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THE PORTRAITURE AND MISSION
OF JESUS.

BY

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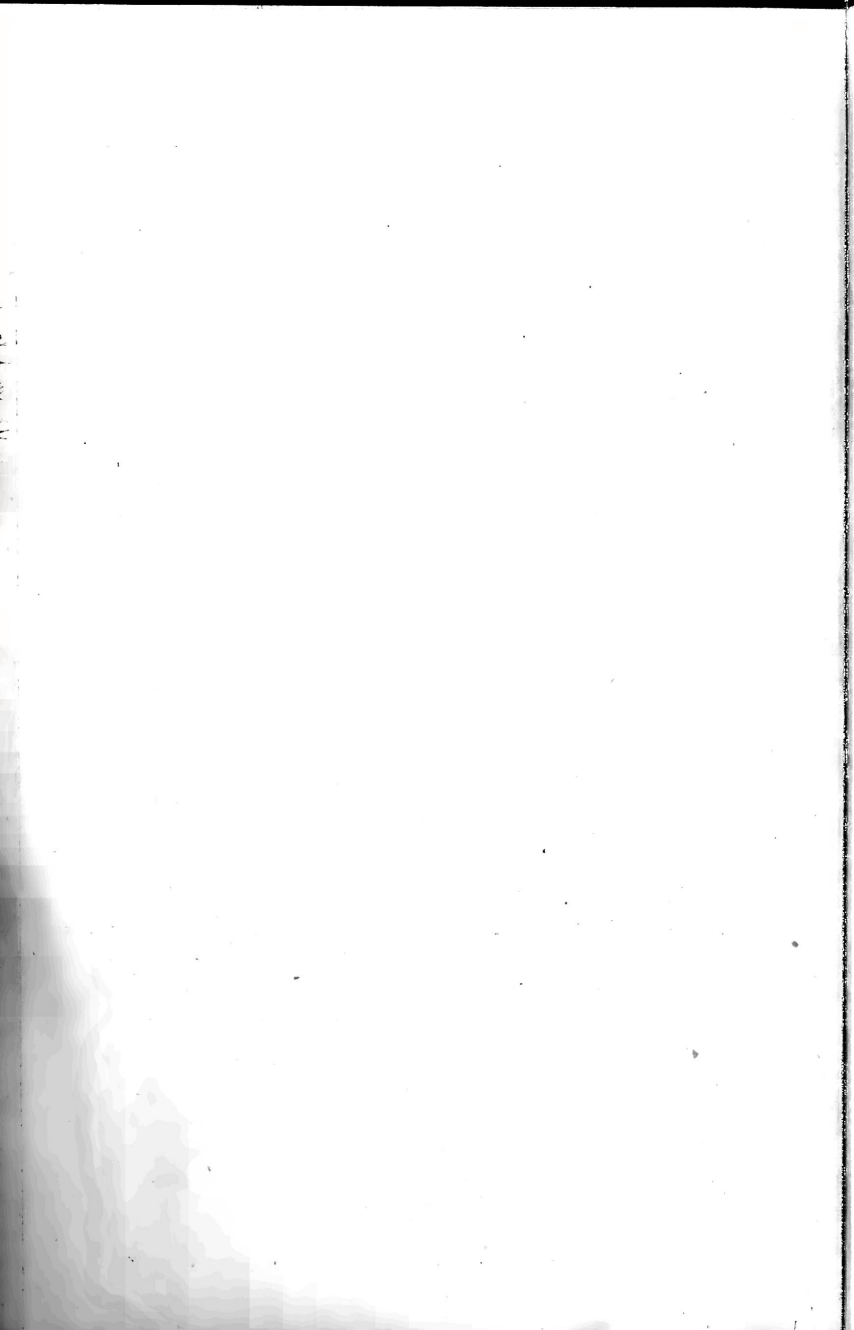
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THE PORTRAITURE AND MISSION OF JESUS.

I HAVE been drawn to this subject by the work of Prebendary Row, entitled "The Supernatural in the New Testament." This defence of Christianity has been undertaken by Mr Row at the desire of the Christian Evidence Society, of which he is an active member, as a reply to "Supernatural Religion," the extensive currency of which able work has aroused action in Christian circles.

Mr Row strengthens himself with his previous effort, "The Jesus of the Evangelists," and in endeavouring to meet him I must refer inquiring readers for a fuller exhibition of the subjects I now handle to my volume, "The Sources and Development of Christianity" (Trübner & Co.).

Mr Row, in his earlier work, acknowledges the insufficiency of the endeavours hitherto made to clear Christianity of the difficulties raised against the creed by objectors of the present day, but, unfortunately, in his attempt to supply a remedy, he shows himself unacquainted with the sentiments of the more advanced opponents of his cherished beliefs, who remain thus, so far as he is concerned, still unanswered.

