressed him, and hastened to announce to the Jews that the author of his recovery was called Jesus.

From this moment the struggle began to assume great proportions. The real Contemner of the Sabbath being known, it was the duty of the religious authorities to demand an explanation. Jesus, on the other hand, does not refuse to discuss this theological case; He is ready to seize upon such a fine opportunity to confront the storm, and to develop His doctrine on His relations with the Father, and on the undeniable proof of these relations. Then, no longer the accused, but as their accuser, He will make a direct attack upon the incredulity of His adversaries and will lay bare its true causes and its malice. "My Father," He cries out, "worketh hitherto, and I also work." The force of this argument seems to be this: the Jews claim that all work must be laid aside on the Sabbath, because God, having completed the work of six days, rested on the seventh. But this is not exact. God, after having created the universe, did not enter into absolute repose. He was active even in His day of rest, and His providence continued to preserve, to govern, and to vivify all things. He has not ceased to make His sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust. If the Sabbath forced Him into absolute inactivity, it would be the saddest of all days, for it would thus bring about the final catastrophe. It is by

a relative repose, therefore, that it must be sanctified. It will not be dishonoured by the doing of good to men. If the Father is active even on the Sabbath-day in order to preserve the life of humanity, the Son, too, can act in order to give back health to one that is sick. Moreover, His personal activity in the working of miracles is not separate from that of God. The principal agent of the prodigy is the Father; the Son is but the secondary instrument. If, then, they blame Him for having caused a miraculous cure on the Sabbath-day, they blame the Father Himself in His works; and is it not folly to accuse God?

When they heard Him call God His Father, and even make Himself His equal, the Jews' indignation again burst forth with violence. The violation of the Sabbath was no longer a cause of anxiety. The impiety, the blasphemy of which Jesus was just guilty were of exceptional gravity. Their thought was to submit Him to the punishment of blasphemers, to put Him to death.

But Jesus was not of those whom danger overawes and reduces to silence. Full of His subject, He raises the discussion to its loftiest heights. His theme, boldly grasped, was the necessary relation between the activity of the Father and that of the Son. In heaven the Father is the eternal Exemplar of the Son, for the Word is nothing else than the perfect Image of the Father. On earth, the Incarnation makes no modification of this necessary relation between the two divine persons, but rather extends it to the human nature itself. This latter reads in the Divine Word, as the Divine Word reads in the Father; so that even as man Jesus regulates His activity according to that of His Heavenly Father: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, the Son cannot do anything of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing; for whatsoever things He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the

Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things which Himself doth." Jesus here gives us the secret of His religious life. He reveals to us how He keeps His gaze perpetually turned toward His Father, Who through love permits Himself to be seen through His Word; and His merit lies in His filial imitation of what is given Him to contemplate. Thus is He initiated into the Father's work, into the divine plan, and the development of His own activity will be in direct proportion to this initiation. "And greater works than these will He show Him, that you may wonder," He adds; "for as the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life: so the Son also giveth life to whom He will."

Taken in a spiritual sense, this power contains something that is more astonishing than the cure of a paralytic. The great moral resurrections that the Son of God will bring about after Pentecost shall, indeed, be a more prodigious sign of His power. But surpassing all these will be the solemn sign, which, at the end of time, shall perpetuate His glory, the physical resurrection of the dead and the general judgment. At the present time He merely anticipates, in isolated cases, this manifestation of His power. Sole judge of the living and of the dead, He selects those whom He wishes to call to eternal life and happiness. This is His right. "For neither doth the Father judge any man," He says; "but hath given all judgment to the Son, that all men may honour the Son as they honour the Father." To give life and to judge are the two great prerogatives of God with regard to His creatures; by communicating them to His Son, God intended to insure for Him the homage and adoration of mankind. So Jesus has the right to conclude: "He who heareth not the Son, knoweth not the Father, who hath sent Him." On this very point shall the judgment be made, and according to their attitude

toward the Son, men must expect death or resurrection. "Amen, amen, I say unto you, that he who heareth my word and believeth Him that sent me, hath life everlasting, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death to life."

Then, of a sudden, perceiving that He alone was living in the midst of that lost humanity, He foretells the moral resurrection of those who believe. The scene, in His imagination, becomes eminently dramatic. He was like Ezechiel in the vast plain of dry bones, raising his voice to call them back to life. "Amen, amen, I say unto you that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself." That is, He has made His Son not merely like unto Himself, but equal to Himself; for the Son has in Himself the inherent faculty of divine life. The Son, in the greatness of His love for the Father, has humbled Himself by becoming man; but the Father, Whose love is equal to His Son's, has glorified Him by the very fact of His Incarnation, with the charge of judging as He shall think best the humanity of which He had become a member. So that the Son of God become the Son of Man has full authority and full power here below. "The Father," says Jesus, "hath given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Wonder not at this, for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." This resurrection is to be not moral and religious, but physical and corporal. That same voice that shall have given life to souls by the preaching of the Gospel, shall sound again at the end of the

world, as clear as a trumpet, summoning the dead from their tombs to give them back their life. Such is the Son's authority and power. He has received them from the Father, and with infinite love He returns them to Him by His declaration that He is perfectly subordinate to Him. "I cannot of myself do anything. As I hear, so I judge: and my judgment is just because I seek not my own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." What sublime simplicity in this clear exposition of the intimate relations of the Son and the Father! We shall find its continuation and full development later on in the discourses at the Last Supper.

After the miracle that occasioned these explicit declarations, it was difficult to contradict them. Yet in order that faith might take deeper root in the hearts of those who heard Him, Jesus shows that the Father Himself is witness of what He says. His assertions might well seem vain were He alone in sustaining them. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is Another that beareth witness of Me: and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of Me is true. You sent to John; and he gave testimony of the truth. But I receive not testimony from man; but I say these things that ye may be saved. He was a burning and a shining light. And ye were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater testimony than that of John. For the works which the Father hath given Me to perfect, the works themselves which I do, give testimony of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." If the Jews had confidence in John the Baptist, why do they not believe his testimony? It is true that his testimony, like all that is human, was only transitory. The light beamed for an instant, and then was borne away by sacrilegious hands to the depths of a dungeon. The witness is in prison; he is no longer heard.

Therefore Jesus invokes another Who is unchangeable, unfailing, ever convincing; He means His own works, which are the voice of the Father, and the undeniable sign of His mission.

What is more to the point, the Father Himself has spoken directly and not only through the miracles He permitted. He spoke in person at the baptism of His Son; He had spoken before through the Prophets He had inspired, in Holy Scripture. Israel had heard nothing of the language of the first, for she was unworthy; of that of the second she had understood naught. "And the Father Himself who hath sent me, hath given testimony of me; neither have you heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape. And you have not His word abiding in you; for whom He hath sent, Him you believe not. You search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting, and the same are they that give testimony of me and you will not come to me that you may have life." The reason is that Jesus and the Jews are absolutely at variance in their views and aspirations. He seeks not the applause of His fellows; He is love that forgets itself and is devoted; they are pride and egotism. "I receive not glory from men; but I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in the name of my Father and you receive Me not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive glory one from another, and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek?" Man is never such a stranger to faith as when in his pride he seeks popularity, the homage of the multitude. His heart, far from being humble, has no ear to listen to God's voice. He longs for the affections of earth, and has no merit for the favours of heaven. Yet Jesus adds: "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one that accuseth you, Moses, in whom you trust. For if you



did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also. For he wrote of me.<sup>8</sup> But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Such are the final and irresistible words of tenderness and logic with which Jesus means to conclude His discourse. They must not look upon Him as the enemy, the accuser of His people. No, He deplors their blindness. The real accuser will be Moses, the great prophet of Israel, the ancient liberator of his people, toward whom are turned all hopes. No longer as intercessor, but as judge, he will condemn those who are apparently so faithful and so zealous, and will do homage to Him Whom they now accuse of being the usurper of his prerogatives and the transgressor of his commandments.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus here alludes to the symbolic figures of the Messiah, to the promises made to the patriarchs, contained in the books of Moses, and more particularly to the prophecy in *Deut. xviii, 18*.

## CHAPTER III

### THE IMPRISONMENT OF THE BAPTIST —JESUS RETIRES INTO GALILEE

CHANGE OF ATTITUDE OF THE RELIGIOUS PARTY TOWARD JOHN THE BAPTIST—INCEST OF HEROD ANTIPAS—THE PRECURSOR'S COURAGEOUS INVECTIVES — UNNAMED AGENCY BY WHICH HE IS DELIVERED OVER TO HEROD —THE PRISON OF MACHÆRUS—JESUS' FINAL RETIREMENT INTO GALILEE. (St. Luke iii, 19-20, and iv, 14; St. Matt. xiv, 3-5, and iv, 12; St. Mark vi, 17-20, and i, 14.)

IN His debate with the Jews, the discourse of Jesus contained an allusion to an important event that had happened only a short while before, the imprisonment of John the Baptist. When the Saviour says that the Precursor ceased to be a burning and a shining light, He means that His enemies have caused Him to be thrown into prison. It is probable that those to whom the close of the preceding discourse was addressed were not acquainted with this fact, for, if we compare the data in Josephus<sup>1</sup> with the Evangelist's narrative, we find the following to be the course of events:

For some time John had ceased to respond to the hopes which the sacerdotal party had founded on him. The embassy from the Sanhedrim found but little satisfaction

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, Bk. xviii, ch. v, § 2.

in his replies, and their discontent must have greatly increased when they learned that he proclaimed a carpenter of Nazareth as the Messiah. This was as much as to contradict all the patriotic aspirations, all the hopes of glory that the nation had. His mission now fell under suspicion, and, as suspicion easily leads to persecution, they concluded that this false preacher of the Messianic kingdom ought to be suppressed. This was not easy to do, for his popularity was great. Josephus says, "Many came in crowds about him, for they were greatly pleased to hear his words." The Pharisees, therefore, decided that they must seek for some means of placing<sup>2</sup> him in the hands of Antipas, a prince cruel enough to put him to death. An opportunity of doing so soon presented itself in the natural course of events.

Antipas, son of Herod the Great and Malthace of Samaria, tetrarch, as has been said elsewhere, of Peræa and Galilee, had married a daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia. He suddenly repudiated her, and took to himself his brother Philip's wife.<sup>3</sup> So great a scandal aroused universal indignation. The people were the more stirred up, since Aretas, to prevent this insult from going unpunished, declared war against his son-in-law. John the Baptist, who

<sup>2</sup>This is probably what is meant by the expression *μετὰ τὸ παραδοθῆναι* used by *St. Mark* i, 14.

<sup>3</sup>The Philip here named must not be confounded with the tetrarch of Ituræa and of Trachonitis, who was the son of Cleopatra. The man here mentioned is another son of the same name, whom Herod had by Mariamne, the daughter of the High Priest, and whom he had disinherited. (See Josephus, *Ant.*, xvii, 6; *B. J.*, i, 30, 7.) It is a mistake to suppose that there was a contradiction between Josephus and the Evangelists, because the former calls this prince Herod, while the latter call him Philip. It is the same individual in each case, who at one time bears his own particular name, and at another only his family name. Krebs, *Observ. in Nov. Test.*, p. 37, has clearly shown that the writers of the time, among others Dion Cassius, *lib.* iv, p. 567, called princes sometimes by their patronymics, sometimes by their distinctive names. As for Josephus in particular, Krebs proves that we may see how he called the person here spoken of both Philip and Herod. (Compare *Ant.*, xviii, ch. iv, with ch. v.)

was preaching in Peræa and, consequently, within the territory of this incestuous tetrarch, did not fail to stigmatise publicly this misdemeanour. The Evangelist seems even to say that the austere preacher went so far as to carry his loud remonstrances into the very palace of the guilty man to disturb him in the midst of his joy, and there gave the pitiless *non licet*, which inevitably arouses remorse and leaves to crime naught but pleasures full of bitterness. "It is not lawful for thee," declared the man from the desert, "to have thy brother's wife." And to this he added a terrible catalogue of the crimes of which Herod had been guilty.

This declaration must have particularly excited the fury of the criminal princess, who, having braved dishonour, now dreaded seeing the miserable failure of her ambitious dreams. John the Baptist stood in her presence like an opponent quite capable of her destruction, if he himself were not soon destroyed. Hence at the same time that she was binding Herod unconsciously to herself by those artificial ties of which passion holds the secret, she was careful to place before him, as a danger to be feared, the great popularity of the Precursor. With calculating cleverness she suffered the murmurs of public indignation to reach the prince's ear; and then, showing how one more word would suffice to let loose the tempest, she seemed to say that this word was already on the lips of this terrible agitator.

It must be at this point that the hierarchical party, the secret enemies of the Baptist, commenced their part. For an influence not named in the Gospel, but only too real, here intervened and delivered him into the guilty hands that sought him. As it was easy for him to escape Herod's authority by taking refuge in Judea, we may reasonably admit that he retired into that province; but such a

retreat afforded him no security. The Sanhedrim, deceived in its first hopes, dissatisfied with the Baptist's categorical declarations, and in the end hostile to his tendencies, must certainly have refused him its protection. John fell into the hands of his enemy, was loaded with chains, and shut up in the prison of Machærus.<sup>4</sup>

Herodias' hatred would have sought more than this; but Herod hesitated to pronounce sentence of death. He could not but admire and even love, while he feared, the courageous voice that inculcated duty.

Besides, such excessive rigour might intensify the universal discontent, and hasten a sudden breaking of the storm. The popularity with which virtuous men are surrounded is ever redoubtable even to tyrants. In its own time it can crush with its weight the most firmly established thrones, and hence it is that it protects the just man in the solitude of his dungeon.

It was sufficient to hold John shut up in prison to prevent him from addressing the multitude, without making his captivity too severe. We shall see that his disciples were permitted to visit him. St. Mark even gives us to understand that Herod manifested not only regard, but actually esteem and confidence in his victim, seeking and following his advice on more than one occasion. Unfortunately a wicked woman stood between these two men; she

<sup>4</sup>Machærus, built by Alexander, the son of Hyrcanus I, destroyed by Gabinius and rebuilt by Herod, was a fortress of the first class and served as a natural defence of Palestine against the Arabs. Josephus, *B. J.*, vii, 6, gives us a description of it. It comprises a stronghold, an upper and a lower city. It is believed that traces of it are found at M'Kaur, to the east of the Dead Sea. The foundations of the citadel are still there, with a cistern and underground chambers which might have been the prison of John the Baptist. The remains of the upper city, 150 metres below the citadel, are strewn in a plateau of about 1,600 metres, whence the view to the Dead Sea and the mountains of Judea is quite picturesque. The lower city, to the east of the fortress, retains in its ruins some traces of Greek civilisation.

had seduced the one, and she detested the other. Her influence, preparing a triumph for her hate, was to bring on the catastrophe which would make the latter a martyr and the former his executioner.

For Jesus, the Baptist's imprisonment, if it was, as we suppose, partly the work of the chief priests, was a serious warning. He had but to avoid the secret plannings of the Pharisees by taking leave of Judea. If they had betrayed the preacher so loved and applauded at his first coming, what would they not hold in reserve for the Master, because of Whom His herald had become detested?

At all events the reception the Messiah had just met with for the second time in the Holy City revealed more and more the tenacious hostility of these multitudes, filled with prejudices and guided by a perverted priesthood. If Jesus had been able to accomplish nothing in Judea, even though the Baptist gave Him the support of his solemn attestations, He could hardly hope for more consoling fruits now that the official witness had, through imprisonment, ceased to carry on his ministry.

From this point He alone is to preach and to establish the Kingdom of God. Galilee is, without a doubt, the spot where His thought shall more slowly, perhaps, but more surely take root. Souls there are already tempered by divine grace. The Master has only to model them as He wishes. Rude as they may be, we shall see them change unconsciously in His powerful hands. Of these uncultivated mountaineers, He will make up a spiritual army which He will lead later on to the assault of the Holy City. Jerusalem may even yet resist these latest advances of divine mercy, and then the Galileans, shaking the dust from off their sandals, as a sign of malediction, will quit this accursed land and, turning toward the pagan world, they will go to achieve its conquest.

Jesus therefore went up toward Galilee,<sup>5</sup> there to enter upon His work. He will go out from that country only when the Church has been definitely organised.

<sup>5</sup> Compare *Matt.* iv, 12; *Mark* i, 14. Nothing more manifestly shows the omissions of the Evangelists than the one found in the three Synoptics at the beginning of Jesus' public life. All three suppress the two returns of the Master to Galilee after His baptism, and His two appearances, though very significant, at the Feasts in Jerusalem. They seem, too, to confound His third return to Galilee with the first, and thus pass over in silence the first half-year of His public life. We have seen how the fourth Gospel happily fills up this hiatus; but does it fill up all the others?

## BOOK II

### *Formative Period in Galilee*

#### SECTION I

#### *Jesus Gathers Together the First Elements of His Church*

#### CHAPTER I

### FRUITLESS EFFORTS IN NAZARETH

JESUS COMMENCES HIS MINISTRY IN GALILEE—THE SYNAGOGUES FAVOUR HIS INFLUENCE ON THE PEOPLE—THE SYNAGOGUE IN NAZARETH—THE PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY—READING AND COMMENTARIES OF ISAIAH (LXI)—SURPRISE AND JEALOUSY—A STERN RESPONSE—THE FURY OF THOSE PRESENT—JESUS LEAVES NAZARETH AND TURNS TOWARD CAPHARNAUM. (St. Luke iv, 16-30.)

OUR Lord's ministry in Galilee is the most peaceful, the happiest, and the most fruitful period of His life. The Master devotes Himself completely to these generous mountain peasants who welcome Him with kindness, listen to His words, and call for His miracles. It is, indeed, the Lord's blessed year. God's work is done openly. Its gradual development may be followed and its final triumph foreseen.



In this labour of creation, Jesus used untiring patience, power, and especially charity. Nothing is for us more consoling than to study the Master at work, and to place ourselves among His disciples and piously to gather in His lessons.

Jesus' return to Galilee was signalled, according to the Synoptics, by an extraordinary display of activity. In every synagogue the young Master was heard preaching the Kingdom of God, penance, and the obligation of faith in the Good-Tidings. He declared with an irresistible conviction that the time was fulfilled; His words were applauded and the preacher's fame was becoming great.<sup>1</sup>

The large number of synagogues in a deeply religious country must naturally have been a means for the scattering of the divine seed. On arriving in a town Jesus was always certain of finding an audience ready to hear Him and to discuss His words. Besides the obligatory assembly on the Sabbath, there were also optional reunions in the synagogues on Monday and on Thursday; and, as these days were at the same time court and market days, the inhabitants of the country, after doing their business, rarely failed to come and glorify God in the holy assembly.

Every town containing ten citizens sufficiently wealthy to be freed from the necessity of manual labor, had a synagogue. The large cities had more, according to the number and munificence of their inhabitants. Tiberias had twelve, and Jerusalem four hundred and eight.<sup>2</sup> Nazareth, too, had her synagogue; Jesus must needs appear there and reveal Himself to His fellow-citizens. Although their bad disposition was notorious—we have already seen that He once passed through His own country without stopping there—He wished to prove it plainly and thus to leave no excuse for those of His own people who refused

<sup>1</sup> *St. Luke iv, 15.*

<sup>2</sup> *Megill. Perek., i, and Barachot, fol. 8.*

to receive Him. Taking the opportunity, therefore, of a Sabbath-day, He came, as usual, to the synagogue and took His place among the people. They were accustomed to see Him from early childhood constant at these pious meetings; but, concealing the extraordinary state of His soul from the gaze of men, He had ever sought to remain modestly mingling in the crowd.

The synagogues may be described as large rectangular halls of more or less definite construction. The more elevated portion, the sanctuary, separated by steps from the enclosure proper, contained a reproduction of the Ark or Tabernacle together with the Book of the Law. In this spot, closely corresponding to the choir in our modern churches, on the seats of honour<sup>3</sup> sat the dignitaries of the assembly, president, elders, the officiating minister, and other important personages of the community, all faced toward the people, who were within the enclosure around the ambo prepared for the lector or preacher.<sup>4</sup>

The right of speaking to the congregation was not so strictly reserved to priests and Levites as never to be permitted to ordinary individuals. In fact, we know that when, on solemn feasts, the ceremonial required seven lecturers, the most educated of those present were invited through politeness or through necessity to ascend the ambo and read a passage from Moses or from the Prophets. Besides, one could ordinarily ask to be heard even without invitation. But in such a case he must be almost certain of compensating by his knowledge for the temerity displayed in soliciting such an honour.

