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FROM THE NATIVITY TO THE TEMPTATION

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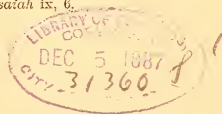
GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN

AUTHOR OF

"STUDIES IN THE CREATIVE WEEK," "STUDIES IN THE MODEL PRAYER," "EPIPHANIES
OF THE RISEN LORD," "STUDIES IN THE MOUNTAIN INSTRUCTION," ETC.

Unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given ;
And the government shall be upon his shoulder :
And his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

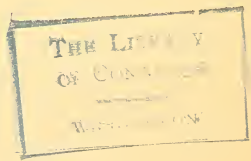
Isaiah ix, 6.



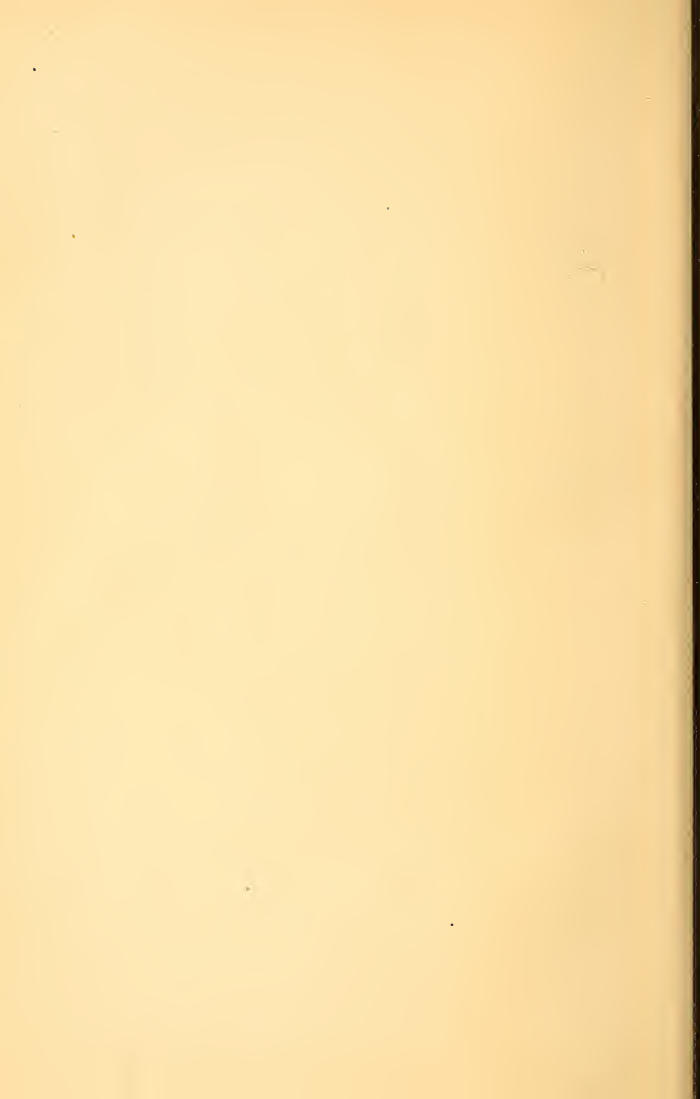
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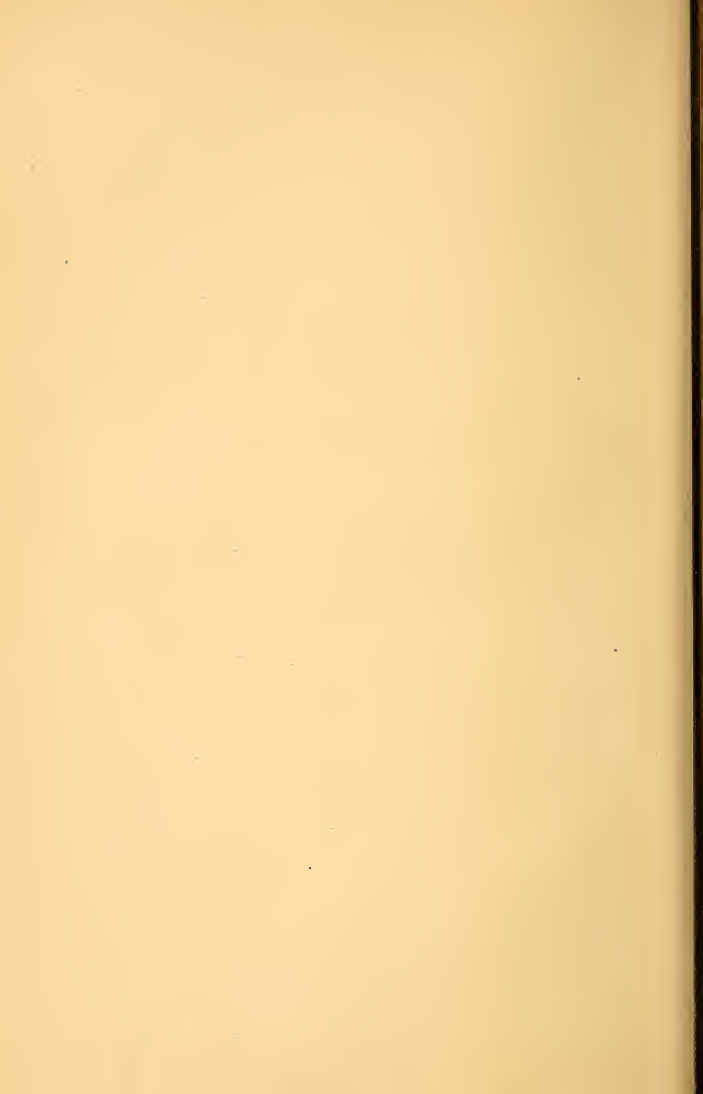