Mr Row considers the idea of the Christ, as embodied in the Christian scriptures, to be a representation so pure, so exalted, so consistent, so unprecedented, and so realistic, that man was incapable of figuring such a being out of his imagination, and that, consequently, in this description, we have before us a true personage, drawn from the life, and that life superhuman and

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divine. But he sees the need at the same time to point to the offered proofs of the alleged reality, and his great source of testimony is that Jesus rose from the dead. Here human supports are requisite, and that upon which he substantially builds is the evidence derived from the epistles attributed to Paul, who, it is assumed, at a very early period, preached the resurrection to audiences already cognizant of the fact.

The conclusion I have come to is that there is not a reliable trace of the existence of Christianity, from any quarter, Jewish, Pagan, or Christian, for a hundred and fifty years from the time alleged for the death of the asserted founder. The sphere of Christianity I judge must have been Alexandria, and not Jerusalem, which had ceased to be, whence we have the Grecian, Egyptian, and Eastern elements, mingled with what was derivable from Judaism, so characterizing Christianity, and of which Alexandria was the focus. The tale of Christianity thus with me is not dependent upon enacted facts. I can allow that there was a person such as the alleged founder of Christianity. His being a carpenter, occupying the field of barbaric Galilee, and suffering death as a culprit, are not features which the constructor of an imaginary tale would go out of his way to introduce wherewith to associate his hero, and therefore, probably, we have here real facts presented to us; but all beyond these circumstances, in illustration of the being, preaching, and actions of the founder, I take to be purely pictorial.

Mr Row, in dealing with the author of "Supernatural Religion," insists on the possibility of what are termed miracles. He assumes his adversary to be a Theist, one who acknowledges the existence of a divine Creator, handling created objects, and moulding them according to his will. Introducing new force, such a Being may convert water into wine without the intervention of the grape; he may satisfy multitudes with supplies sufficient for but two or three persons, the debris of the

feasts amounting to more than the quantity of food originally begun upon ; he may enable a heavy body to move upon water without sinking into and displacing it ; he may cure all diseases with a word, eject by a command demons invading mankind, and raise the dead. These are exercises of power liberally appealed to by the heathen, in common with Jews and Christians, from the remotest to the latest times. But it has to be considered whether the Creator ever thus indulges in exhibitions in reversal of his fixed rules of procedure ; and whether, when so many tales of the kind are summarily dismissed as unfounded, these particular instances appearing in the Christian record may not be equally untrue. What we should not credit now, whoever asserted the facts, why should we receive because men of old have made the assertion of the occurrences ? The very essence of such testimony is the conviction arising from ocular demonstration. Would the Creator need to resort to such a source of evidence as this which can only be passed on, in a diluted form, in the way of hearsay, and may be left to expire, as at this day, without other support than unestablished tradition ? The argument for the possibility of a miracle is of little account when weighed against its improbability. Things of divine origin stamp themselves as such by their inherent properties. If the Creator has a testimony to offer of his hand in the production of an object, it is never of a dubious character. Between what he has done, and what man may have done, there is no room to raise a question. A blade of grass or a leaf reveals itself as truly of his origination as the most stupendous orbs circling in space. But when we come to miracles, there is always the doubt to solve, were these manifestations real ? Might they not have been due to trickery ? Have they been rightly reported ? May not the whole representations be figments, resorted to for an end ? Mr Row does not, as far as I have observed, clear his matter of these defects.

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Mr Row apparently is not himself sure of the ground on which he would have us place our feet as being perfectly stable. Some of the representations he seeks to reduce within limits that may be reasonably accepted. The being of Satan, as currently apprehended, staggers him. Wicked men are capable of exerting evil influences, and Satan's power is merely a higher sample of such influence. If so, the agency of good may be placed on the same sort of sliding scale, and the Deity be figured as only a more exalted example of a beneficent man. The scripture distinctions are, however, as absolute between satanic and human capacity and power, as between what is divine and what is human. Again the temptation of Jesus is more than Mr Row can receive in the naked form of the narrative. He does not accept the idea of a personal Satan holding intercourse with Jesus, transferring him bodily to a pinnacle of the temple, or to the top of an exceeding high mountain, whence he was able to see "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Mr Row is satisfied that there could be no such mountain, or such exhibition, especially upon a spherical globe, and would dispose of the whole representation as parabolic. The sacred writer really did not mean what he has apparently said. Drawing upon the infinite resources of the Creator, Mr Row observes of the multiplication of the few loaves and fishes upon which thousands were fed, that the materials were already existing in the ground, the water, and the air, and had only to be put together in the required forms by the additional exercise of creative force he demands; but he seems to have overlooked that somehow, to produce bread, the corn required to be ground and baked. The demons transferred to the swine is an action he does not like to contemplate as a reality. "The 'going out from the man' and 'entering into the swine,' may only denote the cessation of the influence of the demons over the man, and its exertion on the swine, without determining the