The reading of the fragments of the law (*Parascha*) was over, and that of the Prophets (*Haphtara*) was about

<sup>3</sup> *St. Matt.* xxiii, 6; *Ep. St. James* ii, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> See Vitranga, *De Synagoga Vetere*; Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums*, i, 168 ss.

to begin. The general surprise must have been great when, from the midst of the people, Jesus, the carpenter, made known that He desired to speak. Not that the report of His recent works in Cana, in Jerusalem, and at Capharnaum had not drawn upon Him the attention of His compatriots; but besides the fact that they did not know exactly how much faith they ought to place in all the wonderful stories they heard, it was publicly known that Jesus had never frequented any school other than the workshop, and no one believed Him to be sufficiently lettered to make a solemn reading, much less to explain it. However, the president of the assembly, or the *angel of the synagogue*, granted Him permission to ascend the ambo. There, the *hazan*, a sort of subaltern officer, handed Him a cylinder about which were rolled rectangular strips. This was the collection of the prophetic discourses of Isaias. For we know, that on the Sabbath-day the reading of the prophets<sup>5</sup> was joined to that of the books of Moses. Jesus unfolded the volume, and, whether the order of reading brought it about so, or whether God so permitted that the roll should of itself open at that place, He found a passage<sup>6</sup> most happily selected for the occasion. The chief of the synagogue gave Him the sign to commence, and Jesus read the following words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore He hath anointed me, to preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart; to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,<sup>7</sup> to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and

<sup>5</sup> *Acts* xiii, 15; xv, 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Isa.* lxi, etc. Although referring directly to the return from exile, the prophecy applies equally to the Messianic times of which the deliverance of Israel was to be the symbolical figure.

<sup>7</sup> It is very surprising to find here the clause ἀποστειλαὶ τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, which is neither in the Hebrew text nor in the Septuagint. These words are found in ch. lviii, v. 6, of Isaias. Are we to suppose that Jesus

the day of reward." At these words He ceased, closed the book, returned it to the *hazan*, and sat down.

This was a sign that He wished to speak and to explain the text. There was deep silence; all eyes were fixed upon Him. "This day," He said in a solemn tone, "is fulfilled this scripture in your ears." And He developed His declaration with all the sentiments of tender affection that the occasion inspired. Those who listened to Him, His fellow-countrymen, the friends of His family, the companions of His childhood, were truly the unfortunate blind whom first He sought to cure, the slaves He came to liberate. To them He desired to bring the first-fruits of salvation and of grace. Before an audience less hostile than that of Nazareth, His success would have been most consoling. On the other hand, His thesis was not altogether one of sentiment. He could prove, by the testimony of John the Baptist and by the miracles He had already done, that the Spirit of God had really come upon Him at His baptism. And as for the merciful disposition of His heart toward humanity, He was ready to attest it by devoting His life to the saving of unfortunate mankind. For, from this day, as the true representative of the mercy of the Most High, He shall advance not with the sound of the jubilee trumpet, but, inaugurating the Gospel-preaching, to proclaim in all parts the great year of grace and benediction.

took them from there and inserted them in His reading? It is scarcely probable, because He was reading and not expounding at that moment; so that no interpolation would have been permitted Him without correction by the chief of the synagogue, to the great scandal of all. It is more plausible to say that St. Luke, quoting from the version of the Septuagint, found this fragment as a marginal note in his copy, transferred from ch. lviii to ch. lxi; that it was there in explanation of *τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν*, or simply as a comparison of grammarians of similar ideas, and that he inserted it in his citation as the real text. These inaccuracies may lead to a modification of certain rigid theories on inspiration, but they do not endanger the authority of the Evangelist.

The jubilee, as understood in the law of Moses,<sup>8</sup> every fifty years, returned liberty to the slave who had sold himself, their patrimony to families that had alienated it; in a word restored Jewish society to its primitive basis. The ministry which Jesus is about to undertake will do more than this since it will restore not a people, but mankind, long held in slavery, ruined and fallen. And His work of resurrection shall not be for a half-century, but for all time.

The benevolence, the ease, the eloquence with which Jesus expressed Himself forced the assembly to do Him justice and admire Him. Nevertheless this first movement of enthusiasm and approbation soon gave way to a feeling of surprise and even of violent vexation. The beautiful words just listened to were forgotten as each one asked himself who it was that had spoken them: "Is not this the son of Joseph?" some one said, and this question provoked other cutting words that Jesus overheard, or ill-feelings which He perceived in the depths of their hearts. Since He presented Himself as the preacher of the great jubilee of mankind forgiven, why did not He, Whose childhood had been so obscure, prove His mission by some extraordinary works? He was to commence the demonstration of His Messianic character in His own city. "And He said to them: Doubtless you will say to me this similitude: 'Physician, heal thyself; as great things as we have heard done in Capharnaum, do also here in Thy own country.'" And He said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, that no prophet is accepted in his own country." It is true; the fellow-townsmen of an extraordinary man ever find it particularly difficult to give full recognition of the worth of one whose birth and growth among them they have witnessed.

And as Jesus perceives in their objections a kind of

<sup>8</sup> *Lev. xxv, 9.*

ironical doubt of the miracles He had done elsewhere, He says to them with severity in His tone that heaven owes a sign only to those who merit it by humble and sincere faith. The fact that they are of the same nation or of the same city as the wonder-worker gives them no right to His works. Above all, they should be one with Him in thoughts and in aspirations. This is the true bond, before which all others are effaced. "In truth I say to you, there were many widows in the days of Elias in Israel, when heaven was shut up three years and six months,<sup>9</sup> when there was a great famine throughout all the earth; and to none of them was Elias sent, but to Sarepta of Sidon, to a widow woman. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them were cleaned, but Naaman the Syrian."

As they heard themselves likened to the faithless Jews of the past by the very one Who likened Himself to their great prophets, the Nazarenes no longer checked their fury. They rose up and drove Him from the city, and pursued Him even to the summit of the mountain<sup>10</sup> on which Nazareth was built. Their intention was to hurl Him down from the precipice. So did they prove that Jesus was right in accusing them of evil dispositions. At the critical moment, just as they were on the point of consummating their crime, the Saviour checked them by sending forth one ray of His majestic light. In the gaze or in

<sup>9</sup> *St. James* v, 17, gives the same space of time, whereas in *III Kings* xvii, 1, and xviii, 1 and 45, we read that rain fell in the third year. To solve this difficulty it has long since been remarked that in Palestine there are only two rainy seasons, October and April. It is supposed, therefore, that since the rain failed at the very moment when it was due to fall, it was necessary to add to the three years of drought the six months that preceded, but which formed no part of the punishment.

<sup>10</sup> The expression *ἕως ὀφρύων τοῦ ὄρους* indicates clearly that we must look for this spot in climbing the hill on the side of which Nazareth is built, and not in descending toward the plain.

the words of superior men, there is a surprising force that holds in check the most violent onset, and impresses itself on the fierce but astonished beast. On other occasions we shall see to what degree Jesus possessed this influence; but we may not be surprised at this, since we know that the energy of His great soul was doubled by the strength of God.

Overwhelmed by the superhuman dignity which He suddenly manifested, the Nazarenes turned to each other in amazement, their arms paralysed, their fury held in abeyance. As if by a sudden and irresistible impulse, they opened a way for Him Whom they were going to destroy, and Jesus passed along between them, calm and serene in His majesty, and not one ventured to lay sacrilegious hands upon Him. Such, as has been said, was the miracle He left them in place of all others, as He departed from them.

He went out, therefore, like one banished from the city where he had spent the long years of His hidden life. It is not said that any friend of His youth accompanied Him. No doubt He looked back from afar off for the last time upon that ungrateful city, upon the humble house that had sheltered His work and His virtues, and He mourned, perhaps, that He was obliged to bear unto others the works of mercy and the words of salvation which His own refused to accept.

He turned His steps across the mountains toward Capharnaum. He was certain of finding there elements prepared for the first organisation of His Church. Did not Isaias<sup>11</sup> prophesy that the light would begin to shine on the confines of Zabulon and Nephthali? Besides the

<sup>11</sup> *St. Matt.* iv, 14, sees in this change of domicile the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaias, viii, 23, and ix, 1, which he quotes freely, not following exactly either the Hebrew or the Septuagint. The prophet predicts in this passage, at one and the same time, the deliverance from the Assyrian yoke and the Messianic Kingdom.

royal officer, whose son He had cured, and those who had followed him in his act of faith, was there not in the city itself a twofold group of brothers and of friends whom He had already selected to be the foundation stones of the new society? Young and generous men, convinced of Jesus's extraordinary mission, they only awaited the final signal to hasten into the religious movement, and to bring with them, with all the defects of unpolished Galileans, the good qualities of hearts naturally upright and devoted.



## CHAPTER II

### DEFINITE VOCATION OF THE FOUR<sup>1</sup>

JESUS ON HIS WAY TO CAPHARNAUM MEETS PETER AND ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN, ON THE BORDERS OF THE LAKE—HE PROPOSES THAT THEY BECOME HIS DISCIPLES—HE PREACHES FROM PETER'S BOAT—MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES—THE DISCIPLES SHALL BE FISHERS OF MEN—THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS VOCATION IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND. (St. Mark i, 16–20; St. Matt. iv, 18–22; St. Luke v, 1–11.)

THE Messianic era is definitely opened. Notwithstanding the unfavourable reception on the part of the Nazarenes, Jesus, far from being discouraged, continues henceforth without truce or repose to spread the Good-Tidings and to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. He is still alone; the disciples who followed Him to Jerusalem for the first Pass-over do not seem to have been with Him when, on another feast-day, He cured the paralytic at Bethesda. At any rate, we did not see them with Him at Nazareth at the time of the incident in the synagogue. Very probably

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke alone gives a complete account of the vocation of these four. St. Matthew and St. Mark give only a summary narration; but their story no more excludes that of St. Luke than an abridgment does the history it epitomises. According to them, it is while Peter and Andrew are fishing that Jesus invites them to follow Him. St. Luke does not contradict this, but tells in what circumstances they were fishing. It is on their return when they are arranging their damaged nets that James and John, moved by what they had witnessed, are called to follow the Master.

Jesus had them with Him only from time to time. The festivals over, they returned to their avocations, where the Master will soon rejoin them. For the time being He preaches alone penance and faith in the Gospel.

Wherever He meets with souls, He halts. No longer the synagogue only, but the public square and private houses serve for calling the multitudes together and instructing them. He remains not long in any single place, and gives no lengthy discourses. After scattering among His hearers a few brief and telling maxims, He withdraws and leaves them time for reflection. Therefore, the crowds who have merely caught a glimpse of Him follow Him, eager to hear Him again. With them He will gladly halt upon His way, sometimes at the foot of a mountain, sometimes on the edge of a field of grain, and again near the shore of the lake. It may be said that what was dead in indifference and infidelity comes back to life at His approach. Through kindness, patience, miracles, He stirs up in all places the most salutary excitement.

Such were the circumstances amid which Jesus went about through all the country from Nazareth to Capharnaum. When He reached the shores of the lake, He saw Simon Peter and Andrew, who, in discouragement after a night of fruitless fishing, were throwing their nets for a final attempt.<sup>2</sup> He cried out to them: "Come after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." As they heard that voice so well known to them, the two brothers pushed their bark upon the strand and hastened to welcome Jesus. Not far from them, in another boat were James and John, who, with Zebedee their father and some hired helpers, were cleaning and mending their nets. The Master called them also. This invitation was quite different from the

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark i, 16; St. Matt. iv, 18.

one they had received upon the banks of the Jordan.<sup>3</sup> At that time it was question merely of attaching them to Himself by the ordinary ties of faith and affection, but now there were to be created official and definitive bonds to hold the disciple to the Master. Formerly the four had followed Jesus occasionally and for a time only, but now they will follow Him as in duty bound and forever.

Meanwhile the crowd that surrounded Jesus had become numerous, and as they pressed forward to touch Him or to see Him close at hand, it became impossible for Him to speak to all. Then turning toward the two boats down upon the shore, He entered one of them; it was Simon's. This incident, apparently fortuitous, but which was intimately connected with Jesus' particular intentions with regard to His disciple, was a presage of the primacy which, later on, He would give him in the Church; and, in truth, for eighteen centuries Jesus has ever remained seated in Peter's bark teaching the Christian society with the most indefectible authority.

He then requested Peter to push out the little boat away from the shore, and, seating Himself, He began to instruct the people. How fair that scene! The blue waves caressing the restless pulpit from which the preacher spoke, and standing on the shore, or clinging to the dark rocks that project into the lake, the many hearers listening with unspeakable delight! The morning calm, the charm of beautiful nature no less than the gracious words of the Master seemed to spread perfect happiness throughout this attentive audience. No temple, no palace ever had above it a vault comparable to the glorious sky of Syria, nor round about it an environment more pleasant to look upon than the lake with its clear waters and the undulating slopes

<sup>3</sup> *St. John* i, 35-43.

that framed it as with a pied curtain of field-flowers and violets blossoming beneath rocks that gleamed white in the sun.

When the discourse was ended Jesus dismissed the people, and, turning to Simon, said to him: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." It was, no doubt, His intention to reward them gratefully for the service they had rendered Him in placing their boat at His disposal; but, most of all, He desired to make lasting the impression His discourse had left upon the souls of Peter and his companions. For fishermen He was preparing a miraculous catch of fishes. Their natural desires could not be understood more thoroughly. Simon replied: "Master, we have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing; but at Thy word, I will let down the net." His obedience in making one more trial, notwithstanding the certainty of failure, proves the lofty idea Peter had already conceived of Jesus' power. He was generously rewarded for it by a draught so great that the nets were in danger of breaking. But immediately, in response to a signal, the fishermen who were in the other boat hastened to their aid. They filled both boats to such an extent that they ran the risk of sinking; for ordinarily these fishing-craft in lakes and ponds are not of very great size. Those we found at Tiberias are scarcely an exception to this rule, and six men completely fill them.

There can be no doubt that the fishermen had witnessed a miracle. It was not chance nor the approach of a storm that had gathered this great number of fishes into Peter's net; for Jesus could not count upon luck after the slender results of the night, and Peter had no need of information from Jesus to know that fishing is good when the storm is about to break. No, Peter knew well what was super-human in this incident. He analysed it thus: Jesus, by an

act of supreme authority, has commanded the fishes to assemble around the boat,<sup>4</sup> and with superhuman knowledge He knew that they had obeyed. Now He Who can accomplish such prodigies is not a simple mortal. Therefore in Jesus there is something of God. When the divine majesty permits itself to be seen through the means of extraordinary works, it fills one not only with amazement, but with fear. Peter fell upon his knees and cried out: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But with touching kindness came Jesus' answer: "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men."<sup>5</sup> Andrew, James, and John were of the same mind as Simon Peter. Jesus included them in the same invitation, and when they had drawn their boats upon the shore, He said to them: "Leave your nets and follow me." And all, enchanted with the thought of becoming fishers of men, left their fathers and their companions, their boats, their nets, and the catch of fish itself, and joined with Jesus to depart from Him no more.

In the history of the world, there has been, perhaps, no event of greater importance than the unanimous response of these four men to the call of Jesus. The vocation of Abraham had made certain for mankind the knowledge of one only living and personal God; that of Moses had manifested to the people the providential and permanent action of their God in human affairs; the vocation of the four disciples will give this God as brother and liberator to fallen humanity. All that preceded was transitory, and

<sup>4</sup> It is no more difficult for Him who created the fishes to assemble them at a certain moment in one part of the lake, than it is to preserve in them the instinct of gathering in prodigious numbers at such or such season of the year on the coasts of Newfoundland or of the Baltic to begin at these places the long journey that brings them annually to the coast of France.

<sup>5</sup> The Greek word that Jesus employs, ζῳργῶν, implies that the prey captured is permitted to live. So that, while Peter captured the fish to put them to death, he will take men in order to make them live.

merely prefaced the religious transformation that the fishermen of Galilee are to effect upon a perverted world. In their nets, which they shall draw over all the universe east and west, north, and south, they will gather the peoples of every race, of every tongue, of every civilisation. A prodigy, indeed! and what is the miraculous draught of fishes on the lake when compared with that which these same men, relying on the word of Jesus, have succeeded in effecting in the meshes of the Gospel nets?

## CHAPTER III

# JESUS IN CAPHARNAUM—HIS FIRST DAY

CAPHARNAUM, ITS INHABITANTS—ITS PROSPERITY—ITS SITE—JESUS PREACHES IN THE SYNAGOGUE—HE CURES ONE POSSESSED OF A DEVIL—DIABOLICAL POSSESSION AND ITS EFFECTS—PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER, WHO WAS TAKEN WITH FEVER—WHEN THE SUN HAD SET, THE MULTITUDE, WITH THEIR SICK AND THE POSSESSED, BESET THE HOUSE WHERE JESUS IS—THE LORD DEPARTS THE NEXT DAY. (St. Luke iv, 31-41; St. Mark i, 21-34; St. Matt. viii, 14-17.)

JESUS probably spent that day in the company of His new disciples<sup>1</sup> on the shores of the lake. But He determined to go to Capharnaum on the Sabbath following to preach to the people in the synagogue.

That city played an important part in the Gospel history. A few words uttered by Jesus<sup>2</sup> give us the opinion that it was then at the height of prosperity; but it was a prosperity altogether material, no attention being given to the great questions of the intellectual and moral order.

It is on the side of the little promontory situated

<sup>1</sup> Certainly the day He found the disciples fishing was not the Sabbath. But as, on the other hand, He seems to have only gone to Simon's house on leaving the synagogue, everything would leave us to suppose that He had passed the previous day outside the town.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Matt.* xii, 23.

between Aïn and Tin and Tabigah that we must look for its ancient site. The remains of aqueducts, which we saw for ourselves five years ago, decide the matter.<sup>3</sup> They serve to distribute over the whole plain of Genesareth the irrigating waters of which Josephus speaks. Built on the road of the caravans, the little town was perpetually traversed by strangers, and enriched by the traffic they brought there. Merchants met there to buy or sell the early fruits, fresh and salt fish, corn and grain of all kinds. The Syrian traders willingly unrolled there their bales of rich stuffs, and the Bedouins came to exchange the wool of their sheep for household utensils and clothes. Jews, Pagans, and Proselytes elbowed each other in their money-making pursuits. There were customs<sup>4</sup> and a garrison, for the town was on the frontier line between the kingdoms of Philip and of Antipas.

From this point Jesus could communicate with Galilee on the west, with Gaulanitis and Ituræa on the north, Decapolis and Peræa on the east and south; and after His apostolic journeys He was certain of finding in Peter's house or in that of other faithful friends a free and cordial welcome. Indeed, He became so constant a guest of these excellent families that according to the Gospel<sup>5</sup> Capharnaum was from this time on His official domicile, *His city*, and He paid tribute there as a regularly enrolled inhabitant.<sup>6</sup>

Nothing could be lovelier than the panorama that unfolds at the foot of this little town. From the eminence formed by the rock on which it was built the eye can follow in turn both shores, at that time covered with delight-

<sup>3</sup> See in Vigouroux, *Dict. Biblique, fascic.*, viii, p. 202, article on *Capharnaum*.

<sup>4</sup> *St. Mark* ii, 14, *et parall.*

<sup>5</sup> *St. Matt.* ix, 1; xiii, 1-36; *St. Mark* ii, 1, etc.

<sup>6</sup> *St. Matt.* xvii, 24.



ful dwellings, from Magdala on the right and Wadi-Semak on the left, as far as Bethsaida-Julias on the north, and then rest on the blue waters of the lake beaten by the white wings of countless thousands of birds. Even to-day when the great shadows of the hills that line the western coast begin to descend like gauze curtains over this cradle, where the life of former days seems to slumber forever, one feels the real charm of reverie before this gracious view, and sees how pleased the Son of God must have been to repeat His discourses on heaven amid such natural beauty.

The city was built of black rocks, very hard in spite of their porosity. They had been carefully whitened from time to time, and these luminous tints, in contrast with the sombre rocks or the bits of verdure that framed them, must have had a most pleasing effect beneath the beautiful eastern sun. Various suburbs, or groups of houses upon the shores of the lake, like those upon the Bay of Naples, served to lengthen the city itself. Thus it was that, lying on both slopes of the little promontory, it had on the right, facing the lake, its port where Ain and Tin are now, and on the left toward the east, its suburbs as far as Tabigah, where there are still many insignificant ruins. In that part, no doubt, around a well still in existence and named by Josephus as Capharnaum<sup>7</sup> itself, dwelt the industrial population, forming, as it were, a manufacturing suburb. The plentiful waters of the spring were used partly for the service of the mills, traces of which are yet found. Potters and especially tanners, from whom the name Tabigah seems to be derived, found there all the needed resources for their trades.

More than once, no doubt, did Jesus seat Himself in the midst of these honest workingmen and proclaim to them

<sup>7</sup> *B. J.*, iii, 10, 8: Καφαρναούμ αὐτὴν οἱ ἐπιχώριοι καλοῦσι.

the new era when all men should be deemed equal in the liberty of the children of God, all called to the same felicity, and all united in the same hopes.

Nevertheless He preferred the synagogue for preaching and for rousing the souls of men. A centurion,<sup>8</sup> of foreign birth, but probably a proselyte of the gate, and belonging to the garrison of Capharnaum, had built a particularly beautiful synagogue. He had wished, in this way, to give the Jewish population a proof of his good will and to render to Jehovah his faithful homage.