TO
THE HOUSEHOLDS OF CHRISTENDOM
THESE STUDIES IN THE PREPARATORY YEARS OF
THE DIVINE MAN
ARE OFFERED IN PRAISE OF HIS GRACE.



EXPLANATORY NOTE.

*The Scriptural citations in this book are
from the Revised Version.*



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THE PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL.

JOHN i, 1-18.

Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come
in the flesh is of God.

1 John iv, 2.



I.

THE PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL.

JOHN i, 1-18.

These first eighteen verses of St. John's Gospel are in depth and majesty peerless in all the world's literature, peerless even in the Book of God himself. They take us into the very holy of holies in the sanctuary of Truth, ay, into the very heights of Godhood, into the very depths of Godhood in Manhood. In this prologue profoundest philosophy and loftiest poetry are divinely wedded. No wonder the early Church loved to speak of St. John as the eagle, soaring with tranquil pinion and undimmed eye toward the very sun. Listen to a mediæval poet, who had been evidently trained in the noble school of Adam of St. Victor :

Majesty of the
Prologue.

The Word of God, the Eternal Son,
With God, the Uncreated, One,
Came down to earth from heaven ;
To see him, handle him, and show
His heavenly life to men below,
To holy John was given.

De S. Joanne
Evangelista.

Translated by
Dean Plump-
tre.

Among those four primeval streams
Whose living fount in Eden gleams,
John's record true is known ;

To all the world he poureth forth
 The nectar pure of priceless worth
 That flows from out the throne.

Beyond the heavens he soared, nor failed,
 With all the spirit's gaze unveiled,
 To see our true Sun's grace ;
 Not as through mists and visions dim,
 Beneath the wings of Seraphim
 He looked and saw God's face.

He heard where songs and harps resound,
 And four and twenty elders round
 Sing hymns of praise and joy ;
 The impress of the One in Three,
 With print so clear that all may see,
 He stamped on earth's alloy.

As eagle winging loftiest flight
 Where never seer's or prophet's sight
 Had pierced the ethereal vast,
 Pure beyond human purity,
 He scanned, with still undazzled eye,
 The future and the past.*

* Compare Dr. Washburn's translation of this stanza :

Bird of God with boundless flight
 Soaring far beyond the height
 Of the bard or prophet old ;
 Truth fulfilled, and truth to be,—
 Never purer mystery
 Did a purer tongue unfold.