mode in which that influence was exerted." If we may thus deal with the recounted miracles when they seem to us too hard for belief pursuant to the terms in which they have been narrated, these representations may one and all be readily disposed of without offending reason or warring against experience. The wine converted water at the feast of Cana would be merely joy diffused into the human heart ; the diseases overcome would be moral defects remedied ; the restoring the blind, the deaf, the dumb, and the lame, would be the imparting moral and spiritual faculties where these were wanting or dull and inactive ; and the raising the dead would be the introduction of spiritual life into a soul dead in trespasses and sins. If the chosen advocate of a Society constituted for the defence of Christianity may thus lead the way in the path of rationalistic interpretation, there will soon be nothing left of Christianity either to object to or to defend.

Mr Row lowers the scripture representations in certain other respects to have them reasonably received. When Philip is said to have desired to see the Father, and Jesus to have sought to satisfy him by pointing to himself, this is held to imply no more than that in Jesus was an exhibition of the Father's character, his person not being in question. Elsewhere we are told that Jesus was "the image of the invisible God," "the express image of his person," than which no stronger phrases could be employed to denote a personal exhibition. The choice being between rationalism and Christianity, we cannot elect to have both.

Again, the allegation that miracles should be "signs" which should "follow them that believe," affords a test applicable to faith in miracles to the present day. Mr Row, conscious that there is no such power among believers, chooses to assert that it was a special temporary endowment, "designed for the building up of the church into a distinct community, and when that purpose was accomplished they (the miracles) were to

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cease." The limitation in question is not in the text, and is of Mr Row's creation. And we may ask, when has there ever been a "distinct community" exhibiting Christians in happy union in the faith? The "signs" effected nothing of the sort in the so-called apostolic days, heresies and schisms having prevailed among the body from the earliest age, and this condition has accompanied Christianity through every period of its existence to the present day. May we not then reasonably doubt whether such "signs" were ever provided for the effectuating that which never was accomplished?

Mr Row's theory is, that miracles were provided in order to vouch for a mission, and not for the purpose of supporting lines of doctrine. "Can miracles," he asks, "prove moral truths? I answer emphatically in the negative." "Moral truths cannot be proved by the evidence of miracles, but must rest on their own inherent evidence." The existence of the Deity has, he sees, been made known to man irrespective of any written revelation. All the real elements of religion are thus provided for the spiritual governance of the human race without any appeal to miraculous agency, which has been resorted to, it would seem, merely to support certain wondrous tales. Judged of in this light, of what value, it may be asked, is the scheme of Christianity to the moral man, who stands so completely free of and above its specialities?

Restricted as is the use of miracles, as thus understood by Mr Row, we find them unessential even within this described, confined, sphere. Where was the miraculous attestation to the mission of John the Baptist? He is described as the forerunner of the Messiah, appointed to "go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways," "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace," "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." So important were his func-

tions considered to be, that he stands proclaimed as a prophet, "and more than a prophet," "greater" in effect than any who had yet been "born of women," surpassing thus Elijah, Samuel, and even Moses himself; and yet his mission, so necessary to the introduction of that of Jesus, is ushered in without a miracle. On the other hand, the most stupendous miracle that ever is alleged to have been exhibited, namely, the resuscitation of a corpse by accidental contact with the bones of Elisha, was a manifestation unassociated with any mission. Thus we have the chiefest of all human missions presented without the voucher of a miracle, and the chiefest of all miracles enacted without alliance to a mission, and Mr Row must find some other purpose for the miraculous than that assigned by him to such action.

But supposing it the case that miracles were to attest missions, does not the repetition of them involve the weakness of the testimony they are to supply? One miracle apparently proves nothing unless followed up by another, and another, and we have to ask whether one or more insufficiencies will supply us with a sufficiency. And the whole collection of these wonders, it would seem, required the corroboration of the supreme miracle of the resurrection; and this again required and received confirmation from the wonder workings of the first Christians. Thus Mr Row weaves his web to the entanglement of his own feet.