At Jesus's first appearance the multitude came in haste, for the news of His coming had spread over all the country. They wished to see Him and to hear Him. He spoke to them, and the general impression was that His teaching was quite different from that of the Jewish rabbis. Neither in substance nor in form did His discourses bear any resemblance to the dry commentaries or the minute discussions of the doctors of the synagogue. Jesus took up the living, practical questions of religion, and treated them with an authority and clearness that astonished all. The rabbis relied on the traditions of the ancients; Jesus had reason and man's conscience for His support; the former busied themselves with ridiculous trifles, He with the most serious matters of the moral life. They discussed unceasingly and without reaching any conclusion; He asserted and in a few words proved what He asserted. The multitude did not fail to do justice to the superiority of His teaching and were filled with admiration for Him.

But while they were all thus wrapt in attention to His words, an unlooked-for incident occurred and served to expose in a new light His superior nature. Among the crowds of hearers there was one unfortunate man whose

<sup>8</sup> *St. Luke vii, 2.*

condition should have kept him away from a pious gathering. He was possessed of an unclean spirit. He had listened in silence to this new teacher for some time; but the demon in whose power he was was less patient than he. Satan could not but consider the preacher's triumph odious and intolerable. Every word from the Holy One of God was a shaft that struck him with violence. And now in his fury, no longer placing a check upon his hatred, he broke forth, and, using the voice of the man possessed, he cried out: "Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God!" The assembly, in amazement at an interruption so bold and so little in harmony with the general admiration, wondered what was about to happen. Jesus recognised the voice of Satan the enemy, and scorned his selfish and unwelcome homage. "Hold thy peace," He said menacingly, "and go out of him." At once the unclean spirit, throwing his victim into frightful convulsions, hurled him violently into the middle of the synagogue, and with a loud cry went out of his body. He had not injured him.

The excitement in the assembly was intense. The two powers that disputed the empire of the world, Satan and the Messiah, had just been seen in conflict. Satan had been put to rout before Him in Whose hands was all power over evil spirits as well as over disease and the elements. All were filled with those sentiments of fear that had stirred Peter and his companions after the miraculous draught of fishes, and they said: "What word is this, for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits and they go out?"

For the Jews of this epoch nothing could be more fortunate than the manifestation of this power. The demon's visible influence over this benighted people had assumed

awful proportions, and at all times<sup>9</sup> as Jesus continues His way, we shall find unfortunate beings, given up to diabolical power, who are hastening to seek deliverance. Josephus,<sup>10</sup> asserting the frequency of this terrible phenomenon, thought that it should be attributed to the souls of vicious men who after their death returned to seek a dwelling-place in the bodies of the living. The people, less acquainted with the philosophical theories of Hellenism, were of a different opinion, and Jesus by His actions and by His words established their conviction.<sup>11</sup> They thought that the evil spirits themselves, the fallen angels, companions and instruments of Satan, had power to seize upon a man and to torment him, soul and body at the same time.

In view of what we have said elsewhere of the existence of these superior beings and of their power upon the world, we find no difficulty in accepting literally both the Saviour's words and the Evangelists' assertions.

In fact, there seems to be nothing to prevent evil spirits from contact either with our soul or with our body. They

<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere we have given the general reason of this outbreak of the infernal powers at the time when Jesus appeared. It has been maintained that we should look for the special cause either in the total disappearance of the spirit of prophecy, as in *III Kings* xvi, 14, or in the repulse that God wished to give by these terrible manifestations to the materialistic doctrines of the Sadducees, as in our days the exceptional development of Spiritism seems destined to refute by facts the theories of Positivism. It is more probable that God desired to make known His anger against His faithless people, and to make them comprehend by means of this shameful servitude the full benefit of deliverance by the Messiah.

<sup>10</sup> *B. J.*, vii, 6, 3.

<sup>11</sup> It has been said that He was not charged with the correction of these popular prejudices; but we can see no reason He could have had for permitting them to continue. Religious dogma is deeply concerned in this matter. At all events, no one will pretend that Jesus was obliged to give them yet deeper root; and He would have done this either by His teaching or by His method of proceeding with those possessed, if the popular opinion were not in harmony with His own convictions. Cf. *Luke* ix, 1; x, 19; xi, 21, 22; *Mark* ix, 29.

can, by internal or external representations, excite our imaginations, allure our sensibility and thus disturb our intellect, or even, in some degree, bind our will. The moral state that follows is most extraordinary; the diabolical influence becomes stronger, suggestions more numerous, impressions more vivid. The subject seems to be less and less his own property. The ego is gradually blotted out, not, indeed, annihilated, but put in a condition somewhat like sleep or like lunacy. As a wound or an afflux of blood to the brain or strong sensations of pain can disturb our reason and silence our will, so the demon by substituting himself for these various causes is able to produce the same effects. And why not? Because he is a spirit? But God, too, is a spirit and He acts directly upon us and upon all creation.

As complement to our theory, we must add that it is not illogical to see diabolical possession engendering disease. The devil, entering into man to do him injury, may disturb his health by the very fact that he disturbs his reason; he may cause men to become maniacs, epileptics, furious in anger, deaf, dumb. This is the reason why the Evangelists frequently call the *possessed* the *sick*, and say that Jesus *cured the demoniacs*. Their expressions are quite correct; for ordinarily the sick were possessed, and those possessed were sick.

Yet, it must be observed, that however great its violence, diabolical influence over the possessed is at all times an extrinsic fact. No doubt the demon can force his victim to do or to say what he would do or say himself, as the hypnotist makes the one hypnotised act or speak; but his power never goes so far as to substitute the demon for the human ego. He is always an exterior agent, an exterior evil. That is why this evil itself, since it is not the substance of our liberty, not ourself, can exist in us without

sin. It is a strange phenomenon in any case, and God, in fact, does not, at least ordinarily, grant the demon this awful power except over men who have already freely submitted to the devil's yoke.

Inasmuch as Jesus bore to mankind salvation, deliverance, consolation, it was part of His mission to give succour to these wretched beings whom human science was incapable of relieving. According to Josephus, medicine of different vegetable or mineral substances was used in vain to cure them. Against a supernatural enemy there was required a supernatural force. But, in the synagogue at Capharnaum this force had just made itself known.

Glorified by all, Jesus departed from the assembly and went to the house of Simon Peter.<sup>12</sup> Popular ovations never prevented Him from belonging at all times to His first friends, however poor they were, and Peter had the honour of being His host. It was nearly mid-day.<sup>13</sup> The ceremonies in the synagogue had begun at about nine o'clock in the morning.

On entering they learned that Peter's wife's mother had fallen prey to a violent attack of fever.<sup>14</sup> These illnesses were not rare in the country. The swamps that surround the Jordan before it falls into the Lake of Genesareth send forth dangerous miasmas; and we learn that the physicians did not permit Josephus to pass a single night at

<sup>12</sup> St. Mark says that the house belonged to Simon and Andrew, which implies that the brothers, originally of Bethsaida (*St. John* i, 44), had a domicile at Capharnaum. It was, perhaps, for the sake of deriving greater gain from their fishing that they had selected two establishments in the chief centres on the northern part of the lake.

<sup>13</sup> Josephus informs us that on the Sabbath dinner was eaten at mid-day, on returning from the synagogue. (*Autobiog.*, 54.)

<sup>14</sup> It is known that the medical science of the ancients, from Hippocrates to Galen, *de diarr. Febr.*, i, cited in Wetstein, specialised one kind of fever called "the great fever." Now whereas Matthew and Mark speak of the sick one as *παρέσσουσα*, Luke specifies: *συνεχομένη πυρετῶ μεγάλῳ*. Such accuracy well befits a physician. (Cf. *Col.* iv, 14.)

Capharnaum <sup>15</sup> after his fall from the horse, but without loss of time, in order to avoid a renewal of the fever, had him borne away to Tarichæ. The joy of the family was disturbed by this incident, and Peter's wife must have appeared particularly troubled by the need of her mother's assistance on so great an occasion. They told Jesus of her illness, and asked Him if He could do anything for the sick woman. Was He, who gave help to the unknown, to close His ears to the request of friends? He was led to the bedside of the poor woman, and, leaning toward her, He immediately took her by the hand and raised her up. This was the means He took of entering into spiritual communication with her whom He wished to cure. By His look or by His words, He doubtless conveyed something that would prepare her to merit a miracle. For He at once uttered His command to the fever, and the fever disappeared so promptly and so completely that the woman arose and began to serve the guests.

In this gathering were Peter and Andrew, James and John, evident proof that former relations had served to bring together again these two groups of brothers.<sup>16</sup>

The evening was spent, no doubt, in pious conversation. In the meantime the whole city was thinking of the two miraculous cures we have just recounted, and the people impatiently awaited the setting of the sun so that, the Sabbath having ended, they might be permitted to bring all the sick and those possessed to Jesus.

That evening, in fact, the people came in crowds before Simon's house. The sick of every kind were there. Jesus

<sup>15</sup> Josephus, *Autobiog.*, 72.

<sup>16</sup> This cure is incorrectly placed, in *Matt.* viii, 14, much later, during another sojourn at Capharnaum. The reason doubtless is that to show forth more plainly the power of the young Thaumaturgus, this Evangelist endeavours to group together, not in chronological order but rather didactically, the stories of the miracles (viii-ix, 34) which took place after the Sermon on the Mount.

cured them all simply by imposing His hands upon them. The demoniacs, in particular, were there in large numbers. He delivered them, as, in the morning, He had delivered the one in the synagogue. But the demons, fleeing before His authority, proclaimed His divine character with loud cries. It may be that they sought in this way to provoke a premature religious agitation, and to compromise the work of the Messiah. Jesus threatened them and prevented them from saying that He was the Christ.

The multitude of the sick ceased calling for the all-powerful intervention of the Saviour only when the night was far advanced, and those who had been informed of this good fortune when it was too late, determined to take their turn the next morning. But at an early hour, before daylight, Jesus had departed.



## CHAPTER IV

### JESUS VISITS THE NEIGHBOURING TOWNS—HE CURES A LEPER

THE CAPHARNAITES MUST HAVE TIME TO MEDITATE ON THE MIRACLES THEY HAVE WITNESSED—JESUS GOES ON TO THE NEIGHBOURING TOWNS—BETHSAIDA, COROZAIN, AND THE OTHER TOWNS—A LEPER COMES TO JESUS—HIS DISEASE—JESUS CURES HIM—TWOFOOLD COMMAND TO BE SILENT AND TO FULFIL THE LAW. (St. Mark i, 35-45; St. Luke iv, 42-44, and v, 12-16; St. Matt. viii, 1-4.)

VERY probably Jesus wished to leave these people, now filled with enthusiasm, time for some reflection and for the drawing of salutary conclusions from the miracles they had witnessed. Their excessive eagerness in hastening to His side was visibly selfish. The ardour with which they sought their cures was not a proof that a normal and correct faith had begun to live in the depths of their hearts. At any rate He had accomplished enough to prove His mission to the people of Capharnaum; it was for them now to reflect upon what they had seen and to judge whether it were not reasonable to receive the author of so many miracles as the Messiah.

Therefore, on the day following this Sabbath of miracles, when the multitude thought to find the Saviour at Simon Peter's and to continue the demonstrations of

the day before, it was learned that He was no longer there. All, Simon among the first, set out to find Him. They came upon Him in a solitary place where He had retired to pray. For the Son was pleased to be alone with the Father to give expression to His love, to His gratitude, to His pious desires. "All seek for thee," His disciples said to Him. And the people, coming up directly, joined with them to endeavour to keep Him among them. A thousand suppliant voices besought Him not to leave them; but Jesus beheld His duty elsewhere, and gently responded: "Let us go into the neighbouring towns and cities, that I may preach there also; for to this purpose am I come." Thence he set out to pass among the surrounding places, preaching in the synagogues, curing the sick, and delivering the possessed.

Galilee, as Josephus says, was at that time well peopled. There were no less than two hundred and four cities or towns,<sup>1</sup> in a country badly provided with roads. Its population amounted to three million inhabitants speaking, with an accent that caused them to be ridiculed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a language half Syriac, half Hebrew, which we call Aramean. Making allowance for exaggeration by the Jewish author, it is nevertheless true that the Saviour had before Him a field worthy of His zeal and His mercy.

In all probability He confined His first mission to the towns on the northern shore of the lake, Bethsaida, Corozain, and the others.

Bethsaida, the home of Philip, Peter, and Andrew,<sup>2</sup> must have been a short distance only from Capharnaum, and we should not be far from the truth if we located it at Tell-Hum. In this case, we must suppose two localities of the

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiog.*, 46.

<sup>2</sup> *St. John* i, 44; xii, 21.

same name on the northern side of the lake, one at Tell-Hum and the other which Josephus locates in lower Gaulanitis, on the banks of the Jordan.<sup>3</sup> The latter, built by the Tetrarch Philip, became a rather important town under the name of Bethsaida-Julias. As the name Bethsaida means "House of Fishermen," it would not be surprising if there were several fishing establishments of the same name on this shore of the lake where the fish are wonderfully abundant.<sup>4</sup>

Others, and we have been of the number, suppose that there was only one town called Bethsaida. They place it near the spot where the Jordan flows into the lake. But, it was enlarged and improved by the Tetrarch to such an extent that, bearing the name of Julia, the daughter of Augustus, it subsequently extended from the right to the left shore of the lake. Thus the fishing town would have been situated to the west, and the new town to the east of the river. Our latest exploration of the marshy islets formed in the Jordan at this spot, shows us the improbability of this hypothesis, and that Bethsaida-Julias was certainly a different town from Bethsaida, the home of Peter.

Corozain, if we identify it with the ruins of Kerazeth, which we also visited, would have lain more to the north and inland. There we find traces of a large and handsome synagogue, but it is only to be reached by winding and almost impracticable paths. Assuredly, this town, in the midst of wild and rocky mountains, must from the beginning have been outside the line of communication with the

<sup>3</sup> *B. J.*, ii, 9, 1; iii, 10, 7.

<sup>4</sup> In our excursions toward the northern side of the lake, our boatmen have always asked us as a favour to stop in these parts to fish. In May, 1899, we saw in the space of ten minutes sixteen pounds of fish taken, amongst the islets formed by the laurels and rose-bushes and other shrubs which extend into the lake.

rest of the country. One would rather call it a place of refuge, where Jews later on could hide themselves, than a proud and flourishing city, such as Jesus speaks of. The remnants of the synagogue, columns, architraves, sculptured in the black and porous stone of the country, have appeared to us to be more ancient than those of Tell-Hum.

However this may be, it is truly in these places, and in returning probably to Saphet and Giscala, Kedes, Rama, Hazor, and the other cities scattered among the mountains, that Jesus began His Galilean ministry. He was the sower who sowed the good seed in haste, and had no time to wait to see the harvest. Numerous miracles confirmed His word and doctrine.

In one of these cities Jesus cured a leper.<sup>5</sup> Leprosy was quite common among the Jews. They had contracted it in Egypt, where, crowded together in the land of Gesen and devoured by want, they had greatly suffered. Since then, notwithstanding the comparative prosperity of the nation, this disease had remained hereditary in certain families. Yet there were not wanting legal prescriptions for purging the country wholly of the disease, and they were applied even with severity. In the law of Moses, the leper was obliged to keep apart from all associations until the disease had reached that period when it is no longer contagious. The miserable man, covered with unsightly sores which finally spread over the entire body, was doomed to dwell in the desert places<sup>6</sup> with companions quite as abandoned in misfortune as himself. For all these woful beings food was left in appointed places, and they

<sup>5</sup> To be convinced that the Synoptics have not copied each other, not even taken their histories from the same source, we have only to compare the three different accounts they give us of this miracle. If they differ as to time, place, and details, they all agree identically in the words of the leper and of Jesus, words carefully preserved in the oral Gospel.

<sup>6</sup> *IV Kings* vii, 3; *St. Luke* xvii, 12.

came to take it furtively like wild beasts. In the most painful period of the disease the whole body swelled up; the nails fell off the feet and hands; the vital juices, changed in essence, escaped from eyes, nose, and mouth. The voice became hard and shrill. If the stricken one survived the crisis, his entire body, even to his hair, became of an astonishing whiteness. This was the time to present himself to the priests in Jerusalem in order to be pronounced pure and thus freed from the interdiction that separated the leper from the rest of mankind. Though the cure was not yet complete, the disease could not be communicated to others, and all hygienic precautions in behalf of society were now needless.

The condition of the leper mentioned in the Gospel was quite serious. The leprosy had spread over all his body. How did he succeed in mingling with the crowd and in a city?<sup>7</sup> It may be that the astonishing tales told of Jesus and the strong desire he had of obtaining his cure had pushed him beyond all the prescriptions of the law. Besides, the lepers were not absolutely forbidden to travel; they were simply obliged to have the head uncovered, the chin enveloped, and to cry out, when any one approached, "Beware; I am a leper." To forget any of these precautions was to expose himself to extreme penalties.

However, the leper here mentioned had disguised himself as best he could, until, perceiving Jesus, he was able, suddenly and to the surprise of all, to present himself before him.<sup>8</sup> Falling on his knees, he hid that hideous face against the ground, and in a suppliant voice he said: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He has

<sup>7</sup> *St. Luke v, 12.*

<sup>8</sup> The expressions *St. Luke* in particular employs, *καὶ ἰδὸν, κ. τ. λ.*, without any verb, seem to imply that the leper came forward unexpected, without having been seen, like an apparition.

faith, then, in the power of Jesus, and to His goodness he resigns himself. The two virtues, faith and resignation, that could best attest his merit, are seen, indeed, in his brief prayer, and he moves Him from Whom he seeks salvation to the very depths of His being.

The crowd wonders what will happen. Full of compassion, the Lord looks upon him, and, extending His hand, despite the Mosaic prohibition, He is about to touch the foul, contagious disease. The multitude is visibly agitated. They know not that the Master of the law makes the law, and that the Saviour can even touch the far more nauseating leprosy of our sins without danger of defilement. "I will," He says with the serenity of one who breaks the letter of the divine law that its spirit may be made to live, "I will; be thou cleansed."<sup>9</sup> At once the leprosy disappeared. The hand of the Lord had not become impure by its contact with the leper; but the leper had been made pure by having felt the touch of a hand so holy. "And He charged him that he should tell no man:<sup>10</sup> but go, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleans-

<sup>9</sup> There is scarcely any need of mentioning the rationalistic explanation according to which the leper, as soon as he was completely cured, simply besought Jesus to perform the function of the priest by declaring him clean, and thus to save him the trouble of going up to Jerusalem. There is no such statement in the Gospel story. The leprosy is pictured there in the extreme stage. (Cf. *Ex.* iv, 6, with *IV Kings* v, 27.) The leper is not declared clean; the disease is suppressed: "and immediately the leprosy departed from him." The word *καθαρίσαι*, "to purify," is, with the Evangelists, synonymous with "to heal"; they employ it here with relation to the uncleanness caused by leprosy.

<sup>10</sup> This is the best way of translating the expression of *Mark* i, 43, *ἐξέβαλεν*, which has made some commentators think that, contrary to all seeming, the miracle was worked in a synagogue. In reality, nothing in the Gospel warrants such a supposition. *Luke* v, 12, says simply that Jesus was then in one of the towns He visited. If *Matt.* viii, 1, places this cure at the moment when the Master came down from the Mountain of the Beatitudes, it is only by that artificial combination of which we have already spoken. The command given to tell no one excludes all idea of the possibility of Jesus being surrounded by a crowd at the moment of working the miracle.

ing according as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”<sup>11</sup>

The prohibition to speak of the miracle can be explained in several ways. According to some, Jesus was once more desirous of avoiding an outbreak of popular enthusiasm at the expense of His real Messianic work. According to others, He wished the leper to profit by the favour received, in silence and retirement. But the Master's words indicate an evident connection between the command to keep silence and that of showing himself to the priest. Knowing the evil dispositions of the hierarchical party, could He have desired before all things, to force them to acknowledge the supernatural power which had worked the cure, when they learned by whom it had been effected? Or, may he not have feared that the healed leper, in the expansiveness of his joy, and in answering the questions, and receiving the congratulations of his friends, might forget to fulfil the legal obligations? This seems the more probable.

Jesus, although putting Himself above all law, in order to give health and happiness to a stricken man, by no means intended to suppress the law itself. On the contrary, He wishes the priests to know it. They have enough grievances against Him in Jerusalem, and He does not wish to increase them.<sup>12</sup> The leper must go, therefore, and make his visit to the Temple and his offering of two birds, one of which will be immolated and the other set at

<sup>11</sup> These words, *εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς*, which all three Synoptics preserve, have been variously interpreted. The word *αὐτοῖς* cannot relate to the priest, which is in the singular. We must then give it a collective sense and say that his appearance before the priest would establish in the eyes of all men the complete cure of the leprosy, the almighty power of Jesus, and the respect shown to the law.

<sup>12</sup> This hostility of the Jerusalem priesthood might surprise us if we possessed only the Synoptic Gospels, since, according to them, Jesus would not appear to have as yet been in the Holy City. But John tells us of the struggles and animosity which the other three give us to understand, but without mentioning them.

liberty.<sup>13</sup> Every one shall thus be witness of his respect for the prescriptions of the law. The time is not yet come for despising the authority of the ancient priesthood. The law of Moses is to remain intact until the whisper of the Holy Spirit shall bury it with honour and bring to life in its place a new religion.