Let me add the sonorous original :

Volat avis sine metâ
 Quo nec vates nec propheta
 Evolavit altius ;
 Tam implenda quam impleta,
 Nunquam vidit tot secreta
 Purus homo purius.

The Bridegroom, clad in garments red,
 Seen, yet with might unfathomèd,
 Home to his palace hies;
 Ezekiel's eagle to his bride
 He sends, and will no longer hide
 Heaven's deepest mysteries.

O loved one, bear, if thou canst tell
 Of him whom thou didst love so well,
 Glad tidings to the Bride;
 Tell of the angels' food they taste,
 Who with the Bridegroom's presence graced
 Are resting at his side.

Tell of the soul's true bread unpriced,
 Christ's supper, on the breast of Christ
 In wondrous rapture ta'en;
 That we may sing before the throne
 His praises, whom as Lord we own,
 The Lamb we worship slain.

In studying this profound prologue, every sentence of which is freighted with fathomless meaning, we can not do better than ponder it clause by clause.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.”

The Eternal
 Divinity.
 Verses 1, 2.

“*In the beginning.*” Then Jesus Christ was eternally pre-existent. Matthew's genealogy takes us back to Abraham: “The pedigree of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Luke's genealogy takes us back to Adam: “The son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” John has no genealogy, or rather his genealogy is the genealogy of what the fathers, in lack of a better name, called an “eternal gen-

Matt. i, 1-16.

Luke iii, 23-38.

Heb. vii, 1-3.

eration." Like Melchizedek, king of Salem, the Word of God is without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. St. John's chronology antedates creation itself. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; in the beginning was (not became) the Word. St. John's Prologue is the real Book of Genesis. Before aught else existed, in the unbeginning solitude before creation, Jesus Christ was the Word of God, the eternal Father's majestic soliloquy.

Genesis i, 1.

"In the beginning was *the Word*." Then Jesus Christ was the Speech of God. It is most difficult, and indeed impossible, to give a complete translation of the term here rendered "Word," as the beloved disciple uses it. How striking the lines of Goethe :

"Faust," Bay-
ard Taylor's
Translation.

'Tis written : "In the beginning was the *Word*" :
Here am I balked : who now can help afford ?
The *Word*?—impossible so high to rate it ;
And otherwise must I translate it,
If by the Spirit I am truly taught.
Then thus : "In the beginning was the *Thought*" :
This first line let me weigh completely,
Lest my impatient pen proceed too fleetly.
Is it the *Thought* which works, creates, indeed ?
"In the beginning was the *Power*," I read.
Yet, as I write, a warning is suggested
That I the sense may not have fairly tested.
The Spirit aids me ; now I see the light !
"In the beginning was the *Act*," I write.

But why does St. John call Jesus Christ the Word? Without loitering among the subtleties of Philo and the Alexandrian school concerning the

Logos, enough that I say that John calls the Nazarene the Word because the Nazarene is Deity in manifestation, in expression, in articulation. And for this designation of Jesus as the Word the Old Testament writers had prepared St. John. Such phrases as "God said," "Thus saith Jehovah," "The word of Jehovah came," "The voice of Jehovah," and the like, perpetually recur in the Old Testament. In fact, the whole revelation of God to patriarch, lawgiver, psalmist, and prophet, was recognized as God's Word. When therefore God, who at sundry times and in divers manners had spoken in time past to the fathers by his prophets, now at the close of the old covenant spake to the world by his Son, it was perfectly natural that the Hebrew John, trained from his infancy in the ancient Scriptures, should speak of that Son as being in the eminent, culminating sense of the term the WORD. The God, who had been more or less clearly hinted at in the Old Testament, became distinctly articulate in Jesus the Nazarene. The Son of man is the Word of God. Heb. i, 1.