An essential to a miracle, according to Mr Row, is that it should have been preannounced. Judged of by this test, how will the miracle of the resurrection stand its ground? It is true there are passages attributing to Jesus, when in life, that he said he was to rise again on the third day from the dead; but there are circumstances, taking them as stated, which completely defeat the representation that he ever made such a declaration. The women who are said to have visited his tomb on this third day, went there for the purpose of

embalming the body. They could not have expected that the body was just then to pass into restored life. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are declared to have actually embalmed it. According to the fourth Gospel, Mary Magdalene first visited the tomb, and finding the body gone, went in bewilderment to Peter and John saying, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." The apostles are said to have ran and satisfied themselves of the fact, but as yet, it is remarked, "they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." Any announcement of the coming resurrection by Jesus himself is not referred to, and as to the scripture testimony, it must be observed, it is nowhere fairly discoverable. According to the third Gospel, the women were told distinctly by two angels, who were standing at the tomb, that the resurrection had been effected; and when they went and made their report to the apostles, so little was the event looked for, that their words were accounted as "idle tales, and they believed them not." The two disciples, said to have been met with at Emmaus, showed that their hopes in Jesus had been extinguished by his death. Thomas is described as stoutly refusing to credit any evidence to his re-appearance in life but that of his own senses. And, according to Matthew, when the eleven had the risen Jesus before them, some of them even then "doubted." The announcement that he should rise from the dead, had it been made by Jesus, was a circumstance of too simple a sort to be misapprehended, especially from the lips of one said to have repeatedly shown his power over death by restoring others to life; had he, consequently, made this announcement, the disciples, on the day specified, would have been expecting his re-appearance, and certainly would not have refused evidence to the event when it was certified to them that it had occurred. Mr Row's desideratum of preannouncement of the coming marvel, as necessary to the accept-

ance of a miracle as such, is assuredly wanting in respect of this chief instance on which he depends as a fundamental testimony for Christianity.

Mr Row's most important authority for the fact of the resurrection is Paul, and of the occasions mentioned by him when the risen Jesus manifested himself, he selects, as entitled to most consideration, that when he is said to have shown himself to "above five hundred brethren at once." Mr Row supposes that this may have happened when there was the apparition in Galilee, recorded in Matthew, but here the text is against his conclusion. It is said in Matthew, that after his resurrection Jesus told the two Marys to direct his "brethren" to "go into Galilee," where they should see him. "Then," it is added, "the eleven disciples went into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them," showing that the message was to these only, and to them the exhibition. And this is in accordance with the statement in the Acts, that he manifested himself "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." This excludes the idea that Jesus ever appeared after death to an indiscriminate multitude exceeding five hundred in number; nor can we see that he had so many followers at this time, as the believers were numbered, it is said, after Pentecost, and then found to be but "about an hundred and twenty."

The evidence thus attributed to Paul, which was at best only hearsay, is found to be wanting in every characteristic of true evidence, as judged of by other associated scripture. Still Mr Row is entitled to say that Paul asserted the fact of the resurrection, and he makes much of this assertion as coming from him within twenty or thirty years of the alleged occurrence.

Here Mr Row builds upon the circumstance that four of the Pauline epistles—namely, that to the Romans, the 1st and 2d to the Corinthians, and that

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to the Galatians—are currently accepted by even adverse critics as genuine. I am aware that this is so, but on the other hand know not on what grounds this assurance is founded. Certainly there are no collateral supports for Christianity, of a recognizable character, from any quarter, during the so-called apostolic age, or, it may be added, for a century later; and the mere occurrence in these epistles of features to exhibit the writer as a living personage, moving in the midst of events and persons alluded to by him, may show him to be a clever draftsman, but do not prove the realities of any part of his descriptions, or that he was that Paul of the apostolic period he professes to be. To me there is abundant room for concluding that he was not that Paul, and that these and the other epistles bearing the name of Paul are from Gentile hands at indeterminate periods.

It is apparent that the Paul of the Acts stood in a very different position from the Paul of the epistles. The Paul of the Acts is described as visiting Jerusalem at an early stage in his Christian career, as associating himself with the constituted apostles, as acting in subordination to the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, and as in every respect of the type of the first Christians, who were merely a Jewish sect. He proclaimed himself, it is said, a Pharisee, and had never diverged from the law of Moses or the temple ordinances. But the Paul of the Galatians, we are told, kept himself aloof from Jerusalem and the apostles, held a particular line of doctrine of his own which he traced to a revelation made specially to himself, asserted for himself independent authority coming to him, like his doctrine, by commission from above, thought lightly of the apostles, and swept away every reliance on Judaism as being a system powerless for good, and absolutely superseded by the new dispensation. The other associated epistles inculcate the same view of Judaism. Here we have, assuredly, between the Acts

and these epistles, two or more several Pauls; and the scene being laid in the extinguished Jerusalem, it becomes evident, as in the instance of the gospel descriptions of Christ personally, that we have in the Paul of the alleged apostolical age merely pictorial representations of such a preacher.