The first part of the command given by Jesus was not observed. The leper was too deeply moved with joy and gratitude to keep silent. He had no sooner quitted the presence of Jesus than he began to publish all that had happened to him.

<sup>13</sup> *Lev. xiv, 4.*



## CHAPTER V

### RETURN TO CAPHARNAUM—TRIUMPHANT DEMONSTRATION BEFORE THE PHARISEES

JESUS IS TO TEACH RATHER THAN TO ACCOMPLISH MIRACLES—HE RETURNS TO CAPHARNAUM—SCRIBES AND PHARISEES AWAIT HIM THERE—THE INCIDENT OF THE PARALYTIC WHO WAS LET DOWN THROUGH THE ROOF—JESUS IN CLAIMING THE RIGHT TO FORGIVE SINS IS EITHER GOD OR A BLASPHEMER—THE CURE OF THE PARALYTIC SOLVES THE QUESTION—THE PHARISEES ARE CONFOUNDED. (St. Luke v, 17-26; St. Mark ii, 1-12; St. Matt. ix, 1-8.)

As we have just observed, it has seemed possible to many that Jesus' idea in commanding silence on the part of the leper was to restrain the popular enthusiasm which threatened to distort the true character of His mission. The Messiah, in fact, was come not to do miracles, but to teach and to save mankind. His works, however astonishing, were to be the frame of the picture; the thing to be placed in prominence was His doctrine. But the accessory was being readily accepted for the essential, and as the fame of the wonder-worker spread abroad, multitudes hastened in greater numbers to ask for miracles. When they were granted the crowds were filled with joy and admiration. Indeed, they no longer found either the time or the tran-

quillity necessary for the fruitful reception of the teachings that were to transform souls and to found the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, therefore, that He might avoid these eager and enthusiastic demonstrations, determined not to appear again in the towns. The crowds followed Him then even into the rural parts. Only the most isolated retreats could from time to time free Him from the demands and the curiosity of the people, by affording Him an opportunity to find again in His Father's presence those effusions of love and prayer which were the strength and comfort of His human life. His zeal soon brought Him back to those who sought Him.

However, since He had either to renounce all evangelising or submit to this selfish agitation on the part of the people, Jesus deemed it better to return to Capharnaum, before entering upon His apostolic journeyings, and to strengthen the first germs of good which He had sown in that place. He, therefore, embarked in a boat, and, in this way escaping from all that followed Him, He returned to that town, henceforward His home-city.

Here a kind of religious delegation, an element somewhat novel outside of Judea, and quite unknown in a town so unlettered as Capharnaum, patiently awaited Him. They were doctors of the law and Pharisees assembled from all parts, even from Jerusalem, to hear His doctrine and to judge of His works. His fame was becoming universal, and so the hierarchical party, with whom we have seen Him in conflict in the Holy City, was closely watching Him. As the most recent news had come from Capharnaum, and as Jesus seemed to have established there His centre of action, it was decided to send to that place a committee of inquisitors. Nothing was easier than to obtain men ready for this work. One of the vain ambi-

tions of the rabbis of this epoch was to be called upon to make an exhibition of their knowledge, and to judge of that of others. They were to be seen, mounted on asses, making regular rounds of the country,<sup>1</sup> visiting the schools, the synagogues, and gladly accepting the work of solving difficulties submitted to them. As, ordinarily, they had a manual profession, they worked while travelling, and even devoted themselves to trade. In this way they were enabled to live without being a burden to any. Their influence was, indeed, great, for the people gave to those who explained the law a share of the respect they had for the law itself.

As soon as they learned in Capharnaum that Jesus had arrived, they betook themselves, the Pharisees and doctors leading the way, to the house where He had taken lodging. It was doubtless Peter's house. An immense crowd made their way inside and even into the vestibule; for they were absolutely eager to hear the new preacher.

But, while the entrance was thus obstructed, some men arrived bearing on their shoulders a litter containing a poor paralytic who besought a cure. All requests to make the multitude separate and permit this group to enter were useless. Nevertheless, the sick man and his friends declared that so good an opportunity of calling upon Jesus to prove His supreme power was not to be abandoned. Therefore, in order surely to succeed, they had recourse to a singular stratagem.

In the Orient the roofs of the houses are generally platforms surrounded by balustrades. They may be reached by means of two stairways, one outside, the other inside. Hence the question which the rabbis consider with regard to the occupant of the upper story: "Ought he to ascend

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Targum on the Canticle of Deborah.

to his tenement by the inside or by the outside?"<sup>2</sup> The bearers of the paralytic carried him up the outside staircase to the roof and there they prepared to let him down into the interior. We may conclude that Jesus was delivering His discourse either in the court-yard, or in the cloister which even in ordinary houses opens on this court, or in the principal apartment down-stairs, corresponding to the modern divan.<sup>3</sup> If Jesus was in the court it was the border of the terrace with its brick balustrade that was removed. If He was under the cloister or more probably in the divan, an opening had to be made in the terrace itself large enough to let down the sick man.<sup>4</sup> Lively, indeed, was the faith that thus surmounted walls, and, in spite of all obstacles, succeeded in laying the paralytic at the feet of Jesus, as an irresistible prayer. The Saviour admired it, and in view of this, each one looked for a miracle. To the great surprise of the assembly Jesus simply said to the paralytic: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."<sup>5</sup> The curing of the diseased, then, is clearly not the limit of His power; He claims an influence over

<sup>2</sup> Bava-Mezia, fol. 117, i.

<sup>3</sup> The opening through which light and air were furnished to the divan was covered with a curtain or with bricks conveniently arranged according as the occupants desired to protect themselves from the sun or from the rain. Those who imagine that tiles had to be removed from above the court, have not seen the roofs or terraces of the Orient. There are sometimes bricks, but never tiles.

<sup>4</sup> The expression in St. Luke, *διὰ τῶν κεράμων*, and more particularly that in St. Mark, *ἀπεστέγασαν τὴν στέγην*, indicate a real opening made in the roof. This opinion has caused great trouble, on account of the inconvenience that such demolition would effect. We must conclude that it was done with sufficient precaution and under conditions favourable enough to offset any discomfort on the part of the assembly above whose heads the opening was made. It is not uncommon, even to-day, when it is too warm in the divan, and the assembly is attracted by some subject of interest or is gathered at a banquet, to see obliging hands partly uncover the terrace or the roof.

<sup>5</sup> From this many think that the paralytic bore in his infirmity the punishment of an irregular life, and that, moved by repentance, he came to ask for health, firmly resolved to be more virtuous in the future.

souls far more amazing than His influence over bodies. That which is inmost in man, conscience, Jesus can purify and, by His grace, recall to the higher life by suppressing in it all the elements of death. This is God's exclusive right. For, in truth, if sin is an attack upon God's majesty, to Him Who is offended alone belongs the right to remit and to pardon. The Scribes and Pharisees argued in like manner. Hence, their surprise changing to sentiments of ill-restrained indignation, they murmured: "Why doth this man speak thus? he blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only?" It was true. To speak thus, he must be either a blasphemer or a God. Jesus takes up the dilemma; He had foreseen it. His demonstration will admit of no objection. To be consistent, His adversaries will be bound to acknowledge that, as He is not a blasphemer, since He works miracles, He must really be God. "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" He said to them. Thus He, Who a moment before had read, in the soul of the paralytic, sins to be forgiven and dispositions sufficient to gain this pardon, now discerns in the souls of His adversaries all the difficulties that they encounter and the theological perplexities amid which they are gone astray. "Which is easier to say," He adds: "Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise, take up thy bed and walk?" Neither one nor the other is easy for man, but both are easy to God. Logically, if Jesus can, in a moment, cause a paralytic to walk, it is evident that He was guilty of no lie, when, shortly before, He claimed for Himself the power of remitting sins. The visible work will be the guarantee of the invisible. Those present know it well, and they anxiously wonder what is about to occur. If the miracle is done, the doctors of the law are confounded; if it does not take place, Jesus is lost.

No one responded; the test was accepted. Then in the

midst of general silence, with calm majesty and full of authority, Jesus said: "That you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee, Arise; take up thy bed and go into thy house." At the same moment, as if His word had brought back warmth into the torpid limbs of the sick man and reawakened life in his stiffened joints, the paralytic arose, took up the litter upon which he had been let down, and departed to his house, triumphant in the midst of the astonished and enthusiastic crowd.

It was a clear and positive proof. God alone can remit sins; Jesus claims to have this power; He proves by a miracle that He has it; the miracle is the undeniable seal of truth that God places upon human words; therefore, Jesus Christ is God.

The Scribes and Pharisees withdrew vanquished and in deep thought, while the people, after their first impression of pious fear, glorified God, saying: "We never saw the like!"

## CHAPTER VI

# JESUS OPENS THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH TO THE PUBLICANS

THE PUBLICANS OR TOLL-GATHERERS OF THE JEWS—VOCATION OF LEVI OR MATTHEW—THE BANQUET OFFERED TO JESUS—THE PHARISEES AND THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN ARE SCANDALISED IN TURN—THE PHYSICIAN GOES TO THE SICK—THERE IS NO FAST WHILE THE FEAST LASTS—THE NEW PIECE ON THE OLD GARMENT—THE NEW WINE AND THE OLD BOTTLES. (St. Luke v, 27-39; St. Mark ii, 13-22; St. Matt. ix, 9-17.)

HE Who had just astonished His enemies by an act of His supreme power, did not hesitate to jostle their dearest prejudices by an act of mercy.

In the eyes of a true Jew no one was more detestable than a toll-gatherer or publican. This hated class, gathering the imposts in the name of Roman authority,<sup>1</sup> seemed to have become the living personification of foreign tyranny, of injustice, and of violence. When the tax-gatherer was of pagan origin, he was detested as being

<sup>1</sup> We commonly translate the word *τελώνης* (from *τέλος*, "tax," and *ἀνέομαι*, "I buy") "publican," a name given to tax-gatherers by the Synoptics designating really a class of collectors higher in position than the one mentioned here. When Rome had decided to farm out to particular persons the various imposts she wished to levy, there were formed wealthy associations of citizens, belonging usually to the equestrian order, who took upon themselves, at their own risk and peril, the burden of collect-

also impure; if he was a Jew, he was abhorred as an apostate and traitor to his country. So that all those unfortunate men who, through cupidity or through necessity, lent their aid in this way to the general collectors sent from Rome, were commonly likened to thieves and public sinners. In reality, by force of circumstances they were not of any great worth. Hence the Jews refused them the right of giving testimony. They went so far even as to declare that penance and the remission of sins were to them almost impossible.<sup>2</sup> The general management of the fiscal administration scattered them at intervals along the roads most frequented by caravans, on the frontier lines of different provinces, and wherever the right of way, of entrance, of exit, of sale might be sought. From this point of view Capharnaum was of exceptional importance, for not only was this town traversed by the great commercial road leading from Damascus to Ptolemais, but besides it was the mart for a vast quantity of merchandise transported by boat across the lake.

It was, therefore, a great station for tax-gatherers. Everything indicates that several of this class had heard Jesus and were moved by His words; but their well-known inferiority forbade them even the thought of coming to Him. One of them, Levi, or Matthew, of whom we have spoken elsewhere, was farther advanced than the others toward a generous conversion. Jesus, Whose divine eye scans the depths of all hearts, was not unaware of his good disposition, and He awaited a propitious moment to make

ing all fiscal dues, and bound themselves to pay a sum, settled in advance, into the public treasury (*in publicum*). (Cf. *Liv.*, xxxii, 7.) Hence their name "publican." They were represented in the provinces by collectors who had under their orders custom-house officers. It is of these last that the Gospel speaks when it mentions the publicans. It is true that they might well have borne this generic name, since they were looked upon as labouring for the public treasury as well as their hierarchical chiefs.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot, *Harm. Evang.*, p. 525.



him take the decisive step that would attach him to His following.

One day our Lord, accompanied by the multitude as He returned from the shore of the lake, where He loved to preach, re-entered the city. As He passed in front of the custom-house He came upon Levi, the son of Alpheus, seated at his desk. The tax-gatherer, grievously troubled at heart between the desire to become better and his unwillingness to leave a lucrative post, looked with envious eye upon the disciples who surrounded Jesus and were His ordinary associates. So holy a jealousy could not but do him honour. It is with souls as with fruit. There is a crisis of maturity. The final breath of grace is only needed to pass over them, and they fall upon God's bosom, where they were awaited. Levi had reached this critical point of the moral life. Jesus, inviting him with look and gesture, simply said: "Follow me." At once, as if he were awaiting only this call, the tax-gatherer arose, and, leaving his desk, his profession, his friends, where they were, he gave himself up to follow the Master.

It is probable that, in commemoration of this great grace, Levi then changed his name to that of Matthew,<sup>3</sup> *gift of God*, by which name he was ordinarily designated in the primitive Church. It was, indeed, a singular gift of God that transformed the tax-collector, the pariah of Jewish society, into a disciple and soon after into a prince of the new society. In order to celebrate a day so remarkable, Matthew gave a great banquet, to which he invited his fellow tax-gatherers. At this farewell feast he desired to put them in communication with Jesus; and, already experiencing the apostolic zeal in the depths of his heart, he

<sup>3</sup>The passage in St. Matt. ix, 9, *Ματθαῖον λεγόμενον*, implies that this name took the place of another less known. In Hebrew *Mattaï* means, more exactly, "gratified," and *Amattaï*, "the faithful one."

hoped to guide them to the point he himself had reached. The new era was begun for the unfortunate; it must be inaugurated with a family celebration.

Jesus, faithful to His principles of mercy and pardon for all, did not scruple to take His place in a gathering that was suspicious and apparently compromising. Thus the Pharisees and the doctors of the law who were watching Him were greatly scandalised. The same man who, in the morning, proved His divine mission by a miracle, had the audacity in the evening to sit at a table where tax-gatherers boisterously clasped hands with public sinners and people of base lives! They, therefore, uttered their objections to such conduct, and the disciples coming to the banquet, they even took apart and questioned them, saying: "Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" Was it their intention to separate them from the Master by inciting them to doubt and to scruple, or did they find it more to their purpose of securing an easy triumph to address themselves to ignorant men who were unable to respond, rather than to Jesus, whose crushing retorts they feared? It matters little. Their objection reached the Master's ear; He said simply: "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill." This saying, borrowed, no doubt, from popular parlance, seems to be a topical reply to the objection raised. If it be true, indeed, as they think, that the observance of the law and of the supererogatory rites added to it is sufficient to render a man just and holy, then the Pharisees are thoroughly irreproachable, their spiritual health is perfect, and the care of the heavenly physician is superfluous. On the other hand, every one looks upon the tax-gatherers as being ill, and so seriously ill that their condition seems beyond all hope. It is, therefore, right for Jesus to leave the former and to come charitably to the aid of the latter. If

the Pharisees desire Him to minister unto them—and it is far from certain that they have no need of it—they must begin by avowing themselves sinners. Then the Saviour will eagerly hasten to their side to effect their recovery.

His mission is to devote Himself to the unfortunate who seek Him: “Go then,” He says, “and learn what this meaneth: ‘I will have mercy and not sacrifice.’”<sup>4</sup> The charitable act that a man does for his fellow has greater value in God’s sight than sacrifice itself which appears to be the highest expression of our religion and our devotion. Hence the reason why Jesus is more devoted to the saving of abandoned sinners than to the offering of victims in the Temple or to the practice of superfluous purifications and abstinences. He knows that His zeal for souls gives greater honour to God than all the devotions of pharisaical formalism. Sinners await Him, He will not desert them. This would be to forget the chief object of His mission. He adds: “I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance.”

Baffled again on this point, when they were certain of victory, the enemies of Jesus almost immediately found other grievances. This time the Pharisees were not alone. To give greater strength to their new recriminations they had brought with them some of the followers of John the Baptist, and these they craftily placed in front, while they themselves kept in the background. They<sup>5</sup> said to Him: “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, whereas Thy disciples do not fast?” Before it was the company at the

<sup>4</sup> *Osee* vi, 6: “For I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than holocausts.”

<sup>5</sup> In *Luke* v, 33, it is the Pharisees and the Scribes who speak; in *Mark* ii, 18, it is the disciples of John and the Pharisees together; in *Matt.* ix, 14, it is only the disciples of John—another variant difficult to explain if there was one common written source.

feast that had scandalised them; now it is the feast itself. It may be, as St. Mark <sup>6</sup> seems to hint, that the banquet took place on a day when the Pharisees and the disciples of John were observing a rigorous fast. Yet it is probable that the fault was found rather with Jesus' ordinary line of conduct than with a passing event. Besides, we shall soon see that His adversaries speak of Him as an eater and drinker in order to make known the little respect He had for the fasts established by their formalist and absolutely arbitrary rigorism. The Lord, unmoved and with gracious suavety, made answer: "Can you make the children of the bridegroom <sup>7</sup> fast, whilst the bridegroom is with them?" If the disciples of John had not forgotten their Master's discourses, they must have recognised in this the beautiful picture the Precursor had drawn long before <sup>8</sup> in explaining his work and the part the Messiah was to take in the religious restoration that Israel awaited. They were reminded of it now as the affectionate reply that should close their lips. As the Precursor has said, He is the true Bridegroom, and the preaching of the Gospel is the time of the wedding, or the religious alliance of God's Envoy with the society He comes to establish. Why, then, ask what the Pharisees in practical life would not venture to exact? For they do not bind themselves to fast when they are present at a wedding-feast. "Besides," continues Jesus with an air of sadness, as He suggestively casts a prophetic glance into the future, "the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them;

<sup>6</sup> *St. Mark* ii, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Nothing is more touching than the condescension of Jesus when He speaks of His disciples. They are His intimate friends, His brothers, the children of the nuptial chamber, in the Hebrew expression He employs, to show how completely they are initiated into the life of the Church and into the affectionate relations between the bride and the bridegroom.

<sup>8</sup> *St. John* iii, 29.

then shall they fast in those days." The issue of the conflict now on is known to Him; He makes it evident to His adversaries, and on this occasion more clearly so than when He promised to rebuild the temple, or when He spoke of the Son of Man raised up above the earth like the brazen serpent. The Bridegroom shall be taken away, borne off by violence; He expects it, and the very men to whom He speaks are to be the criminal actors of this awful drama. Then shall come days of woe and of suffering for the disciples. Dragged before the tribunals, condemned to most terrible tortures, to death, no longer by fasting and in tears, but by martyrdom and in blood shall they found the Church.

In the meantime, what would be gained by hastening to subject them to premature mortification? It would only fill them with discouragement and despair. "No man," He says with lofty familiarity, "putteth a piece from a new garment upon an old garment; otherwise he both rendeth the new, and the piece taken from the new agreeth not with the old." The disciples are as yet men of the ancient Judaism; if, while permitting them their former practices, Jesus were to impose upon them some portion of His own religion, by such patchwork He would compromise all. On the one hand, Judaism is not sufficiently powerful to support the new religious idea, and, on the other, Christianity is not to be bestowed in fragments in order to reanimate the religion of the Pharisees. When the hour shall have struck, these citizens of the Kingdom of God will cast off the old garment of legality according to Moses, and put on the new cloak of Christian spirituality. Then the law of mortification as found among the disciples may be compared with that among the Pharisees, and it shall be proclaimed on which side true heroism is discovered. For the present, Jesus has every considera-

tion for souls as yet without experience and of little generosity.

“And no man,” He goes on, “putteth new wine into old bottles; otherwise the new wine will break the bottles, and it will be spilled and the bottles will be lost. But the new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved.” He repeats the same thought as before, but under a new figure. The bottles that were passed around toward the end of the feast had naturally suggested this graceful comparison. He sees in this new, glowing, generous wine, now served, a symbol of the spirituality characteristic of His religion. It would be wrong immediately to place it in His disciples, filled, as they are, with their old dispositions; they would be unable to sustain it. For the time being it is enough to strive to effect a renewal of their souls now vitiated by passions and by an ill-understood religion. When He shall have them retempered, recast in a new mould, in a word, regenerated, He will place before them, together with all the other precepts, the law of mortification which is the sinew of Christian morality. At present those carnal ears would not comprehend that which is beyond the powers of nature. “No man,” adds Jesus, with a kind of amiable gaiety, “drinking old, hath presently a mind to new; for he saith, the old is better.” For new wine, even though superior in quality, produces by its tartness a disagreeable impression on one who drinks it for the first time, and makes him long for a liquor less fine, perhaps, but whose bitter, sharp taste has been softened by the lapse of years. It is difficult to become accustomed to it, and some respite is desired that so radical a change may be received only little by little. Thus we may perceive, in this quite appropriate amenity, that the Saviour’s thought is to make Himself everything to every man in order to lead all to God. Having, in his mercy,

opened the gates of the Messianic Kingdom to the meanest of sinners, He intends, moreover, to be cautious in leading on feeble souls, and to lay the new law entirely before them only when He has made them able to bear it.