"*And the Word was with God.*" Then Jesus Christ was distinct from God: for whoever is with another is distinct from that other. Then again Jesus Christ was in unity with God, "throned face to face" with him. He was Deity's infinite, blessed *Vis-à-vis*. Existing in the form of God, he counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped. The Word was with God. Phil. ii, 6.

"*And the Word was God.*" Then Jesus Christ was absolutely Divine. Whatever doubts we may have about his Godhood, his apostle John had

none. This in fact is the reason why the early Church gave him the title of Theologian; they called him *Theologus*, because he taught that the *Logos* was *Theos*, the Word was God. John is pre-eminently the Theologian, because John is pre-eminently the Christologian. The Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God."

Then Jesus Christ, who eternally was and was with God and was God, was also eternally distinct from God and also eternally associate with God. It is the exceeding emphasis of solemn iteration and compact summary. The Same was in the beginning with God.

The Creative
Agent.
Verse 3.

"All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made."

Col. i, 16, 17.

"All things through him were made." Then Jesus Christ was the agent and instrument of the universal creation. In him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist, that is, hold together. Thus the "God-Said" of the first chapter of Genesis is the "God-Word" of the first chapter of John.

"And without him was not anything made that hath been made." Then Jesus Christ was the sole medium of the whole creation. Again it is the solemn emphasis of minute iteration. All things came into being through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into being.

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.”

The Living Illumination.
Verses 4, 5.

“*That which hath been made was life in him.*”

Then Jesus Christ was not only the divine agent of the universal creation; he was also the divine source, and basis, and means, and sphere, of all life; life vegetable, life animal, life human, life angelic. Not only is he before all things: in him also all things consist, subsist, have their substance, hold together. That which hath come into being was life in him.

Col. i, 17.

“*And the life was the light of men.*” Then Jesus Christ is also the divine source, and basis, and means, and sphere of moral illumination. Do you say that John’s connection of life and light is abrupt? It is abrupt only in appearance. Gifted with profound insight, intuitively discerning the occult, real connections of things, John’s copulative conjunctions are more than merely connective: they are also organic. To his piercing vision, the Word in whom was life is the same as the Word in whom was light; the God of creation the same as the God of redemption. To the disciple whom Jesus loved, the Word was the life of light and the light of life. That which hath come into being was life in him, and the life was the light of men.

“*And the light in the darkness shineth.*” Then there is such a thing as moral darkness. Alas! dark, indeed, is this poor fallen world of ours; it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death; the land of thick darkness as darkness itself, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

Job x, 21, 22.

Isaiah ix, 2.

But, thank God, the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Yea, the same God, who in the beginning commanded light to shine out of darkness, now shineth in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Genesis i, 1.

2 Cor. iv, 6.

“And the darkness overcame it not.” Then Jesus Christ will be victorious. A profound truth underlay the dualism of Zoroaster, according to which there are two deities struggling for the mastery of the universe: Ormuzd, God of Light; and Ahriman, God of Night; and Fate has decreed that Ormuzd shall conquer Ahriman. It was the pagan, instinctive groping after God and his righteousness. As a matter of fact, light and darkness are inherently, constitutently antagonistic; but light is the stronger, and will conquer. The light in the darkness was shining; and the darkness overcame it not.

The Preluding
Witness.

Verses 6-8.

“There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.”

Then John the Baptist was divinely commissioned to be the prophetic witness of Jesus Christ. For it was not meet that the Word of God and the Light of men should come into the world unheralded. All the Old Testament, its system of oracle, ordinance, ritual, and prophecy, had foretold his coming. And the heraldic system

culminated in John of the Desert. This was he of whom it had been written,

Matt. xi, 10.

Behold, I send my messenger before thy face,
Who shall prepare thy way before thee.

Malachi iii, 1.

This is why among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist. And yet he was not the Light. True, he was in his own place and measure a burning and shining lamp; and men were willing to rejoice for a season in his light. But he was only a lamp ignited; he was not the igniting light.* He was a morning star; he was not the sun of righteousness.

Matt. xi, 11.

John v, 35.

“There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.”