The epistle to the Romans presents special difficulties to its acceptance as a genuine address to the Church of Rome in the era ascribed to it. The faith of this church, at this early period, is said to be "spoken of throughout the whole world," and yet when Paul, according to the Acts, at a later time visited Rome, so little had this alleged church influenced the neighbourhood, that the inquiring Jews of Rome are shown to be totally ignorant of what constituted Christianity, and to have looked to Paul to enlighten them; and as Josephus made Rome his place of abode from the year 70 to the end of the century, there inditing his history of all that concerned the Jews, it is apparent that, had there been a sect flourishing in the city who were proclaiming the risen Jesus as the Messiah in his time, the circumstance was one this careful and discerning writer could not have failed to notice and to comment on. Furthermore, the last two chapters of this epistle contain matters inconsistent with other portions of Paul's accepted history, and attribute to him an acquaintance with residents of Rome which he could not have had before visiting the place; to save the epistle from which defects it is usual to sever these chapters from it as spurious additions. When, however, the integrity of the whole epistle may be called in question, the occurrence of these particular chapters, we may suppose, very possibly, to be indiscretions on the part of the hand that fabricated the earlier portion.

The scripture shows that there was a time when the disciples considered themselves precluded from offering the gospel to the Gentiles, and the restriction is accounted for by the founder when in life having enjoined

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it on them to confine their ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The church was then in Jewish form, and accordingly in the Acts we find the first teachers, and prominently the alleged Paul, described as frequenting the temple and practising and upholding Judaism. At some undiscernible period the door was opened to the Gentiles, and the character of the dispensation became materially altered. Attempts are made to place the change upon a warrantable footing, but the statements here are so inconsistent, that all the conclusion we can come to is that we have not true history before us. The proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles could not have been owing, as alleged, to a command issued by Jesus at his resurrection, else it would not have been necessary to provide Peter with a vision from heaven to encourage him to exercise this liberty; nor could there have been this vision to Peter, or Paul and Barnabas would not have had to resort to a questionable interpretation of the Jewish scripture to justify their free ministry among the Gentiles; and, it may be added, were there this scriptural support, either Jesus could not have been conscious of it, or he could not have given the edict of exclusion against this scripture. We arrive, therefore, at this result, that at some unrevealed time, and under some circumstances not properly disclosed, the Judaic form of Christianity became altered and a dispensation for the Gentiles was introduced, and in this unknown period, and certainly not within twenty or thirty years of the alleged resurrection, as assumed by Mr Row, the Pauline epistles made their appearance, and probably from Gentile hands.

Mr Row comforts himself with the idea that no one looks upon the Christian narrative as a deliberate invention. It is time assuredly to remove from the advocates of Christianity such a refuge. What is the meaning of that host of criticism in which, in modern times, Dr Strauss has led the way, founded upon the

conflict of statement in the gospel narratives, one representation destroying or excluding another, if it be not that these critics disallow the historical value of the narratives? They may admit some sort of foundation for the proffered history, but in its essential parts, figuring the hero in a desired form, they see that realities have not been followed. Marks, in fact, indicating what must be looked upon as deliberate fabrication on the part of the gospel writers are not wanting, and I will point out a few.

It is transparent that these writers have had the desire to exhibit Jesus as fulfilling ancient prophecies, and there must always have been a tendency on their parts to find events to correspond with the predictions. Some of the circumstances so brought together are of a character to give evidence of designed adaptations, as that of Jesus being taken to and brought from Egypt merely to carry out the saying, "Out of Egypt have I called my son;" the "voice of him that crieth in the wilderness," said to have been realized literally in the instance of John the Baptist; the being borne up by angels lest his foot should be dashed against a stone, as being met by Jesus when Satan tempted him to throw himself down from a pinnacle of the temple; the people of Zabulon and Naphtalim being visited by a great light, provided by Jesus in his ministrations in those among other localities; the attempt to prove John to be the precursor before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" spoken of by Malachi, of which no more could be said than, "*If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come;*" the purging the temple because Jeremiah had complained of God's house being converted into a den of thieves; the casting lots for the garments of Jesus to accomplish a saying of the Psalmist; and Jesus calling out in his last moments "I thirst" in order to fulfil another passage in the Psalms. A history composed with materials thus selected carries with it on its face the appearance of

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having been so arranged for a purpose, and if there are anywhere positive indications of statements introduced of a nature warring with fact, the whole representation becomes tainted as based upon fiction.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke contain genealogies deriving Joseph in a direct line from David. Now, as it is freely admitted in Jewish circles that the people had no knowledge of their tribal distinctions from the time of the Babylonish captivity, it is clear that the family of Joseph, a carpenter of Galilee, could have had no means of ascertaining their lineage as traceable through David to the tribal patriarch Judah. It was held desirable, to meet the requirements of assumed prophecy, in presenting Jesus as the Messiah, to show him lineally descended from David, and therefore it is that we have these genealogies. They were framed by the two writers independently of each other, and they effectually disagree, as might be expected when put together with imaginary data.