The ancients loved to discourse at table, and it was not an unusual thing to find philosophy or politics reserved for the end of a feast, and the most burning questions then taken up. For it seems that, at this moment, the gathering, accustomed to breathe the same atmosphere of intimacy, and knowing already, through the common interchange of ideas, the opinions of all, forms an audience most happily disposed in favour of whoever may speak, especially if he has already shown by his words the superiority of his mind. Jesus readily lent Himself to the customs of His time and of His country. We shall see how, on more than one occasion, at feasts, He treats, with a familiarity that is sublime, the most delicate points of His teaching, and at times provokes, at times solves, the malicious objections of His enemies. It was at His farewell banquet, at the Last Supper, that He gave utterance to the most beautiful discourses that the ear of man has ever heard.

Crushed by His logic, as gracious as it was irresistible, and disconcerted by His charity, the Pharisees could say nothing. But now an unexpected event set Jesus before them once more as a Worker of miracles. So fair a day could not end more gloriously than by revealing Him as the Sovereign Master, not of nature alone, but of death.

## CHAPTER VII

# TWO GREAT MIRACLES COMPLETE THE GLORIFICATION OF JESUS IN THE EYES OF THE MULTITUDE

A RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE, JAIRUS, SEEKS THE CURE OR EVEN THE RESURRECTION OF HIS YOUNG DAUGHTER—ON THE WAY JESUS BECOMES AWARE THAT AN EFFECT OF HIS POWER IS PRODUCED—THE WOMAN WHO IS DELIVERED FROM A FLOW OF BLOOD—BERENICE OR VERONICA—GREAT MOURNING AT THE HOUSE OF JAIRUS—TALITHA KOUMI—THE CHILD RECOVERS LIFE. (St. Luke viii, 40-56; St. Mark v, 21-43; St. Matt. ix, 18-26.)

“As He was speaking,”<sup>1</sup> says St. Matthew, a man made his entrance into the banquet hall. He was a ruler

<sup>1</sup>Some have set down the two miracles we are about to recount apart from Levi's banquet. Doubtless the connections between the majority of the events that fill the present phase of the Saviour's life are not very close, and we shall prove that we, like other biographers, have no fear of seeming frequently to break through them. If the general expressions that seem to connect these events one with another were taken literally one might say that Our Lord's ministry in Galilee did not last two months. But each day would thus be filled beyond all probability. Nevertheless, in the present instance it is difficult violently to separate events that must have occurred in succession, according to the words of St. Matthew. For he distinctly says that Jesus was yet speaking to the people at the banquet and to the Pharisees when Jairus presented himself. On the other hand,



of the synagogue and his name was Jairus.<sup>2</sup> His drawn features, his tears, his eagerness plainly bespoke his deep-felt grief. Father of a child twelve years of age, he was about to receive a cruel blow in his most cherished affections. His only daughter was expiring. Beneath the blow of this trial, the grief-stricken man had forgotten both his personal dignity and the profaneness of the place where he came to find Jesus, and, too, the looks of the Pharisees who might behold him. His grief bade him seek the Saviour wherever He was. Having found Him, he unhesitatingly threw himself at His feet and, paying Him homage, cried out in despair: "Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." It was certainly a robust faith that this man had, to demand clearly the resurrection of one who was dead. It proclaimed well the lofty idea which the very chiefs of the religious party had conceived of Jesus' power and goodness. At once the Master, rising from the table, decided to prove to all that He went to a family mourning as readily as to a feast among friends, if at the one, as well as at the other, there were souls to save. The disciples followed Him.

As soon as He gained the street an immense multitude quickly gathered about Him out of curiosity, enthusiasm, and interest. Some desired to see what would occur; others hastened to glorify the great Prophet; and, again, many sought a cure. Among the latter was a woman who, for twelve years, had been suffering from a loss of blood. The greater part of her possessions had been given over to

St. Mark v, 21, indicates that He was nigh to the sea; St. Luke mentions no place in particular, but both suppose it was on His return from Gerasa. Where must we look for perfect accuracy?

<sup>2</sup> This name was also borne by one of the descendants of Manasses (*Numb.* xxxiii, 41) and by one of the Judges of Israel, who had thirty sons (*Judges* x, 3). Its etymology is "He enlightens," *i. e.*, "God enlightens."

physicians who had tortured her in every way,<sup>3</sup> with no satisfactory result. On the contrary, her illness had steadily become worse. If she were a Jewess, with her physical sufferings she must have endured also moral sufferings not less intense. For in the law of Moses<sup>4</sup> her trouble constituted a legal impurity. Having, perhaps, condemned her to a painful divorce, her condition obliged her to take each day endless precautions in her relations with society. What she heard said of Jesus might well have given her the belief that He would be a physician for her more powerful than any other; but how should she explain to Him her pitiful condition? To speak with Him in private seemed very difficult, and to confess in public an infirmity so loathsome was as fraught with danger as it was with humiliation. A favourable opportunity must be sought to second her desires. And now, as the multitude crowded about Him so as almost to crush Him, she thought—so speedily does woman's foresight perceive all the details of an enterprise—that, with courage and patience, she herself would be borne by this moving wave of people even to the Saviour's side. She said to herself with heroic confidence: "If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed."

In fact, following out her intentions, she came close to Jesus, but behind, timidly and with perfect discretion. Under the impulse of an ardent faith she furtively touched the *zizith* or small red woollen tassel that hung from Jesus' cloak.<sup>5</sup> All at once a deep-felt commotion through

<sup>3</sup> The array of remedies employed by the ancients for this infirmity is somewhat terrifying. (Cf. Lightfoot, *Hor. Hebr. in Marcum*, v. 26.) We may observe that *St. Luke* viii, 43, is less severe than *St. Mark* v, 26. He refrains from saying that his brother physicians had tortured her in every way.

<sup>4</sup> *Lev.* xv, 25; *Deut.* xxiv, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Numb.* xv, 38. *Deut.* xxii, 12. The Greek word *κράσπεδον* signifies, according to the etymology, *κεκραμένον εἰς πέδον*, that which falls toward the ground. Keil, *Archäol.*, § 102; Ewald, *Alterth.*, p. 307.

her whole being told her that she was cured. For at the touch of this believing hand the Saviour had let pass from Him the supernatural influence that the poor woman was begging of Him, or, rather, was seeking to take from Him unnoticed. "Who is it that touched me?" He said, as He turned around; for He wished that the miracle might serve to strengthen the faith of all. Such was the authority of His words that in an instant the crowd respectfully drew back. Yet no one responded. There was a moment of solemn silence. Jesus waited that the pious culprit might gain courage to make herself known. Peter, with his usual briskness, exclaimed: "Master, the multitudes throng and press thee, and dost Thou say, 'Who touched me?'"<sup>6</sup> Then, as the other disciples agreed with this, Jesus said: "Some one hath touched Me; for I know that virtue is gone out from Me." At the same time He looked scrutinisingly about Him. There could be no more hesitation. The poor woman, not knowing what was about to happen, filled with fear for her boldness, and full of confidence because of her faith, came forth from the crowd where she had withdrawn, fell at the Saviour's feet, and in a loud voice told of her malady, of her act of trust, and of her cure. Jesus desired no more. It was sufficient for Him to have it understood that nothing could go out from Him without a positive act of His will. If this woman with the flow of blood had been cured, it was because she had touched, not His garment, but His heart. Then graciously looking upon her, He said to her: "Daughter," and by this tender word He dispelled all her anxiety, "thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be thou healed of thy disease."

<sup>6</sup> Peter, according to St. Augustine's beautiful thought, sees no difference between crowding one and touching him. The curious multitude crowd upon Jesus, but faith alone touches Him: "Illi premunt, ista tetigit," says the great Doctor, *Serm.*, cccix, and elsewhere, "Caro premit, fides tangit."

So great a mercy, no doubt, bound this woman's heart to Jesus, and the curing of her body made way for the sanctifying of her soul. Tradition tells us that this woman of faith caused to be erected in Paneas, her native city, and in front of her own house, a bronze monument representing herself in the attitude of prayer, while the Saviour, with cloak thrown back over His shoulder, extended His hand to cure her. Eusebius, in his day, still saw these two statues,<sup>7</sup> which Julian the Apostate had had removed in order to substitute his own. At an early date Christian legendary lore assigned to this woman a considerable place among its stories.<sup>8</sup> She figures in them under the name of Berenice or Veronica, at one time before Pilate to give the most remarkable testimony of the holiness and goodness of Jesus, and again upon the way to Calvary, wiping the bloody face of the Saviour with her pious hands, in spite of the insults of a furious mob. If this late tradition were well founded, the divine image, impressed upon the towel she used, would be an authorised portrait of Jesus left us by Himself, and thus the woman, once impure and timid, but afterward sanctified and sustained by grace, would have merited by her heroism the gift of one of the most touching relics left by the Son of God for the veneration of the faithful.

Meanwhile His coming to Jairus' house had been delayed for quite a long time, and the sorrowing father, to whom minutes were as centuries, made known to Jesus by his lamentations and even by respectful supplications that

<sup>7</sup> H. E., vii, 18.

<sup>8</sup> In the *Acta Pilati*, vii, the first part of the Gospel of Nicodemus, she makes her deposition before Pilate: "A woman of the name of Veronica cried from a distance to the President: 'I had a flow of blood for twelve years, I touched the edge of His cloak, and the illness ceased at once.'" The Jews said: "We have our law, and according to it a woman has no right to bear witness." See Thilo, *Ev. Apocr.*, p. 563. Cf. Hefele on the subject "*Christusbilder*," in the *Kirchen-Lexicon of Wetzer and Wette*, ii, 519-524.

they must hasten. His impatience was, indeed, reasonable, since he learned at that very moment that his daughter had just breathed her last.

Some of his people, in fact, had come in haste from his house and said to him: "Thy daughter is dead, why dost thou trouble the Master?" The father was deeply cast down. Heaven vouchsafed no blessing upon his action, since death, instead of suspending the fatal blow in view of the Saviour's coming, seemed only to have precipitated it. The strongest confidence might well have been disturbed. Jesus, turning to Jairus, said: "Fear not; believe only, and she shall be safe." At the same time He spoke to the multitude and forbade them to follow Him. The burst of enthusiasm that would salute the resurrection of one who was dead might impede the slow and normal development of the Messianic plan. Jesus energetically opposed all premature triumph. Peter, James, and John, alone, were permitted to accompany Him. These three disciples, from this time forth, are to be the privileged witnesses of the most important scenes that mark the Master's life.

As they entered the house they found mourners and flute-players, who, as was their custom, had hastened to commence the solemn mourning over the child. If the poorest of the Israelites owed his dead wife at least one mourner and two flute-players,<sup>9</sup> it was natural to find this class of people present in great numbers at the house of a man of distinction, such as Jairus was, and for a mourning so sad. Lamentations, the noise of the instruments, cries of all sorts filled the house. Jesus, as if surprised by this spectacular exhibition of useless grief, said at once: "Why make you all this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." For to Him whose hand is the power

<sup>9</sup> Cf. De Wette, *Archæolog.*, § 263; Geier, *de luctu Hebr.*, v, 16.

of God Himself, death is but a light sleep. He has only to speak, and those who have fallen asleep awake. Besides, if they misunderstand the divine sense of this saying: "the damsel only sleepeth," it is no great harm. The crowd at first will think that He is mistaken and will laugh Him to scorn; and then they will suppose that, perhaps, the child was in a lethargy, and the doubt that will hover before the eyes of many, as to the reality of the resurrection, will offset the untimely enthusiasm the Messiah wishes to avoid.

Therefore, without further explanation, Jesus dismisses all, save the father, mother, and the three disciples, and enters the chamber wherein the dead child was laid. Her burial robes had already been put on. The Master of life took the young girl by the hand, and addressed her: "*Talitha koumi.*" that is, "Maid, arise." Was ever command more simple or more sublime than this? And it was addressed in homely terms to a dead body! to a corpse! Peter, who heard it with all its irresistible power, repeated it in the presence of Mark, his disciple, and this latter has transmitted it to us in the Aramean idiom in which it was uttered, as if the more surely to preserve the masterful note it bore upon the lips of Jesus.

How great must have been the amazement of those who beheld Death, obedient to this voice, humbly surrender its victim to Him who claimed her with such imposing authority! The young girl arose immediately and began to walk, and Jesus, as calm in the presence of this prodigy as a physician who has just prevented a crisis, gave His attention that suitable food<sup>10</sup> might be given to strengthen her who at His command had come back from death to life and health.

<sup>10</sup> It is *St. Luke*, the physician, who alone gives us this detail (viii, 55), thus recalling the prescription of the physician to the convalescent patient.

The father and the mother, as well as the disciples, were beside themselves in their astonishment, joy, and gratitude. That He might gain time to escape the acclamations of the multitude, Jesus commanded silence. It was not that He hoped to force them to keep the prodigy secret, for too many immediate witnesses had seen the girl dead, and were now coming to find her living again, but He desired an opportunity of quitting the town, unchecked by the enthusiasm of the people. Since He intended not to reappear for a few days, He thought that public emotion would then be calmed, if, indeed, the miracle itself were not completely forgotten.

It was done as He wished, and thus He was able to take His way in haste toward the sea-coast. There, as the crowd began to join Him once more, He embarked in a boat and gave the word to push out into the deep. Even then there were some who sought to follow Him; but they were few, for there were not many boats to be found at their disposal. The multitudes upon the beach sorrowfully watched Him depart.

## CHAPTER VIII

# THE TEMPEST ON THE LAKE AND THE VISIT TO THE LAND OF GERGESA

JESUS' REPOSE ON THE EVENING OF A GREAT DAY—THE DISCIPLES GAZE UPON HIM AS HE SLEEPS — THE TERRIBLE TEMPEST—THEY AWAKEN THE MASTER—HE COMMANDS THE ELEMENTS, SINCE HE IS GOD—THEY APPROACH GERGESA—THE AWFUL DEMONIAK—SATAN'S WEAKNESS, HIS CUNNING, HIS WISH—THE SWINE RUSH INTO THE SEA—THE CONSEQUENCES—THE DEMONIAK, BEING CURED, IS NOT TO FOLLOW JESUS, BUT TO EVANGELISE HIS OWN COUNTRY. (St. Luke viii, 22-39; St. Mark iv, 35-41; v, 1-20; iv, 35; v, 20; St. Matt. viii, 18, 23-24.)

THERE is nothing more delightful than a walk by the Lake of Genesareth when the sun is setting. The waves, one moment golden and purple, change again imperceptibly to blue, as the sun is veiled behind the hills of Tiberias and Magdala. Then the stars that glimmer in the firmament begin to be reflected in the broad sheet of water. The calm of nature, the freshness of the evening, and a certain fragrance of purity and poetry fill the soul with a vague feeling of comfort with which one is delighted as with a first sense of ideal joy.

After that great day of conflict with a growing opposition, and the miracles with which it was filled, Jesus in



solitude gladly availed Himself of the sweet restfulness of the evening.

Proud of the glorious burden they were bearing, the Galilean boatmen made their bark glide smoothly over the peaceful waves. Near to the helm the Master had lain down, resting His head upon an oarsman's cushion, and, lulled by the noise of the oars as they moved in unison, He had just fallen asleep while gazing into the depths of the sky.

The disciples looked at Him with admiration and tenderness. Their faith was heightened more and more as they recalled, one after the other, the events of the day. Before them slept the Master of the demon, of disease, and of death. He had placed Himself under their protection, and in their love they were proud of watching over Him. We are happy when we see those whom we love and venerate calmly sleeping, especially when we think they owe their sleep to us. The light breathing that rises from their breast and comes forth from their lips comforts our own heart, and the calmness spread over the beloved brow whence have vanished the grave cares of life makes us forget the fatigue which is the price of their momentary happiness. How many, indeed, are those who, on the evening of such a day, would have been eager to offer to Jesus the gift of such well-earned repose and to see sleeping the man who accomplished, as if for pleasure's sake, so many amazing and superhuman works!

While the disciples in a low voice were thus sharing their religious impressions, on a sudden the wind arose, announcing a most violent tempest. It is not unusual to see a terrible squall burst forth, even when the weather is perfectly clear, over these ordinarily tranquil waters. The numerous ravines which, on the north-east and on the east, extend to the upper shore of the lake, are, as it were, so many danger-

ous defiles in which the winds from the heights of Hauran, from the table-lands of Gaulanitis, and from the summit of Mount Hermon, meet and then rush on together. These winds, bursting forth suddenly upon the little sea of Genesareth, scatter in their path most awful desolation. The fishermen's wherries are frequently engulfed. The best sailors, at such times, abandon all hope of reaching the northern shore of the lake, and hasten off toward the south, where the storm is always less severe.

The first gust of wind was soon followed by another; the hurricane was fearful. The boat, dragged into a whirlwind, took water on every side. The danger was extreme. The disciples, accustomed to the sea, beheld the danger, and were seized with fear.

But Jesus still slept.

Suddenly the boat seemed to sink. Thinking themselves lost, these poor Galileans no longer respected the Master's sleep, but awoke Him and said: "Master, doth it not concern thee that we perish?" while some cried: "Lord, save us: we perish." Jesus arose without emotion, looked upon the tempest, and, with a word of sovereign authority, bade the winds and sea to be calm. At His word, as if conscious of a bridle that governed them, the wind abated and the waves subsided. The disciples, more astonished by this latest act of power than by what they had hitherto witnessed, passed from the liveliest feelings of anxiety to those of the most perfect security. Joy, wonder, gratitude filled their souls; they no longer had fear of anything. But Jesus had not forgotten that, when He awoke, He found them agitated almost to despair. The recollection of this was painful to Him, for if it is true that in such circumstances prayer can be strong and deeply moved, it is not becoming that, when faith is in the heart, fear should usurp its place. "Why are you fearful?" He

said to them. "Have you not faith yet?" Cæsar, in the midst of the storm, seizing upon the terrified pilot's hand and commanding him: "Keep on, fear not, thou bearest Cæsar and his fortunes!" may be the ideal of human greatness and of proud confidence in a lofty destiny; but Jesus, imposing not only His courage upon His disciples, but also His will upon the heavens and the sea in wrath, is ever the ideal of divine grandeur. His disciples, stupefied, said one to another: "Who is this, think you, that He commandeth both the winds and the sea, and they obey Him?"

Each new miracle they witnessed transformed and exalted, in their minds, the first idea they had conceived of Jesus. Unconsciously they beheld light increasing about this great figure until their perfect faith should confidently salute in their Master the Son of God made Man. Their cries of enthusiasm attest the progress already effected in their souls, and it is the logical result of this progress that will soon burst from the lips of Peter in the admirable profession of faith which is being formulated gradually in the depths of all their hearts.

Nothing could be more natural than the sentiments excited in the disciples by the events which had just taken place. It is man's to conquer by patience and by genius the forces of nature, and to be at all times superior to nature, even when nature has overpowered him. He launches forth upon the waves the bold, untiring vessel which needs not the stars of heaven to direct her course, and by her motive power advances straight to port despite the storm. This is the result of human labour, and he who attains it is only man. But if Jesus, standing in the midst of general terror, cries out to the unbridled winds and to the angry waves: "Peace, be still!" and thus suddenly reduces to a calm the tempest He has chided, then in the

presence of this act of authority we must exclaim: "This is God!"

This act of supreme power on the part of the Saviour on earth has not ceased to be repeated from the time it astonished the disciples on the lake of Genesareth. In the spiritual sphere, with like reality, Jesus, asleep in the bark of the Church, has been awakened often by the cries of the faithful in distress. At the very moment when all seemed lost, He has given the sign and the popular waves of revolution have been calmed on a sudden and the winds of human power and of pride have become still, when Christ's single word has not completely destroyed them. Peace has returned and the bark of the Church, sailing on again in triumph, despite all obstacles, has pursued her way through the course of centuries.

Jesus and the disciples disembarked on the other shore of the lake, in the land of Gergesa.<sup>1</sup> Where was this exact

<sup>1</sup>The three Synoptics, in different manuscripts, give Gerasa, Gadara, and Gergesa. It is certain that if Gerasa is on the spot where Burckhard and all geographers after him have placed it, it in no way corresponds with the indications given in the Gospel. For Djerasch is fifteen leagues south-east from the little sea of Genesareth. On the other hand, if Hum-Keis now occupies the site of Gadara, it is almost as difficult to explain the Evangelist's narrative, since from Hum-Keis to the southern extremity of the lake is still a rather long distance. After traversing the plain that stretches as far as the Jarmuk, one must cross a wide and deep ravine in which this river flows, and finally, after a climb of an hour and a half, he arrives in ancient Gadara. Now, the scene in the Gospel took place on the shores of the lake. Jesus has scarcely disembarked when He beholds the demoniac coming from among the tombs that were near to the city. The swine were feeding not far away, and near enough to the sea to rush in headlong in a moment. No one of these details can be understood, if we grant that the city was Gadara, situated three long hours distant from the lake. These considerations induced Origen to reject the two readings of Gerasa and Gadara and to adopt Gergesa, the ruins of which still existed in his day, near a precipice overlooking the lake (*In Jo.*, i, 28, and ii, 12). We have sought the remains of this ancient town, *πύλις ἀρχαία*, as the Alexandrian exegete called it, and we have found nothing answering his description. As for Kherza, discovered by Thomson, that is a solution that will be rejected by all who have been to Wadi-Semak. Besides the fact that there is not in this place any trace of tombs, it is evident that before

spot? It is impossible to say, but we must look for it toward the south-east of the lake. There the cliffs approach more closely to the little sea, without, however, entirely overhanging it anywhere, probably because the sea has gradually receded from the steep rocks.