The Progressive Illumination.

Verse 9.

“*There was the true light.*” Then Jesus Christ was the original, archetypal light. All other lights, whether of Nature or of Scripture, are only derived, reflected lights. Jesus Christ, as the Word of God, is the primal, underived, archetypal, true light. And Jesus Christ is the true light, because Jesus Christ is the Word of God.

“*The true light, which lighteth every man, was coming into the world.*” Then Jesus Christ, the true light, is evermore coming into humanity. The Word existed before the birth at Bethlehem: In the beginning was the Word. And the Word, as the true light, is ever coming into the world.

* *Johannes lumen illuminatum : Christus lumens illuminans.*—

Rom. i, 20.

The true light is ever shining in Nature : The invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity ; so that even heathen are without excuse. The true light is ever shining

Rom. ii, 14, 15.

in Conscience : When Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves ; in that they shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts accusing or else excusing them one with another. Yes, it is sublimely true that the true light, even the Word of God, who in the beginning was and was with God, and was God, is Deity in eternal advent. The true light, which lighteth every man, was coming into the world.

The Tragic Rejection.

Verses 10, 11.

“He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.”

“*He was in the world.*” Then Jesus Christ is the light of the world as well as the light of the church. The true light, as we have seen, is ever shining in nature and in conscience. “*And the world was made through him.*” Then those who live in the world owe Jesus Christ, the eternal Word and the true light, grateful loyalty. “*And the world knew him not.*” Then the world was guilty of sacrilegious ingratitude to Jesus Christ. Although his eternal power and divinity were clearly seen through his works, yet they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks ;

Rom. i, 20-23.

but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not. "*Unto his own he came.*" Then Jesus Christ condescended to become a Jew. When the Word was made flesh, he, as had been divinely covenanted, was born of the stock of Abraham; so that the Jewish race was in the eminent sense his own possession and inheritance: Unto his own he came. "*And they that were his own received him not.*" Then the Jews were guilty of a special sacrilege in rejecting their own divine Countryman. It was his own Nazareth who rejected him; it was his own Jerusalem who crucified him. He came unto his own home, and his own people accepted him not.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

"*But as many as received him.*" Then Jesus Christ found welcomers in the world that hated him, even among the Jews that spurned him. Already in our apostle's day multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles joyously accepted the Nazarene's sovereignty. "*To them gave he the right to become children of God.*" Then Jesus Christ is the medium of the divine adoption. True, man,

The Heavenly
Right.
Verses 12, 13.

Genesis i, 26.

John iii, 3.

Acts iv, 12.

in virtue of his very creation, as made in God's likeness, after God's image, is God's son. But he has fallen, and lost the sense as well as the privileges of sonship. What he needs, then, is to have the sense and privileges of sonship restored to him : to be, as it were, born over again, born from above. And the Word of God is the secret of this regeneration : To as many as receive him he gives the right to become God's children. "*Even to them that believe in his name.*" Then none but those who accept Jesus Christ as the Word of God will Jesus Christ, God's Word, empower to become God's children. There is no other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved. "*Who were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" Then this second birth, this recovery of the sense of divine sonship, is no wise possible in the plane of nature. No ancestral piety or birth of blood, no outward rite or birth of the will of the flesh, no personal resolve or birth of the will of man, can make us children of God. None but the Word of God himself, in whom is the life and who is the true light of men, can give the power and the right to those who believe in his name to attain the divine sonship. As many as received him, to these gave he the right to become God's children, even to them that believe in his name ; who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The Divine Incarnation.

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of

the only-begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." Verse 14.