These same writers also give us a divine nativity for Jesus, a circumstance to entirely defeat the aforesaid genealogies; for if Jesus had no human father, he becomes cleared of association with Joseph and David, who had no part in his paternity. The event of this divine procreation is never made use of again to the last page of the sacred record, and the probability is that it was a late introduction. The tale could not have been current in the times depicted in the Acts, else it would have been an offence charged against Paul, that he had preached the new divinity, whereas he stood acquitted of having transgressed in any way against accepted Judaism as expressed by the law of Moses and embodied in the ordinances of the temple; nor would it have been said at this time, as it has been said, that Jesus obtained his divine sonship only at the day of his resurrection, according to the saying applied to him from the second Psalm.

With the account of the divine nativity in Matthew

is linked Herod's slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem, a matter the want of historical support for which has been commonly noticed. The conspiracy of Pheroras, as recounted by Josephus, would seem to have suggested this portion of the tale. Certain Pharisees, supposed to be gifted with the power of seeing into the future, predicted that Herod's line should be overthrown in favour of that of Pheroras. On this Herod put these prophets, and all of his own family who favoured the pretensions of Pheroras, to death. Pheroras he drove away to his own tetrarchy, and he went swearing with many oaths that he would not return till Herod was dead. Thus we have the prophecy of the subversion of the line of Herod, the consequent slaughter, the withdrawal of the rival, and his remaining in retreat till the death of Herod, all which circumstances the gospel writer has apparently made use of, and converted them in altered form to embellish his history of Jesus. As Josephus' history was not indited till the year 93, it follows that this portion of the narrative respecting Jesus was not even imagined until a later time.

Jesus is described as having been of Nazareth, and the distinction is kept up even by a voice from heaven alleged to have addressed Paul in effecting his conversion. Josephus mentions no such place, and we first hear of it, outside the pages of the scripture, from Eusebius, in the fourth century, when it is called Nazara, and said to be a village not of Galilee but of Judea. Matthew, ever striving to adapt fact to prophecy, asserts that it had been predicted that Jesus should be "called a Nazarene," but by which of the prophets he did not venture to point out. Possibly he was thinking of the term Nazarite, and there is the appearance that the name Nazareth has been coined under a play upon the Hebrew word *nazar*, consecration.

The second Psalm has a saying which has been

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frequently appealed to in the Christian scriptures as applicable to Jesus. The phrase is, "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." The question is of what day did the Psalmist speak? He shows in the verse next preceding that the time involved was when it could also be said of the personage adverted to, "yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," which was to be effected when the confederacy of the kings and rulers of the earth against him had been overthrown. This is sufficiently definite, and shows the eventful birth to be still in the womb of futurity. The Christian writers, anxious for the support of so marked a declaration, blind themselves to its surroundings, and say that it took effect in the instance of Jesus. The earliest statement, namely, that in the Acts, was, that it was by the means of his resurrection that this sonship was conferred upon him. The epistle to the Romans supports this representation, and twice in the epistle to the Hebrews the passage in question in its integrity is made applicable to Jesus. At some later time, seemingly, various other and conflicting allegations were introduced to support the title of Jesus to this prophesied sonship. An angel informs Mary that he was to acquire the divine sonship at his birth, his procreator being the Holy Ghost; a voice from heaven proclaims his sonship thirty years later at his baptism, as if then conferred on him, using the words of the Psalm, but (suspiciously) in a modified manner; and there is the same declaration, with the same modified use of the language of the Psalm, brought in at the transfiguration. On this one important point, therefore, how and when Jesus was made to be the son of God, we have a variety of conflicting statements, the leading statement, namely, that of the Psalm, which is the foundation of all the others, showing that it is an event that has yet to be accomplished. It is a mockery of our senses if the specific "this day" when the son in question was to be "begotten," is applicable to five different occasions.

One would think also if God could introduce among us an individual thus begotten by himself, his divinity would have been recognizable without the need of the offices of any herald.

There are some minor matters in which the hand of the constructor is also shown. To meet a prophecy, Jesus has to enter Jerusalem as its king upon an ass. The writer of Matthew, misapprehending the Hebrew phrase, brings upon the scene two animals, and curiously enough places Jesus upon them both. Mark and Luke, reading the Hebrew aright, have but one animal. Matthew and Luke state that Jesus predicted that before the cock crowed Peter should deny him thrice, and accordingly it is said, after his denial of any knowledge of Jesus three several times, "immediately the cock crew." Mark has it that the saying of Jesus to Peter was, "before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice;" and accordingly he makes it out that there was a crowing of the cock after the first denial, and again after the third, shaping his events to suit his sense of the prophetic utterance. At the crucifixion of Jesus the soldiers are said to have cast lots for his garments in fulfilment of a saying in the twenty-second Psalm. Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree that the whole of the garments were thus disposed of by lot. John, misapprehending the force of the Hebrew, thinks that it was meant that the "vesture," or upper "coat," as he takes it to have been, had been referred to distinctively, and was alone to be subjected to lot, and he puts his facts accordingly, saying that the "garments" were divided into four portions, for each soldier a portion, and that as the "coat" was without seam they could not divide it, but cast lots to decide which of them should have it.