As He set foot upon the shore, Jesus saw a naked man running among the tombs on the side of the hill; he was sending forth wild cries and his aspect inspired pity as well as fright. He was an unfortunate demoniac.<sup>2</sup> Antiquity knew not those admirable institutions of charity wherein Christianity gathers insanity in all its forms, seeking to quiet it when incurable, and insuring for it, if not a few moments of happiness, at least an honourable retreat and perfect security.

falling from Kherza into the sea the swine would have had plenty of time to recover themselves. It may be, however, that Gergesa belonged to the district of Gadara, which, according to Josephus (*Bell. Jud.*, iv, 7, 3), was the capital of Peræa. In this case the two readings, Gergeseans and Gadara-neans, are correct, and the inhabitants of Gergesa may be called Gadara-neans, as the inhabitants of Buffalo are New Yorkers. As for the reading Gerasens, it is inexact, and results from the fact that Gerasa was better known than Gergesa. The copyists have here made a mistaken correction.

<sup>2</sup>St. Matthew says there were two. It would be quite surprising that not only St. Luke, but also St. Mark, who forgets nothing that will make his narrative dramatic, should have neglected this detail. Hence some interpreters have supposed that in the first Synoptic there was an error on the part of copyists; these latter, seeing that the demons spoke in the plural, concluded that there must have been at least two demoniacs, and, presuming that they had discovered an inexactitude, immediately proceeded to correct it. It may be, however, that St. Luke and St. Mark spoke of only one demoniac because he was more terrible than the others or because he became a firm believer and perhaps even a disciple, and was, therefore, particularly famous in the primitive Church. But St. Matthew viii, 28, represents the two demoniacs as very wicked and dangerous, and, moreover, the primitive Church does not seem to have known one any more than the other, for of the two demoniacs there is no trace in the Apostolic traditions. The most plausible solution is that which admits here, as in the case of the blind men of Jericho, a distraction on the part of the translator who read in the plural what was, in the original Aramean, in the singular. It is, besides, quite remarkable that the two demoniacs always speak and act, in St. Matthew, as if they were only one individual, which would be very surprising if there were two in reality.

This wretched man, possessed of the impure spirit, had become a furious maniac. Attempts had been made in vain to confine him: he broke his chains and resumed his wild wanderings. He was accustomed to hide among the tombs,<sup>3</sup> which, no doubt, he believed to be the abode of demons and of roving spirits. Passers-by were exposed to his furious attacks, and care was taken not to be in his way. His howlings were terrible to hear, and he bruised his body with small stones. Jesus, as He beheld him from afar, stopped him with a single word<sup>4</sup> and commanded Satan to leave his victim. This order, given in a tone of highest authority, stirred the demoniac's soul to its depths, and put there, with a gleam of hope, a germ of faith. The woful being knew he was in the presence of a man stronger than the demons. He stopped in his flight, ran suddenly toward Jesus, and threw himself at His feet to do Him homage.

It was then that the evil spirits, aware of the approach of a fatal conflict, responded to the Saviour's command with this shout of insolence: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" Then, as if avowing himself already vanquished by a superior power,

<sup>3</sup> It is sufficient to have visited the necropolises of Byblos, Sidon, and others, not to mention those of Jerusalem, to know that it was the custom of the Jews to build their tombs outside the city. Every large family possessed a cavern either naturally formed or cut in the cliff at great expense and carefully ornamented with columns and precious marbles. In the interior walls were openings destined to receive the mortal remains of several generations.

<sup>4</sup> By a careful study of the story of St. Luke and of that of St. Mark we are led to believe that the demoniac did not recognise Jesus, but that it was Jesus Who first saw and challenged the demoniac. From v. 29 in St. Luke and v. 8 in St. Mark and from the very significant conjunction *γάρ* purposely placed in prominence, we may conclude that if the demoniac saw Jesus and came and spoke to Him in so singular a tone, it was because Jesus had summoned him by commanding the demon to leave him. This does away with all difficulties arising from the fact that the demoniac had of himself attacked Jesus in somewhat extraordinary terms, had uttered His name, had gone to Him Who did not speak to him, to beseech Him not to torture him, etc.

Satan besought Him: "I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" This supplication, made in the name of God, gives rise to the opinion that the man and the demon spoke successively, the former mindful of the painful treatment to which he had been subjected, hitherto without gain, the latter eager peacefully to enjoy the prey he had seized upon. It is more probable, however, that the man had no part at all in this dialogue, but that the demon alone spoke. Satan writhes under the sway of Jesus, Who bids him go out of his victim. His resistance, his supplications, his fear of being tormented, and of returning into the pit of hell, his hesitation to depart from the unfortunate man whom he besets, his wish to enter into the herd of swine, the name he gives himself, contain something that astonishes us, who have no clear ideas of the kingdom of evil or of the peculiar condition of its occupants. Yet we perceive that, though he addressed Jesus as if he knew Him, Satan still has doubts of His superior nature and thinks it not impossible to deceive Him by his wiles. He tells his name, Legion<sup>5</sup>—the sum of physical and moral phenomena produced in the wretched demoniac was sufficient proof that a number of spirits were in possession of him<sup>6</sup>—and demands permission to enter into a herd of swine that are feeding on the mountain side. His plan is to cast upon Jesus, in this way, the responsibility of the disaster for which he is making ready. The owners of the animals will certainly become angered against Him, since their injury is to be effected by His authorisation. Thus the vanquished demon counts on taking his revenge

<sup>5</sup>The Legion, recalling the Roman armies with their irresistible force, had become the symbol of supreme power. By this pretentious response the demon seeks to disconcert Jesus.

<sup>6</sup>They probably exercised their influence successively upon the demoniac's soul and simultaneously on his body.

and on destroying forever the new Teacher and His doctrine. The artifice was vain; for the Saviour, deriving good from evil, will prove that He knows how to make even Satan's malice contribute to the increase of His own glory.

Since He possesses supreme dominion over all creatures, nothing can interdict Him from abandoning to the demon the impure victims for which he asks. Moreover, are not these animals, the eating of which is forbidden by the law, frequently the occasion of an Israelite's fall, and, in particular, an insolent protest of paganism against the religion of Jehovah? Indeed, the Herodians, according to the stories of the rabbis, had composed small books and caused them to be disseminated among the people in order to undermine the law of Moses and to demonstrate the puerile character of its prohibitions. These theories, the natural result of the free thought and of the materialism of the times, gained ground each day. The Saviour, therefore, found that there was some reason for punishing so flagrant a violation of the sacred precepts and for removing the scandal that the impious had placed in the way of the faithful. Pagans or Jews, the proprietors of the herd deserved the lesson.

Then Jesus said to them, "Go!" If He is Himself the Shepherd of the sheep, that lovable emblem of gentleness, kindness, and fidelity, He can permit Satan to take to himself the swine, the disgusting symbol of moral ugliness and of the vilest appetites of fallen nature. On the instant the demons pass out of the man who was possessed, and he is born into a new life; like a frightful hurricane they hurl themselves upon the filthy herd.

The animals, terrified, roused, overwhelmed by this tempest-blast that strikes them, spurs them, and excites them, rush off in a huddled mass toward the summit of the moun-



tain. There, deceived doubtless by an irregularity of the ground, victims of a panic terror, or driven on by the foul spirits, they reach the extreme end, where the cliff projects abruptly into the sea; they fall into the abyss and all are lost in the waves.

At the sight of such a disaster—the drowning of two thousand swine—the swine-herds in despair hasten across the fields to the city to bear the news to those who were concerned. From all parts they hurry to the place to learn more of the catastrophe. In this way, contrary to the foresight of the demons, Jesus' plans are fulfilled. The swine-herds, in their despair, became evangelical messengers, for they spread everywhere the news that an extraordinary man was in the land, exercising complete power over demons, and proving by his works the divine mission which He claimed.

As they arrived from the neighbouring city or from the rural districts, all were surprised at such an event. At the feet of Jesus was calmly seated the demoniac cured. He had resumed the habits of social life. As they beheld him, calm, reasonable, clad in his garments, and in every way like his fellow-men, they all wished to know how these things had come about. Then astonishment gave way to stupor; and with a movement of respectful fear, like Peter after the miraculous draught of fishes, the Gergeseans besought Jesus to depart.<sup>7</sup>

God offers grace; He does not force it. Jesus had just sent forth a ray of divine light upon this earth impregnated with paganism. If a cold reception was accorded to it, it was because the hour of Providence had not yet come. He re-entered the bark to return to Capharnaum.

<sup>7</sup> These Gentiles, conscious of their deep unworthiness, and yielding, it may be, to a superstitious impression, might have been in fear of greater evils from Him whom Heaven seemed to send them as a judge. (Cf. *III Kings* xvii, 18.)

As He was on the point of departing from the shore, the man who had been delivered, full of gratitude, begged Him to take him and to admit him as a disciple. "No," said Jesus, "return to thy house and tell how great things God hath done to thee." For it was well to leave as a stepping-stone in this country, which the Son of God purposed to evangelise later on, not merely the rumour, but also the living proof of the passing appearance of the Messiah, and this proof was the man himself, who had been delivered from a legion of demons.

The Evangelist tells us that Jesus' intention with regard to this new proselyte did not miscarry. Though he was not received among the Master's disciples, the demoniac continued to be an ardent and untiring labourer of the Gospel. He preached in Decapolis, and aroused the liveliest hopes in Him Who had just revealed Himself by such amazing works.

When Jesus comes back to this country, His name will be known already and His teaching appreciated.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *St. Mark vii, 31.*

## CHAPTER IX

# A SERIES OF MIRACLES—PREPARING THE FIRST ELEMENTS OF THE CHURCH

THE GENTILES THEMSELVES BEGIN TO BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF JESUS—THE CENTURION WHOSE SERVANT IS ILL—THE EMBASSY OF THE ANCIENTS—THE SOLDIER'S FAITH AND HUMILITY—THE CHURCH IS OPENED TO THE PAGANS—CURE OF THE TWO BLIND MEN—OF A DUMB DEMONIAK—JESUS IS PLACED BY THE PEOPLE ABOVE THE MEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. (St. Luke vii, 1-10; St. Matt. viii, 5-13; ix, 27-34.)

JESUS' position in Capharnaum was fully acknowledged, even by the most influential personages of the city. The hostility of the Pharisees and their murmurings were thus stifled in an outburst of general enthusiasm in which the pagans themselves took part. They had come to regard the youthful Prophet as an extraordinary man from whom they might expect the most astounding prodigies.

And so we find that a centurion or captain of the cohort garrisoned at Capharnaum<sup>1</sup> publicly had recourse to Him, to obtain the cure of a sick servant.

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to say whether he was in the service of Herod or of the Roman Emperors. The great provinces of the Empire were defended by

It is a common thing for us to become as much attached to a servant as to a relative, when, by his fidelity and devotion, by his mild, affectionate, and prudent character, he has merited being admitted to a degree of family intimacy. By his care for our material needs, if his soul be sufficiently lofty and sympathetic, he ends by interesting himself naturally, as it were, with us in our moral welfare. Little by little he seems to take a certain position in our life, always proving, in the full consciousness of his inferiority, that no foolish vanity renders him unworthy of the affection we manifest for him. His death assumes the proportions of a family misfortune. With him we lose a help and an affection that may not be replaced. All this will explain the anguish of the centurion, who found his faithful servant<sup>2</sup> attacked with paralysis<sup>3</sup> and at the point of death. If the centurion had been a Jew, nothing would have been more natural for him than to hasten to the great physician who had already cured the son of a royal officer, and who had been seen to resurrect the daughter of Jairus. But he was a pagan, or, at most, a *proselyte of the gate*, that is, one who had scarcely reached the household of that Jewish theocracy into which final entrance was to be

legions that formed a permanent army of occupation. The less important provinces were guarded by simple cohorts. As one of the latter, Judea held Roman troops commanded by tribunes, under whom were centurions. But there is nothing to prove that Galilee was not left entirely to the care of Antipas. As it is known that there were Gentiles among the troops of the latter (*St. Mark* vi, 21), we may suppose that the centurion was one of his officers.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Matt.* viii, 6, and *St. Luke* vii, 7, call the servant *παῖς*, as if he were a child of the house, and *St. Luke*, v, 2, declares, in fact, that he was much beloved by his master.

<sup>3</sup> It was, doubtless, either an attack of acute rheumatism, which becomes mortal directly it approaches the heart, or *tetanus*, a kind of neurosis of the vertebral nerves quite common in warm countries. By impeding the movements of respiration and of swallowing this affection ordinarily causes death in a short time. The ancients confounded all such diseases with paralysis, though they greatly differ both in cause and in effects. *St. Matt.* viii, 6, says *παρλυτικός, δεινῶς βασανιζόμενος*.

gained only by circumcision and by the complete acceptance of the law of Moses.<sup>4</sup>

He had, however, given evidence of his full sympathy with the people of God, in causing to be constructed the great synagogue of the city,<sup>5</sup> an act of generosity that bound the true Israelites to him, and which shortly they will not fail to exploit. For when the centurion had made known his purpose of repairing to Jesus and his fear of not being heard, the batlanim, the ancients of the people who held the control of the synagogue, presented themselves as mediators. They organised as a formal deputation, and came to ask the Miracle-Worker to come to the centurion's house, and cure the unfortunate servant. They testified both to the foreigner's devotion to the nation and to his respect for Jehovah, since at his own expense he had built so beautiful a house of prayer. Thus they appealed at once to two uppermost sentiments in the heart of Jesus: His patriotism and His religion.

The Saviour, without further request, followed them. Now the ambassadors, full of that obsequiousness toward the great which compromises the best sentiments, had probably gone farther than the honest centurion had desired. For the latter did not intend that Jesus should be put to any trouble. The recovery of the son of the royal officer had proved that a word from Him suffices to check the evil, and all that he sought was simply that word.

When he learned, therefore, from a messenger, that Jesus was coming in person, he was annoyed, and, sending other

<sup>4</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, xiv, 7, 2, calls them *οἱ σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν*. (Cf. *Acts* of the Apostles xiii, 43-50; xiv, 14; xvii, 4, etc.) Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, and Lydia were of this class.

<sup>5</sup> As it is probable that there were more synagogues than one in Capharnaum, it is supposed from the expression *τὴν συναγωγὴν* that the centurion had built, not merely a synagogue, but the most beautiful of all.

friends, he said to Him: "Lord, trouble not thyself." It was a strong lesson for the Jews. While the children of the synagogue, proud of their title to God's friendship, thought themselves free to treat His prophets with familiarity, the centurion, a humble representative of the nations, perceives at a glance how unbecoming it is to summon Jesus to a sick servant, and, moreover, to propose that He should enter into the house of a pagan. With all the frankness of a soldier, he declares that he deems himself unworthy to welcome so high a personage, and that if he had thought that he could without indiscretion have preferred his request in person, he never would have sent any to represent him. This man's humility was great, and his feeling of inferiority very touching, but greater still and yet more touching was his faith.

According to the idea he had formed of Jesus, a single word from His lips would suffice to cure his servant. We shall see on what grounds he rested his conviction. His reasoning, for its clearness, its originality, and its fulness, is worthy of a soldier. "For I also," he says, "am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it." Why should not Jesus have the same authority over the powers of nature? Has He not proven that He was Master of them when He so wished? Have they not obeyed His word whenever He has spoken? They are, therefore, as soldiers under the commands of their chief. He can, at any time, rightly be content with the simple saying of a word, to save Himself the taking of one step. The precision, the truth, the fulness of the notion this pagan had conceived of the supreme dominion Jesus has over nature cannot be admired too much. The way in which he clothed his thought, borrowing his expressions from the

manners of military life, was particularly happy, and gave joy to Jesus Himself.

Under the influence of this joy He turned to the crowd that followed Him and said: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel." Thus, by the energy of its convictions, heathenism gave a sign of its future triumph over Judaism, and the just Judge hesitated not to give public honour to him who deserved it. Then, facing the proud Pharisees, whose activity was fomenting about Him a deep and dangerous opposition, He continued: "And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This great theme of the vocation of the Gentiles is merely touched upon here; Jesus will resume it with greater development when Israel's reprobation is near at hand. In the meantime, the sons of the Saints, the children of the Promise, who deem themselves born citizens of the eternal fatherland, must know that heaven belongs to him who purchases it, and that, for entrance there, the rights of birth, nationality, name, count for nothing, but that faith and works are everything.

Turning, then, to the ambassadors, or, perhaps, to the officer himself, who came at the last moment,<sup>6</sup> for they

<sup>6</sup>The two accounts, St. Matthew's and St. Luke's, are developed with such apparent divergence as to cause embarrassment to the interpreters of every age. According to St. Matthew one would believe the centurion himself had done all that was accomplished in the presence of Jesus, while the details in St. Luke clearly indicate that the captain acts only through those who represent him. The ordinary solution of the difficulty is that the two Evangelists do not contradict each other inasmuch as a man is said to do himself what he causes to be done by others. But is it not more simple to admit that the centurion, after sending his emissaries, came in person to receive the word which he had requested of Jesus for the recovery of his servant?

were not far from his house: "Go," He said, "and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." At that very moment the servant was cured. The centurion found him so <sup>7</sup> when he entered his house.

Such a demonstration of faith on the part of a pagan and the Saviour's response had a broad signification. The Church, therefore, was not only for publicans, but even for the Gentiles themselves. What Jesus had preached was henceforth an accomplished fact. Every man, penetrated by a ray of evangelical truth, has only to knock resolutely at the door and divine mercy has already begun to open.

As He made His way back to His dwelling-place, the Master became aware that two blind men were following Him and crying to Him: "Have mercy on us, O Son of David." The better to try their faith or perhaps from prudence, He halted not. For the title with which they hailed Him, if taken up and repeated by the crowd, might prove dangerous and become for the patriotic and enthusiastic Galileans a signal for a political revolution. Undaunted, as if their steps were guided by a trail of light, the two suppliants followed Jesus into His house. Within He turned to them and said, "Do you believe that I can do this unto you?" And they replied, "Yes, Lord." Then, touching their eyes, He added: "According to your faith, be it done unto you." Their eyes were opened and they gazed with delight upon Him Whom they, though

<sup>7</sup> There is no reason for identifying this cure with the one related in *St. John* iv. There is almost nothing in common between them. In *St. John* it is a civil officer of Jewish origin who seeks the recovery of his son. Here it is a soldier of pagan origin who seeks the recovery of his servant. The one asks that Jesus should come to his house, notwithstanding the distance from Cana to Capharnaum; the other begs Him not to trouble Himself to come to his house, though He is already in Capharnaum. And, finally, from the demand of the first Jesus takes occasion to blame all the Galileans; while from the request of the second He is induced to hold a pagan up as an example to all Israel.



they were quite blind, had with so much faith proclaimed the Son of David.

More strictly than ever, He enjoined silence upon these two thus miraculously cured, for the expressions they used out of their gratitude still threatened to compromise the regular development of the Messianic plan. But, as before, no precaution could withhold their enthusiasm from self-betrayal, and every one soon knew what had occurred.

So the sick came, one after another, without cessation, to implore the help of Jesus. The two blind men had scarcely departed when a demoniac was brought in, whom the demon's power had rendered dumb. Whether it was that the dumbness of this poor man was a monomania, or that the evil spirit had really deprived him of the power of speech, the unfortunate man spoke not. Jesus had but to make a sign; Satan was driven out, and, at once, the demoniac spoke.

Informed of all these prodigies, the astonished multitudes cried out: "Never was the like seen in Israel."

Thus it was acknowledged by all that the great figures of Elias, of the Prophets, of Moses himself, paled by the side of Jesus. The faith of the multitude became now more and more explicit, and the time was coming when the Son of Man would make His selection from these ripening fruits, and seek the twelve chiefs of the new tribes of Israel, in other words, the pillars of His Church, the princes of His spiritual kingdom.

## CHAPTER X

### A VISIT TO NAZARETH AND TO NAIM

THE REASONS OF THIS SECOND VISIT TO NAZARETH—  
JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE—IMPRESSIONS AND REFLEC-  
TIONS OF HIS HEARERS—INCREDULITY PREVENTS MIR-  
ACLES — FRESH APOSTOLIC JOURNEYINGS — NAIM—AN  
ORIENTAL FUNERAL—THE WIDOW'S SON RESTORED TO  
LIFE—TRUTH OF THIS MIRACLE—FEELINGS OF THE  
MULTITUDE. (St. Mark vi, 1-6; St. Matt. xiii,  
54-58; St. Luke vii, 11-17.)