"*And the Word became flesh.*" Then the Divine Word became human. It is a profound statement, the corner-stone of Christianity, the turning-point in human eternity. Let us, then, ponder it most carefully. Observe, first, what it was that became flesh: it was the Word, that same Word who in the beginning was, and was with God, and was God. Observe, secondly, the verb which St. John uses. He does not say, "The Word was changed into flesh"; he says, "The Word became flesh." When the eternal Word was born, he was not altered into flesh, and so ceased to be the Word; he became flesh, and still continued to be the Word. Jesus Christ as the Word always was; Jesus Christ as flesh became. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word became flesh. And in the Word become flesh, the Word and the flesh blended into one new personality, the God-man. In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, in body-fashion. Col. ii, 9. Observe, thirdly, that in thus becoming flesh the Word became man under disabled conditions. For take precise note of the noun which St. John uses. He does not say, "The Word became man"; he says, "The Word became flesh." And "flesh," according to a common scriptural usage, means man as under disabilities, human nature as frail and dependent and mortal. The Word not only became man, as Adam was before he fell: the Word became flesh, as Adam was after he fell. Not that the Word took into himself a sinful

Rom. viii, 3.

manhood—perish the thought! It was only in the likeness of sinful flesh that he became. Nevertheless, he did become flesh, and as such did become exposed to the unfortunate conditions, to the trials and sorrows and perils and mishaps of a nature lapsed in Adam's fall. He took into himself weakness without sinfulness, infirmity without guilt, possibility of fall without fall. Verily, we have not a high priest who can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. What unspeakable comfort in this little clause, "The Word became flesh"!

Heb. iv, 15.

"And dwelt [pitched his tent, tabernacled] among us." It is a reminiscence of the old wilderness life. What the ancient tabernacle had been to the Jew, that the enfleshment of the Word was henceforth to be to the Church. The incarnation was the entempling of Deity in humanity. Jesus said unto the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews answered, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?" But he spake of the temple of his body. Accordingly, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had spoken this, and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

John ii, 19-22.

"And we beheld his glory." Again it is a reminiscence of the old wilderness life, even of the Shechinah which was wont to marshal the hosts of Israel, and gleam between the cherubim over the mercy-seat. St. John himself had literal-

ly beheld that glory : it was when the face of the Word made flesh shone as the sun on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is also for us to behold Christ's glory ; for the character of the Divine Man, what is it but the true and everlasting Shechinah ?

“Glory as of the only begotten from the Father.” An infinite mystery surely ! For to be begotten implies a beginning, an origin in time. But the Word, as we have seen, had existed eternally : In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. How then could the unbeginning Word be said to be begotten ? The problem absorbed the thought of the early church, and so they talked of “eternal generation,” an “eternal filiation,” and the like, as though the Son and only begotten of the Father were eternally generated or filiated from the Father. Their mistake was, and we ourselves often fall into a like mistake when studying Scripture, they interpreted a figure of speech as though it were a creed-statement, a parable as though it were a dogma. Whereas such phrases as represent Jesus Christ as being the Son of God, or the only begotten from the Father, are not creed-formulas, to be taken literally or word-wise ; they are figures of speech, hinting in a colossal way such ineffable relations between God and the Word become flesh as can be best set forth in analogies drawn from human relations. The phrase before us, “The only begotten from the Father,” is an august parable, divinely meant to suggest, in way of stupendous, nebulous hint, the unutterable con-

substantialness and fellowship of God and Christ, the infinite intercommunion of the eternal God and the eternal Word. We beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, even the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Whatever glory infinite Deity had—whether as being uncreate, or eternal, or omnipresent, or omniscient, or omnipotent, or infinitely true, or infinitely righteous, or infinitely gracious, or infinitely blessed—all this infinite glory also belonged to the Word made flesh. We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father.

John xvii, 5.

“Full of grace and truth.” Then Jesus Christ is the personal plenitude of the divine mercies, he is full of grace; and also of the eternal realities, he is full of truth. And this fullness of grace and truth comes to our apprehensions and to our hearts through the incarnation, or the enfleshment of infinite Deity. In the Word made flesh dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Col. ii, 9.

Thus the weightiest of truths is expressed in the briefest of phrases, “The Word became flesh.”

The August
Testimony.
Verse 15.

“John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me.”