Mr Row furthermore supports himself with the belief that the representation of Christ, as given in the gospel accounts, is so drawn as to demonstrate that it must have been taken from a real life, and that life of

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such a character as to have been of divine mould. Assuredly the picture of a god-man was one difficult to portray. We may say indeed that there is an impossibility to conceive the incidents proper to prove the being to be described as at once truly man and truly God, the conditions of the two natures and spheres being so diverse, and that of one of the two standing essentially beyond our cognizance. That the gospel writers in their portraiture have had nothing to draw from but human models, and that they have failed to present their subject with the attribute of perfection, or to maintain the composition of the divine with the human in consistency, was to have been expected; and we may readily see, in the imperfections of their work, that in a dark and ignorant age, building upon imagination and not upon fact, they have ventured upon a task which could not have been even attempted in an enlightened one.

The object placed before us is a carpenter, the reputed son of a carpenter, living in remote and barbaric Galilee, suddenly presenting himself, at the mature age of thirty, as in being an incarnate god, and in office the long-expected Messiah of the Jews. His credentials are his mighty works, or a system of thaumaturgical displays, his own assertions, and the character of his teaching, all to be judged of in an age incompetent to discern or weigh the facts, and to be sustained through all time by the hearsay reports of we know not who.

The humanity of the mother is certain, but we are perplexed to decide whether on the father's side he sprang from a human or a divine parent. It is as when the renowned conqueror Alexander was traceable either to Philip or to Jupiter Amon; or as when Hercules was derivable from the same supreme god or from Amphitryo; or, nearer still in parallelism, as when the imprisoned virgin Danae was visited and "overshadowed" by this divinity and brought forth the heroic Perseus. Both parentages are asserted and sup-

ported, the divine by angelic messengers, visiting, however, only the ostensible parents, the human by elaborate details of the father's pedigree. What Jesus said of himself is equally doubtful. His pleasure appears to have been to style himself "son of man;" when devils, cognizant of his divine constitution, were about to disclose who he was, he authoritatively shut their mouths; when at a late period in his ministry Peter asserted his divine sonship and position as the Christ or Messiah, he attributed his knowledge of him to a direct revelation from heaven, showing that hitherto he had never thus proclaimed himself; and at the same time he interdicted his disciples from declaring him to others. Currently he was considered to be a prophet, and if, as held in the Acts and the Epistle to the Romans, his condition as the son of God dated only from his resurrection, his career in the flesh must have been devoid of the divine ingredient. His place in the godhead has therefore, it is apparent, been imagined for him under the ordinary stimulus of the desire of his followers to magnify their master, as in the instance of the Hindu reformer Buddha, or of the Roman emperors, or of any other example of apotheosis or canonization.

The appeal to miracles is a very questionable resort. Now as Jesus is repeatedly represented to have exhorted those on whose behalf they were wrought to keep the matter secret to themselves, and as when such signs, upon being asked for, were refused to be accorded by him, and the desire to have them was repressed as sinful, it is to be gathered, in spite of the sayings to the contrary, that the writers were aware that there was no such public sense of the occurrence of these marvels as must have attached to them had they really been enacted, and we are left to the conclusion that there were in fact no such demonstrations. Not only therefore was the divine Messiahship, it may be seen, not asserted in the lifetime of Jesus, the testimony of the

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miracles to fall back upon as evidences of his super-human being and mission, was also, it may be understood, equally wanting. Such displays of alleged power are after all a very weak and hacknied device, common among the Hebrew prophets, asserted as current among the followers of Jesus, and traceable in every mythology that has prevailed, Hindu, Chaldean, Egyptian, Grecian, and Roman, with which the Christian writers were familiar when they drew up their narratives, and from which sources, it may be judged, they derived their models.

Nor were the acts ascribed to Jesus of a character uniformly to sustain the pretensions asserted for him of his divinity. It certainly was not ennobling that he should by a miracle have supplied a vast quantity of wine to promote the revelry of those who had already "well drunk;" that he should make clay with his spittle to anoint the eyes of a blind man and restore him to sight; that he should drive swine to self-destruction by infesting them with demons; that he should look for his tribute money in a fish's mouth; that he should curse and blight a senseless fig-tree for not producing fruit out of due season; that he should castigate with a whip, made up by him of small cords, merchants and money changers assembled in the temple courts, in promotion of the ordinary temple services. These are defective pictures betraying the pencils of inferior artists.