It must have been about this time that Jesus determined to make another visit to His own ungrateful town. For now that He was to make His final choice of the great dignitaries of His new society, His co-workers in the preaching of the Gospel, His future representatives on earth, He doubtless felt pained in His man's heart that He was unable to let that choice fall upon His own relatives, His childhood companions, the friends of His youth, whom incredulity now held far from Him.

Humanly speaking, there was now reason to expect among the Nazarenes if not an actual triumph, at least a relative success.

Jesus returned, not alone, but accompanied by numerous disciples who, in their lively enthusiasm, told of His won-

derful works, and by their talk, as much as by their respectful deference, surrounded Him with a kind of halo capable of recommending Him to the admiration of His fellow-townsmen. But there is nothing harder to overcome than the prejudices of a small town and the opposition created by them. His welcome was less churlish than before, but the religious result was almost the same.

On the Sabbath, He repaired to the synagogue and undertook to instruct the multitude. He produced a deep impression, notwithstanding the suspicious dispositions of His audience. The words of grace that issued from His lips were so full of unction, so appropriate and so strong, that all were struck by them. But this public admiration, far from becoming a germ of faith, soon took the form of a barren, if not a malignant, curiosity. "How came this man by all these things?" said some, "And what wisdom is this that is given to him, and such mighty works as are wrought by His hands?" "Is not this the carpenter?" said others, "the son of Mary,<sup>1</sup> the brother of James and Joseph and Jude and Simon? Are not also his sisters here with us?" Thus they took pleasure in running through the list of his relatives as if the intimate knowledge they had of Him could cheapen the youthful Prophet's deeds or lower the sublime character of His discourses. To be sure, none could deny that the circle in which Jesus had grown up was humble and poor, and these ill-natured remarks uttered in proof of it were needless; but what conclusion was to be drawn, if not that the sublime height to which, despite all obstacles, He had raised Himself, was the undeniable proof of His personal worth and merit? But instead of admiring this result, his fellow-townsmen drew scan-

<sup>1</sup> In the text of St. Mark no allusion is made to Joseph, and this proves that he was dead at this time. In St. Matthew the father is mentioned because of his trade, but his name is not given, because he is no longer alive.

dal therefrom, incapable, as they were, of recognising or even suspecting that God was in the young carpenter of Nazareth.

Jesus, then, was forced to see His mighty and merciful hands bound by the incredulity of His compatriots. God's grace reaches those who lay bare their hearts in faith, and show themselves worthy of receiving its effects by a generous response to its calls. Others it leaves to their reprobate dispositions. When He beheld the obstinate hostility with which they met His fraternal advances, Jesus again gave utterance to that sentence, which He had already pronounced once before, and which the experience of all ages has erected into a proverb: "A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred." For it was only with difficulty that He succeeded in curing, by the imposition of His hands, a few scattered sick in the very city where His heart's desire was that His goodness and His power might be displayed. He *wondered*, says St. Mark, at such a phenomenon. By this the Evangelist wishes us to understand how extraordinary was that incredulity which was so obstinate as to cause wonder even in the soul of a God.

Jesus spent but a few days in Nazareth. The chilling atmosphere He experienced there weighed too heavily upon Him. He, therefore, spoke His last farewell to His mother-town, and returned once more to His evangelical journeyings among the neighbouring cities. There, at least, He was eagerly welcomed. His words stirred all hearts, and the miracles so confirmed His teachings, that He felt the seed of salvation growing beneath His steps.

On one of His journeys He came to Naim, a charming town, situated on the northwestern slope of little Hermon, at a few hours' distance from Nazareth. A group of mis-

erable huts and a white chapel to-day mark the spot which it once occupied, and yet bear its name. To look at the ruins that cover the ground, and at the many tombs cut in the cliff to the east, one might suppose that Naim had been in its time a place of some importance. The traveller who pays a visit to the antique and picturesque cemetery, wonders which is the sepulchre that one day remained unoccupied in consequence of the sign the Saviour gave to astonished Death. What a blessed joy it would give us to hear its testimony upon one of the most striking prodigies of the Gospel story! This is what took place:

It was toward evening.<sup>2</sup> Jesus, escorted by a number of His disciples and by a crowd of people, who were ever as eager to hear His words as to witness His works, arrived on the northern slope of the mountain, almost beneath the walls of Naim. Their conversation was somewhat solemn, like the impressions received upon the journey. Not far away to the east was Endor, near the cavern where, long before, the pythoness had summoned into the presence of Saul the awe-inspiring shade of Samuel, and to the west they looked abroad over the vast plain of Esdrelon, which stretched away, teeming with great memories from Sunam to the Cison. It may be that the thought occurred to some among them to mention the great names of Endor and of Sunam, and of the witch and of Eliseus, in the hope of inducing the Master to discuss the awful mystery of death, and to define the power of the friends and of the enemies of God over those who people the kingdom beyond the grave. Over the fields of Mageddo, enriched by the blood of many warriors, hung a cloudy mist. The sun was descending behind the summit of Mount Carmel,

<sup>2</sup> Since the captivity the Jews had adopted the Persian custom of burying the dead on the day of their death. The funeral took place and still takes place toward the close of the day.

and its last beams were still gilding the woody, picturesque hillsides of Galilee. The country-folk, walking leisurely, were coming back from their labour in the fields. In the air was that deep calm of evening that invites to rest after a weary day. Jesus and His disciples were at the city gates, when suddenly were heard the long-drawn notes of grief and poignant lamentations, and, at last, the confused cries of great mourning. A funeral procession was sadly advancing. Nothing could be gloomier than such a ceremony in the East. Mournful and silent, with heads partly covered with their cloaks, at times with bare feet and torn garments, the men solemnly begin the march. Then, wrapped round with fillets in an open coffin, is borne the corpse upon its funeral bed. Last come the women, the female mourners, chanting in heart-rending tones their sorrow for the dead, and alternately beating the tam-tam in response to the music of the flute.

The mourning on this occasion was all the greater, as the mother of the dead man conducted it herself. The poor woman, who was a widow, had but this son from whom death so cruelly parted her. No other lips than hers were needed to utter the sad *alas!* of the obsequies,<sup>3</sup> nor other heart to praise the virtues of him who was no more.

The sympathetic crowd, also, shared largely in her grief. Jesus was moved by it, and, gently approaching the unhappy woman, "Weep not," He said to her, in a tone that could not but appeal even to a heart that had most reason to mourn. At the same time He stretched His hand toward the bier. There was such majesty in the gesture that those who were carrying the dead man came to a halt. "Young man," He said, "I say to thee, arise"; and those

<sup>3</sup> *Jer.* xxii, 18.

ears that had been closed by death to the noises of earth hear the command given by the voice of heaven. The cessation of relations between the soul and body is only relative in death as well as in sleep; and as in sleep the voice of man is sufficient to re-establish them by awakening the sleeper, so in death the voice of God restores them by reviving him who was dead. The young man sat up, and began to speak, while Jesus, with gracious tenderness, took him by the hand and gave him back to his mother.

This prodigy, attested by many witnesses, who were disinterested and who belonged to the most diverse conditions of life, was undeniable. They all knew well that the young man had been really dead, since they were on the way to bury him: every one now saw him alive, since he was speaking and walking along. The miracle, or, in other words, the intervention of a superhuman power, was then clearly the necessary hyphen between these two evident facts, a death and a life. The disciples, too, were aware that they had as yet seen nothing so astonishing.

For this resurrection, surpassed later on by that of Lazarus, was more astounding than that of the daughter of Jairus. The dead, who is being borne to the grave, is farther from life than he who has but just died, though nearer than he who has been in a state of decomposition for four days. But the act that revives them all is essentially the same. It is God and His representatives alone who can call back into life those who have departed therefrom.

So, all together, disciples, Naimites, and the people who were following Jesus, divided between a pious terror and an irresistible enthusiasm, hailed the *Thaumaturgus*, crying out: "A great prophet is risen up among us; and God hath visited His people!"

"And the rumour of Him," adds the Evangelist, "went

forth throughout all Judea,<sup>4</sup> and throughout all the country round about." That is Peræa, where John the Baptist was in prison.

<sup>4</sup> According to this, it is not necessary to look for Naim on the other side of the Jordan in the southern part of Peræa. To be sure, Josephus, *B. J.*, iv, 9, 4, 5, locates there a city of this name. But it is evident that the miracle reported by St. Luke took place in Galilee; and if the Evangelist observes that the news of it spread, ἐξῆλθεν, from this country into Judea and the neighbouring countries, it is as a transition to what he is about to tell concerning the Baptist.



## CHAPTER XI

# THE MESSENGERS FROM JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE PRECURSOR'S HOLY IMPATIENCE—THE MEANING OF THE QUESTION ASKED OF JESUS—THE SAVIOUR'S INDIRECT BUT CLEAR, POSITIVE RESPONSE—THE WORKS PROVE THE MESSIAH—PANEGYRIC OF JOHN—HIS CONSTANCY, HIS AUSTERITY, HIS EXCEPTIONAL DIGNITY—THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS OPENED—THE VIOLENT BEAR IT AWAY—FICKLE CHILDREN ARE CUT OFF FROM IT—THE SONS OF WISDOM. (St. Luke vii, 18-35; St. Matt. ix, 2-19.)

THE fame of these wonders penetrated even into the dungeons of Machærus, and a man there trembled with joy because of them. It was John, the Precursor, whose ardent and deeply religious soul intensely longed for the solemn and triumphant inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> We may understand and even praise in the

<sup>1</sup> It is wrong to ascribe this message of John to Jesus as a doubt which at the last moment troubled the Baptist's soul. It is true, we can see how some men in the solitude of a dungeon, embittered by suffering and weary of the struggle, may feel their courage failing them and their convictions being shaken. But in this case the moral probation of the Precursor's soul cannot be understood. He cannot forget what he has seen and heard. The men, quoted as examples of discouragement, doubt not what they have seen but what they have thought. Moreover, we cannot comprehend how John was inclined to doubt, because he heard of the miracles of Jesus. Naturally he would be impatient to see these miracles bear their fruits.

great servants of God that holy impatience which, inspired by supernatural views, has nothing in common with reprehensible self-seeking. For John expected from Jesus neither his own deliverance nor the punishment of his persecutors, but simply the glory of God; and all that he learned of the young Prophet's miracles and of the popular enthusiasm He was arousing, led him to believe that the decisive hour had struck.

His disciples shared his opinions, yet not without a certain distrust and doubt to which he himself, in his strong faith, was ever a stranger. By their contact with the Pharisees, they must have lost much of the hope which, on their Master's testimony, they had founded in Jesus. The young Nazarene, notwithstanding His miracles, seemed to them to fulfil less and less the plan of action outlined for a long time back by their national prejudices. Their doubts troubled the Baptist's heart and redoubled his impatience to see "the Lamb of God," Who had been proclaimed Messiah many months before by the voice of the Father, carry out the divine mandate to its full realisation. The time for supreme resolution seemed to him to be at hand; he thought it opportune, as well for the strengthening of his disciples' faith, as for determining Jesus openly to declare Himself the Christ, to send to Him two messengers with this interrogation: "Art thou he that is to come, or look we for another?" It cannot be denied that the circumstances were happily chosen for the removing of all appearance of doubt from this question: it arose because of the great miracles of Jesus; if it is bold and piously familiar in its form, this is because the Baptist's character could not otherwise express it. He who sends these messengers is certain of Jesus' mission, aware of his own part with regard to the Messiah, and convinced of the necessity of acting without delay. On the

eve of being put to death, he desires to continue to the end his office of Precursor, by hastening the coming of the kingdom of God. He rightly phrases his question in the manner most suited to induce Jesus to declare Himself and put an end to the uncertainty of many.

At the moment when the messengers came on the scene, Jesus was engaged in curing a number of sick.

When He had listened with manifest kindness to the question they brought Him, He pointed, with a gesture more eloquent than any words, to the sick who had been cured by His command only, or by His touch. Then He meekly made answer: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the gospel is preached." To be sure, this reply was only indirect, yet it was thoroughly categoric, for it contained the affirmation of the Messianic character of Jesus, and the proof of this affirmation. If Jesus realises all the works that the prophets ascribed to the Messiah, it is because He is the Messiah.

Isaias had said:<sup>2</sup> "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped"; and Jesus has effected these wonders. "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free." And all this, too, has been accomplished by Jesus. Ezechiel<sup>3</sup> had announced that the Messiah would purify His people and resurrect the dead; Jesus has done this. And, in fine, as a characteristic trait, the Messiah "was sent to preach to the meek,"<sup>4</sup> and Jesus gives His life to this work. It is needless, then, to ask for further light; it remains for each one to see and to conclude that the Kingdom of God is come with its train of beneficent wonders,

<sup>2</sup> *Isa.* xxxv, 5.

*Ezech.* xxxvi and xxxvii.

<sup>4</sup> *Isa.* lxi, 1.

and that, for the present, no realisation, other than this spiritual realisation of it, is to be expected. Later on it will be established in its definitive and triumphant form by the great Day of Judgment. It would be an error of perspective to confuse the spiritual regeneration of the world with the eternal consecration of the elect in glory.

Then, with a special emphasis in His words, He added: "And blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in me." This is not in response to John's message, which He is soon to praise with such satisfaction. We must see in this an allusion to the state of uncertainty and distrust in which they are who come to question Him. Let them be careful that they may not strike against the stone of which the prophet<sup>5</sup> speaks, and which is the Messiah, for otherwise they would surely fall and perish miserably.

As for the Baptist, Jesus will speak His thoughts of him, but only after the departure of his messengers, that He may not seem a flatterer with regard to him. Nothing could be more glorious for the Precursor than this eulogy, or, better, this funeral oration, for his death was not far distant: "What went you out into the desert to see?" exclaimed the Saviour, "a reed shaken by the wind? But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? But what went you out to see? A prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: <sup>6</sup> Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." Such was the justice Jesus did to the constancy of John's character, to the austerity of his life, and to his worthiness of the

<sup>5</sup> *Isa.* viii, 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Malach.* iii, 1. The quotation is not exact either according to the Hebrew or according to the Septuagint; and yet it is found in identical terms in *St. Luke* vii, 27, in *St. Matt.* xi, 10, and in *St. Mark* i, 2. *St. Mark* puts it in another context, attributing it to Isaias, probably because he continues it with a passage from that prophet.

divine command. The reed shaken by the wind is the figure of a wavering, inconstant soul, which bends before every breeze, and shifts its strongest convictions<sup>7</sup> to suit circumstances. This is not what the multitudes went out to see. Standing amid the reeds of the Jordan, John the Baptist was the oak unbent by any storm. The saintly severity of his soul, the strength of his convictions, the vehemence of his words, won for him the admiration of all. He braved Herod himself. A reed would have bowed its head. John prefers to offer his to be cut off. Such in great part was the result of the austere life which he led from his earliest childhood. He scorns death because he never has loved life. In his dungeon he is fully as formidable as when he was free; for, accustomed to voluntary sufferings, he fears nothing, if it be not failure to do his duty. Hence it is that not only does he bid Herod put an end to his scandalous life, but he desires to persuade Jesus Himself to proclaim His character as Messiah. He meets every need full in the face. If the herald that goes before the Messiah must needs be stern as justice and brave as truth, John is worthy of a mission which Jesus rightly places even above that of the prophets themselves. For he who is foretold, is greater than they whose charge it is to foretell him. The prophets did the foretelling, but John was foretold. This is his glory.

“Amen, I say to you,” Jesus continues, “there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist.” Then, as if seized by a thought that He wishes to communicate to His hearers, He checks Himself, and adds: “Yet he that is the lesser in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.” The Saviour here speaks not of virtue but of dignity. From this point of

<sup>7</sup> *Ephes. iv, 14; Heb. xiii, 9.*

view, though John surpasses those of the old alliance, he, in turn, is surpassed by those of the new. The first in the Old Testament is the last in the New, so profound is the chasm that separates these two orders of things. John's knowledge of the great questions of the supernatural life is inferior to that of the humblest member of the Christian society, and while with relation to Jesus the latter shall be a brother, the former has been but a servant. The one shall live under the law of grace and, as it were, shall be unconsciously penetrated with it; the other has lived under the law of justice and shall find mercy only in the name of the Saviour, Whose coming he announces; for, it must not be forgotten, the Precursor, dying beneath the sword of Herod, shall not immediately enter heaven. For him, as for all the Saints of the Old Law, Jesus must open the door of the Kingdom of Glory, otherwise all would remain in exile.

This peculiar position that John occupies, between the two Testaments, accounts for his inferiority as regards the future, and his superiority in relation to the past. He has not had the joy of entering the promised land, but he has the honour of having guided his people to its confines.

“And,” continues Jesus, “from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And, if you will receive it, he is the Elias that is to come.” Thus announcing the close of the theocratic era and the official opening of the Messianic era, He declares that man must think no more of the past unless it be to hail its fulfilment in the present, and that now the true Israelites have only to enter freely into the Kingdom of God. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!” says Jesus, as if to point out the decisive importance of his final words.

He goes on: "And all the people hearing, and the publicans, justified God, being baptised with John's baptism. But the Pharisees and the lawyers despised the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised by him." The lower orders had eagerly responded to the sign God gave them, while the heads of the nation, blind in their pride, held aloof from the religious movement that was agitating Israel. 'Twas a strange phenomenon! They had at all times formed some pretence for their discontent: heaven's messengers were not pleasing to them; their doctrines were either too severe or too easy. "Wherewith shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market-place, and speaking one to another, and saying: We have piped and you have not danced; we have mourned and you have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine, and you say, he hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and you say: Behold a man, that is a glutton and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners!" Such is their response to all of heaven's advances.

It was God's thought to incite His people to a twofold movement of repentance with John the Baptist, and of holy joy with Jesus Christ. Both emissaries have come in the midst of their adherents, and have invited the Jews, sitting in idleness, to rise up and follow; but they remained unmoved by any solicitation; John was too severe, Jesus too indulgent. Like the capricious children whom He had so many times seen playing, and with whom He Himself had played at Nazareth, the Saviour declares that the children of Israel waste their time in contradictions, and succeed only in proving themselves all malcontents. In the meantime those men of energy, the violent already spoken of, march on with vigour, at the summons they

have heard, and carry the Kingdom of God by storm. These are men, the others merely children. Happily, as the Saviour concludes, "Wisdom is justified by all her children." For there are some who do not deem John too severe, nor Jesus too gentle; to those it has seemed that austerity and mercy ought both to find a place in the work of justification, and they are ready to weep and to rejoice in turn. In this way have they entered into God's kingdom, and, by their virtue proving the wisdom of the divine plan, they have become worthy of assisting in its fulfilment by the sublime functions of the apostolate.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELVE

THE CHURCH MUST BE VISIBLE—JESUS BY PRAYER MAKES READY FOR THE SELECTION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES—OFFICIAL DECLARATION—THEIR NAMES—THE APOSTLES INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY—THEIR PRESENT AND THEIR FUTURE—FIRST DEFINITE RESULT OBTAINED BY JESUS—THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH. (St. Luke vi, 12-19; St. Mark iii, 13-19; St. Matt. x, 2-4; Acts i, 13.)

UNTIL now Jesus has sought only to awaken, to arouse, to astonish the souls of men. Amid this religious agitation there has been no organisation; the Church is yet like a vague mist raised by the sun of truth which, in its bodiless condition, appears to some extent everywhere, but without any substantial footing. But now the Messiah-King must have subjects, who shall be registered, known, and His forever. The multitudes that we have seen appear and disappear, and then appear once more, are only a hope; the new kingdom must be a visible reality.

This, no doubt, is what John sought through his emissaries, at the very time when Jesus was preparing to put it in execution.

Everything in the Evangelists' narration, however brief it may be, points to the fact that the Master attached a capital importance to the choice of the twelve Apostles.

Alone upon a mountain, He passed the night in prayer, or, it were better to say, in close communion with God. The sentiments He had of pious and tender deference toward His beloved Father, made it a duty for Him to lay at that Father's feet, as a son's homage, the work He was pursuing with all its wealth of hopes. With His Father He deliberated as to the best means of assuring, of localising, of rendering palpable this germ of life that was now <sup>1</sup> beginning to grow. The choice of appointed disciples, attached to His person and intended even to represent Him, seemed to be a measure as wise as it was natural. For, by their constant faith, their distinct lives, and even their prerogatives, they were to be, for the present, the visible personification of the new religious society. As for the future, they were destined to give the most explicit and best authorised testimony to the truth. It would be theirs, above all, faithfully to repeat in the Church the works and words of her Founder, and by their virtues and their teachings to keep the great figure of Him Who had quitted earth, ever living before her eyes. The institution of the Apostolate is a decisive event in the Gospel history. By it Jesus proves the existence of the Kingdom He is come to found, and assures its future life.

During that night of prayer and recollection, He considered under His Father's eye the names of the most faithful, the most generous, the most constant of His disciples; and, at dawn, He rejoined the multitude, and proclaimed Apostles <sup>2</sup> the happy ones on whom heaven's choice had fallen.