We have Jesus represented as stretching out his arms longingly to Jerusalem, exclaiming, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not;" but as his divine sonship and Messiahship were both profound secrets, in what capacity, it must be asked, could he have offered himself to Jerusalem and been refused? In fact there is no such action towards the city on his part described, and the attitude in question is a mere sensational protraiture.

We have him described as speaking as never man spake before, but such a thing as a novel elevated sentiment is not recorded as falling from his lips. He retails what was current among Essenes and devout Jews of his day, and preaches natural religion as prevailing among the godly in all times. His famous sermon on the mount, for example, contains nothing but what is fairly traceable to the teachers of his people who had preceded him, as transmitted to us in the Talmudic traditions. But in these unequal delineations he is also represented to us as designedly withholding from the people instruction in godliness. He veils his discourses in parables with the professed intention that they should not be intelligible to his hearers, to their benefit, "lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and he should heal them," (the parables, however, nevertheless, being simple in structure, and transparent as to their import); and he solemnly thanks God that "these things," necessary for their salvation, are "hid" from the wise and prudent, and revealed only to those who are without discernment as "babes."

He is made, contrary to all sense of modesty, to announce himself as "meek and lowly," ever ready "to seek and to save the lost ones." We find him far from accessible to those who looked to him for instruction, rebuffing them with short and enigmatical answers; he reviles Scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, whitened sepulchres, liars, and children of the devil; he is rude to his own mother; he holds earthly ties of relationship in small account when measured by his personal mission, and represents that he has "come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law," adding that under his dispensation "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." "There is nothing more remarkable," acknowledges Mr Row himself, in

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his earlier work; "The Jesus of the Evangelists,"—"in the Evangelical portraiture of the Christ than the manner in which the humblest of men is depicted as habitually preaching himself." "In no other man would such an assumption wear anything but the appearance of arrogance." And yet we are to accept the feature as consistent with a perfect specimen of humanity fortified and exalted with a divine essence ever permeating through it.

The being so composed is in truth a mass of bewildering inconsistencies. God is said to have "so loved the world" that he gave up his son "that the world through him might be saved," and yet the son solemnly intimates to the Father, "I pray not for the world;" he is "the light of the world," "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and nevertheless consigns multitudes to perdition, of whom he will say, "I never knew you;" he expresses in himself the type of poverty, as one who had not a hole wherein to lay his head, but can pass forty days and forty nights without food, create sustenance for thousands out of nothing, fabricate wine out of water, and supply himself with cash from a fish's mouth; he is at once the bridegroom, the centre of joy, and spreading joy around him, and the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he is the source of life, and yet cannot protect his own life from his enemies; he is God, "equal with God," and nevertheless, in an agony of distress, "with strong crying and tears," entreats God for deliverance, and his prayer is unheeded; again he is God, and yet feels himself abandoned by God; he came to lay down his life as a sacrifice for others, and when he undergoes his destined fate, not recognizing his own work, he upbraids God with forsaking him, and wonders "why" he has done so.

It is a relief to know that this is no true life, but a mere portraiture of an ideal personage drawn by ignorant men, for ignorant classes, in days of darkness. Josephus

knew nothing of these wonderments, and he wrote up to the year 93, being familiar with all the chief scenes of the alleged Christianity. Nicolaus of Damascus, who preceded him and lived to the time of Herod's successor Archelaus, and Justus of Tiberias, who was the contemporary and rival of Josephus in Galilee, both Jewish historians, equally knew nothing of the movement. Philo-Judæus, who occupied the whole period ascribed to Jesus, and engaged himself deeply in figuring out the Logos, had heard nothing of the being who was realizing at Jerusalem the image his fancy was creating; and for about a hundred and fifty years from the time given as that of the death of Jesus, there is not a single reliable name or record connected with Christianity which can be safely associated with the period. After this lapse of time, when Jerusalem had been destroyed and the Jews exiled by Hadrian, the Christian representations were conceived and gradually put together. The Jewish scriptures and the traditionary teaching of their doctors, the Essenes and Therapeuts, the Greek philosophies, the neo-platonism of Alexandria, and the Buddhism of the East, gave ample supplies for the composition of the doctrinal portion of the new faith; the divinely procreated personages of the Grecian and Roman pantheons, the tales of the Egyptian Osiris, and of the Indian Rama, Krishna, and Buddha, furnished the materials for the image of the new saviour of mankind; and every surrounding mythology poured forth samples of the "mighty works" that were to be attributed to him to attract and enslave his followers; and thus, first from Judaism, and finally from the bosom of heathendom, we have our matured expression of Christianity.