They were twelve. This number corresponded to the twelve tribes of Israel, to whom Jesus had come as to sheep without a shepherd. Thus each tribe seemed to offer its

<sup>1</sup> *St. Matt.* x, 14, marks out the part of the chosen twelve.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Luke* vi, 13.

first-fruits, to present its contingent to the new Church, and to have henceforward its accredited preacher. The first to enter the Messianic Kingdom, they would be elevated to the dignity of chiefs and princes. Twelve thrones awaited them in heaven, for them to judge not only Israel, but the people of the new alliance, in other words, mankind become Christian.<sup>3</sup>

It is known what importance the ancients attached to the symbolism of numbers, and attentive study has been given to the meaning of the number twelve. *Twelve* is the result of the number of the Divinity, *three*, multiplied by the number of creation, *four*; as if the Twelve, personifying, at the same time, the head and the members of the Church, the principle that gives life and the subject that receives it, were the numerical representation of the alliance of heaven with earth; the result of the union of God with creatures. Whatever may be its mystical signification, the number twelve, fixed by the Saviour, was always held sacred by the disciples. The Apostolic circle was never increased nor diminished.

On closely studying this glorious list of Apostles, as carefully preserved in the Synoptics and in the Acts, we find in each the same twelve names, with one exception, namely that of Jude, the brother of James, who is called Lebbæus by St. Matthew and Thaddæus by St. Mark. These names form three groups, each group regularly having the same head and the same members. The order of the members only is at times changed, but never so that any member of one group passes into another. This classing, moreover, seems to be according to the different degrees of intimacy in which, in the daily intercourse of life, each Apostle stood in relation to Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup> *St. Matt. xix, 28.*

Thus Peter is first in the first group, which includes also the favourite disciples, Andrew, James, and John.

Philip is first in the second, which is composed of also Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas. These, also, play an important part in the Gospel history.

Finally, James, the son of Alphaeus, is first in the third group, which, besides, consists of names less well known: Simon Zelotes, Jude-Lebbæus, and Judas, the traitor, who is invariably the last recorded, as being a disgrace to so noble a list.<sup>4</sup>

Seven among these personages are already known to us. Jesus had long since bound them to Himself by ties which, in truth, were less intimate and less definitive than those with which He now honours them.

Peter is the head; this is not the result of chance—such chance were, indeed, most persistent in the classing of the Apostles—nor is it because he was the first called, for Andrew, at least, and John were his elders in the faith. The reason, therefore, must be sought in the prerogative of a recognised primacy over his colleagues. Later on we

<sup>4</sup> List of the Apostles according to :

	<i>St. Matt.</i> (x, 2-4)	<i>St. Mark</i> (iii, 16-19)	<i>St. Luke</i> (vi, 14-16)	<i>Acts</i> (i, 13)
1			Simon Peter	
2	Andrew	James	Andrew	James
3	James	John	James	John
4	John	Andrew	John	Andrew
5			Philip	
6	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
7	Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
8	Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
9		James, the son of Alphaeus		
10	Lebbæus	Thaddæus	Simon Zelotes	Simon Zelotes
11	Simon	Simon	Jude, the brother of James	Jude, the brother of James
12	Judas Iscariot		Judas Iscariot	.....

shall learn its origin and its consequences. In the meantime we shall prove that there is good ground for accepting, in its full sense, the title of *first* with which he is honoured by St. Matthew.

In the whole Apostolic college, there is no figure more strongly emphasised than that of the son of Jona. A true Galilean type, brave even to rashness, devoted even to self-sacrifice, a man of initiative, of intuition, and of resources, Peter's is a rich, beautiful nature. He has, no doubt, the defects of his qualities. Frequently unreflecting, because ordinarily he sees, at once, the knot of a difficulty; presumptuous, because he is energetic; variable, because he is impressionable, one esteems him even when he errs, for one feels that in the midst of his failings he can love, can believe, can hope to the extent of heroism, and can regret with all the bitterness of repentance.

Beside him, his brother Andrew is plainly his inferior, but still he has the honour of having been the first to discover and to hail the Messiah of Israel. The Gospel pictures him full of zeal in announcing the Good-Tidings. Though his was a modest part, yet we judge from the history of his martyrdom that his faith was none the less lively, and his love none the less ardent.<sup>5</sup>

James and John are more prominent than he. With Peter they share the honours of accompanying Jesus on the most solemn occasions of His public life. Like the chief of the Apostles, these two brothers bore a surname, given them by the Master: they were called the *Sons of Thunder*; <sup>6</sup> yet their souls, though, at times, impetuous because of their violent zeal, were particularly meditative. In them we must look rather for men of contemplation

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Acta et Martyrium S. Andreae, Apost. Migne. Patrol. Grec.*, t. ii, 1218-1248.

<sup>6</sup> *St. Mark* iii, 17.

than for men of action. The Master's words struck them more forcibly than His acts. John, in submitting to us the sublime discourses of the fourth Gospel, has proved how far his reflective nature had succeeded in assimilating all that was most transcendent and most difficult of repetition in the Saviour's thought. They had received from their mother a tender and affectionate nature. Jesus had a special love for John, who was the younger, and of whom we have spoken elsewhere. The destinies of these two brothers were quite different. One was the first of all the Apostles to die; the other was the last. James pointed out to his colleagues the glorious road of martyrdom; John, by his writings, his counsels, his example, solidified all that his colleagues had built; with his benediction he consecrated the Church now definitely established and organised, and brought the Apostolic age to its close.

We have seen Philip summoned, at an early date, to follow Jesus. Prompt in believing, he at once became the auxiliary of grace to guide his friend Nathanael to the light. A positive mind and less enthusiastic than the others, we find him at one time calculating how much money is needed to furnish bread for four thousand men, at another asking the Master, with Whom, besides, he seems to have lived on terms of close familiarity,<sup>7</sup> this annoying question: "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Like the four others, he was of Bethsaida. That little town had generously given its contingent to the Apostolic college.

Bartholomew, or the *Son of Tolmai*, or of Ptolemy, is naturally connected with Philip, since in the opinion of many he is no other than Nathanael, his friend.<sup>8</sup> We are

<sup>7</sup> *St. John* vi, 5.

<sup>8</sup> It would be very surprising if Nathanael, after having been called to follow Jesus together with companions, all of whom became Apostles, should

already acquainted with the upright, thoughtful, it may be somewhat rude, but profoundly religious character of this sincere Israelite, to whom Jesus gives most honouring testimony. He was of Cana.

Matthew, whom we have identified with Levi, in his list of the Apostles, himself mentions his former occupation as tax-gatherer. He modestly places himself after Thomas, his companion, while, in the catalogues given by St. Luke and St. Mark, he is placed first. From his occupation in the office at the custom-house we ought to suppose that he had received some intellectual culture, and it is natural, therefore, that he, the first of all, should undertake to write the discourses and the doings of the Saviour. Judging him by the history of his vocation, his character was resolute, energetic, and generous.

His companion, Thomas, or, translating the Aramean name, the *Twin*, is known to us by three incidents which are related only in the fourth Gospel, and which place in relief the moral character of this Apostle. Unusually serious and reasoning, Thomas was slow to believe. He weighed all the difficulties of a situation, beheld in particular all its unfavourable sides, and easily allowed himself to become discouraged. But, once having gained the certitude for which he was distrustfully looking, he was a man of coura-

have been excluded from the Apostleship. Hence we find him (*St. John* xxi, 1, 2) named among the Apostles and distinguished from the disciples. But if he was an Apostle how shall we account for his name not being in the four lists which we have just transcribed? If he is there, where is his proper place? By the side of Philip, no doubt, who brought him to Jesus; now Philip's ordinary companion is called Bartholomew. But St. John does not mention Bartholomew at all in his Gospel, while the Synoptics, on the contrary, make no mention of Nathanael. This can be explained easily if Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person. This identity is the more easily admitted since the first name alone is a proper name, while the second is only a patronymic. St. John always uses the former. The Synoptics prefer the latter, perhaps to avoid putting in their list two names with the same etymological signification, for Nathanael and Matthew may both be translated by "Theodore" or "Gift of God."

geous, explicit, and enthusiastic faith. His love for the Master was capable of heroism.

The head of the third group, James, the son of Alpheus, or Cleophas, as we have said elsewhere, is no other than James the less, so called either because he was of smaller stature,<sup>9</sup> or because he was younger than James, the son of Zebedee. By his mother or his father he was cousin to Jesus.<sup>10</sup> His wisdom, his piety, his intelligence gained him great influence over the Jewish-Christian party of his time. He took an important part in the first council. In spite of the ritualistic prejudices that prevailed in his surroundings, he energetically sustained the broad notions of Paul. For thirty-seven years he was Bishop of Jerusalem.

His brother Jude was of a less tranquil nature, if we may judge from the questions he puts to the Saviour and from the style of the Epistle we have from his pen. To distinguish him from Judas Iscariot,<sup>11</sup> and to do justice, moreover, to his ardent temperament, he had been surnamed Lebbæus, or Thaddæus, *the courageous, the man of heart*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Greek qualifying adjective *ὁ μικρός* more commonly signifies "small in stature" (Xenophon, *Mem.*, i, 4-2; Homer, *Iliad*, v. 801). Sometimes, however, it signifies "younger" (cf. *Judges* vi, 15).

<sup>10</sup> We have said elsewhere that Mary of Cleophas, designated in *St. John* xix, 25, as sister of the Blessed Virgin, may have been only her sister-in-law, either by her marriage to Cleophas, a brother of Joseph, as Hegesippus claims, or because she was Joseph's sister.

<sup>11</sup> *St. John* xiv, 22, clearly notes that these two are not to be confounded.

<sup>12</sup> Thaddæus and Lebbæus have analogous meanings, the latter being derived from *Leb*, the heart, and the former from *Thad*, breast, or from *Shaddai*, powerful. The name *Thoda* is given by the Talmud to one of the disciples of Jesus. The Apocryphal *Acts of Lebbæus* in Tischendorf, p. 261, say that the surname Thaddæus was given him when the Precursor baptised him. This Apostle was more generally designated by his surname than by his given name, that the memory of the traitor might not be renewed. Mill's ingenious conjecture (*Proleg.*, § 386) gives Jude only the surname Thaddæus. Taking the text of *St. Matthew* as many manuscripts have it, *καὶ Λεββαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Θαδδαῖος*, he thinks that the first four words, written in the margin, referred to the preceding name *Μαθθαῖος*, and that they were wrongly attached to the name *Θαδδαῖος* which followed. So that the prim-



Simon, the Zealot, was his worthy rival;<sup>13</sup> for, if we were to give credence to his surname, he belonged to the party of the Kenaïm, which preached and practised revolt against the yoke of the foreigner, and rose up, like Phineas, more by act than by word, against the abominations of impiety. Thus had Jesus associated in the Apostolic college the most repugnant elements: a member of the sect of Zealots, and a tax-gatherer; Simon, the violent defender of national independence, and Matthew, the renegade, who consented to be the appointed representative of foreign tyranny. But under the influence of the divine word all had put off the old man, and joined together in most cordial fraternity.

There is a shadow upon the list we have just examined, cast there by the name that comes last. It is evident that it is only with regret that the Evangelists evoke the memory of the miscreant who had malice enough in his soul to betray the best of Masters. Judas Iscariot, *native of Keriot*,<sup>14</sup> or, again, the *man with the leathern girdle* (in

itive text would have "Lebbæus or Levi, surnamed Matthew, the publican." By this Jude would be rid of his double surname and the identity of Levi with Matthew would be peremptorily settled.

<sup>13</sup> St. Matthew and St. Mark call him *ὁ Καναῖος*. It is not probable that this word is to be translated either by the word "Cananite" or by the words "citizen of Cana." There is better reason for accepting it as a peculiar form of the adjective *Kanna* (*Kananit* in the Talmud), which means "zealot." St. Luke, therefore, merely translated the Hebrew into Greek.

<sup>14</sup> The word "Iscariot" is ordinarily analysed as consisting of *Ish*, which means "man," and *Keriot*, which, according to many, is a place of the tribe of Juda, mentioned in the book of *Josue* xv, 25, and sought in the ruins of Kereitein, sixteen kil. south of Hebron. Others, following Josephus, *B. J.*, i, 6, 5; iv, 8, 1; *Antiq.*, xiv, 3, 4, make it Kuryût, three kil. north of Silo. In this hypothesis, Judas was the only Apostle selected from outside of Galilee. Ewald, however, supposes that he was originally from Karta, in the tribe of Zabulon (*Josue* xxi, 34). On the other hand, it has been said with good reason that surnames in the New Testament scarcely ever indicate the place of birth of those who bear them. They generally, and particularly in the case of Apostles, refer to something which reveals their physical or moral condition. So, if Judas had this surname before he com-

which girdle he carried perhaps the common treasure), was of an intensely selfish nature. Selfishness not unusually renders the coldest men very demonstrative toward those from whom they expect some favour. It was probably at the time when the enthusiasm with which the Galileans welcomed Jesus seemed to promise the immediate inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom that Judas joined the Master's following, made known his zeal, and was naturally chosen to be one of the Twelve. Besides, it is not impossible that in the beginning there may have been some sincerity in the affection he showed for Jesus. His egotism could well find secret food in the proof he gave of his faith, and of his devotion. Selfish men long think that they are living only for the sake of others, until they finally call upon others to live for them. Judas' soul had no element of greatness. According to some<sup>15</sup> the son of a currier, and, at any rate, of low extraction, he was of those to whom all means are good, if by them they themselves are but exalted. His nature, cold, positive, and practical, had caused him to be chosen treasurer of the Apostolic college. And even while awaiting future dignity in the Kingdom of God, he derived for himself present consolation by stealing from the common treasury. This unfaithfulness promptly stifled all the germs of faith that were in his heart, and in due season, through incredulity, resentment, and self-interest, he was capable of the most horrifying crimes.

mitted his crime, it signified, perhaps, the "man with the leathern girdle or apron" (*ascorith*); if he received it only afterward, it may be translated the "man of strangulation" (*ish ascara*) or the "man of lies" (*ish schecker*).

<sup>15</sup> This opinion is sustained by the fact that, according to *St. John* (vi, 71, and xiii, 2 and 26), Simon, the father of Judas, already bore the surname of the "man with the leathern girdle." This girdle or apron seems, according to the rabbis, to have been the costume of carriers. Lightfoot, *Hor. Heb. in Matt.* x, 4, says: "Quærit Gemara: Quid est *ascorith*? Respondit Bar bar Channah: *Indumentum Coriarii*. Glossa: *Cinctorium indutum a coriariis supra vestes suas*."

The Apostles' indignation, shared by honest hearts in all ages, has joined to his name the qualification of traitor, a blot as well merited as it is indelible.

Malice that coldly calculates, hypocrisy that conceals its true ends, energy that knows no surcease of evil desire, all these qualities had place in his perverted nature, and our faith wonders how Jesus, Who was not ignorant of what lay deep down in the man's character, could have made him an Apostle. To understand this choice, we must recollect that though He foresees what is fated through the natural play of human liberty, to be our last end, God acts, nevertheless, as if He foresaw nothing. For His prescience cannot bind our free will. As the Creator gives life, intelligence, and the other means of domination to men, who are sure to misuse them to the sorrow of their kind, so Jesus, judging in human wise, estimated the worth of Judas at the time when he was chosen, and ignored what He knew in His divine nature of the man's future life. In addition to this the wretched betrayer, having attained his Apostleship by cunning, ended only in serving the designs of heaven by the selling his Master. When he had betrayed Him, he felt himself forced to do Him homage, and the angry protestation drawn from him by his conscience in the very depth of his despair, became the compensation planned by Providence for the cowardly denial of Simon Peter. The falsehood uttered by the head of the Apostles, when he said with an oath that he knew not Jesus, was obliterated by the remarkable testimony of Judas, the traitor, who cried out: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood."

Such, then, were these twelve men, who, henceforth, were a corporation regularly organised for the reception and transmission of divine teaching. Where the Master would be, there should be, from now on, also the Apostolic college, seated at His table, living on the alms He would gather,

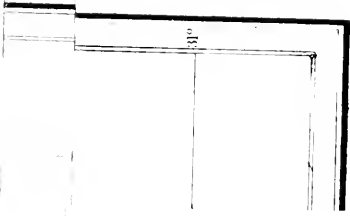
servicing Him as circumstances should demand. In these unremitting and intimate relations, these dulled natures were to undergo a gradual change. There was much to be done. The least illiterate of all the Apostles was a tax-gatherer; the rest had spent their youth in gaining their livelihood by the sweat of their brow in rough and painful labour. At least four were fishermen. The others were the offspring of those common people to whom the Saviour so joyfully and so successfully preached His Gospel. With the exception of Judas all had kind hearts; and upon these fleshly hearts the new Law-Giver meant to engrave the New Law for the world. When His work shall have been completed, the Holy Spirit shall breathe upon them, and, scattering these twelve living tablets to the four winds of heaven, He shall guide them about the world to reveal through them God's truth to a corrupted mankind.

We have clearly reached a critical stage in the Gospel history. Here is the first visible, official, definite result of so many hardships, discourses, miracles. God's Kingdom is now not merely at hand or yet to come; it is being peopled; for the Church, through these twelve men, is established. Instruction is the only thing that remains to be done, and to this Jesus proceeds without delay.

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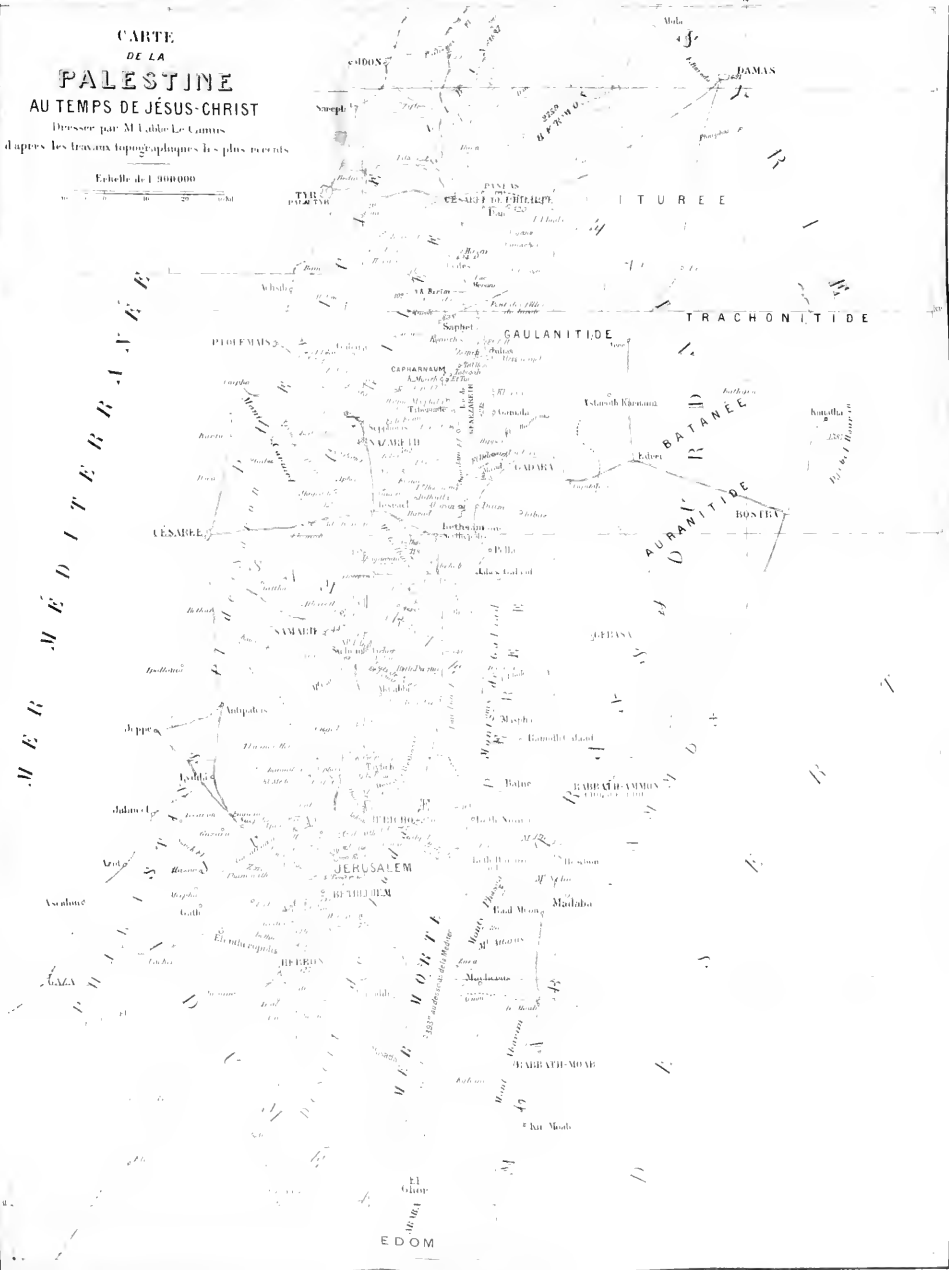
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