Then John the apostle does not stand alone in testifying to the Word made flesh. His memory goes back many a year to the Jordan, where the man who had been sent from God to be a witness to the true Light had also borne most solemn tes-

timony to Jesus the Nazarene as the pre-existent Word. John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is become before me: for he was before me." John's successor was really John's predecessor. Before John was born, the Word was. Before Abraham became, Jesus Christ is.

John i, 29, 30.

John viii, 58.

"For of his fullness we all received, and grace for grace."

The Gracious Fullness.

Verse 16.

"*Of his fullness.*" Then Jesus Christ is inexhaustibly full. He is the plenitude of the Divine attributes, the totality of the Divine perfections. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell. "Out of that fullness *we all received, even grace for grace, grace after grace, grace upon grace.*" The fullness of the Word made flesh is the true tree of life, evermore fruitful, evermore yielding new kinds of fruit.

Col. i, 19.

"*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*"

The Majestic Superiority.

Verse 17.

It is a triple contrast. First, Moses, although so great, was only a servant; but Jesus is a son: Moses, indeed, was faithful in all God's house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken; but Jesus was faithful as a son over God's house, whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end. Again, the law which came through Moses was a condemning, slaying power; but the grace which came through

Heb. iii, 1-6.

Jesus Christ is an acquitting, life-giving power: The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. Once more, the law which was given through Moses was but a shadow of the good things to come; whereas the truth which came through Jesus Christ is the essential, abiding reality itself: Christ is the end (goal, consummation) of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth. The law through Moses was given; the grace and the truth through Jesus Christ came.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

“*God no one hath ever seen.*” For infinite God must, it would seem, because infinite, be for ever incommunicable with finite man. Jehovah said unto Moses, “Thou canst not see my face: for man shall not see me and live.” The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen. “*The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [interpreted, made exegesis of] him.*” Then Jesus Christ, the Divine Man, because both infinite and finite as the Word become flesh, is able to mediate, and does mediate, between the infinite and the finite. The Word made flesh is infinite God in gracious communication with finite man. He is the loving manifestation of Deity absolute. Philip saith unto Jesus, “Lord, shew us the Father, and

Rom. viii, 2.

Heb. x, 1.

Rom. x, 4.

The Competent Interpreter.

Verse 18.

Exc. xxxiii, 20.

1 Tim. vi, 15, 16.

John xiv, 8, 9.

it sufficeth us." Jesus saith unto Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Shew us the Father?"

Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, the effulgence of his glory, the very image of his substance. The Word made flesh is Deity in exposition. And for this service of expounding or revealing Deity, the Word had been perfectly qualified. For no one can be truly interpreted except by his intimate. And Jesus Christ was the eternal Father's bosom companion. The Word was with God, and therefore could interpret him. God no one hath ever seen; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. Jesus Christ is Deity in enunciation. He is the Word of God.

Col. i, 15.

Heb. i, 3.

Such is the apostle John's prologue to his evangel of the Divine Man.

Reviewing this majestic prologue as a whole, we can not fail to be struck with certain points.

First, The Word made flesh is the mystery of mysteries. Listen to the great Augustine: "God; what more glorious? Flesh; what more vile? God in flesh; what more wondrous?"* This in fact is the reason why so many persons reject the story of the Miraculous Conception. But let us be fair. The Word made flesh is not the only incomprehensible mystery. Take, for example, one at our very doors, confronting us every moment of our lives—the mystery of the union of mind and

The Word
made Flesh
the Mystery
of Mysteries.

* *Deus; quid gloriosius? Caro; quid vilius? Deus in carne; quid mirabilius?*

matter. Think for a moment how utterly different these two things are. The mind is spirit; the body is matter; between the two there is nothing in common; spirit and matter, so far as we know, are absolute antitheses. In fact, to talk of the union of spirit and body is, as the skeptic says of the Word made flesh, "a contradiction in terms." Nevertheless the skeptic believes it, absurd and *à priori* impossible though it is. He does not deny the union of soul and body on the ground that he can not understand it. If he can not understand earthly things and yet believes them, why then does he disbelieve heavenly things on the ground that he can not understand them?

John iii, 12.

The Word
made Flesh
the Prophet
of God.

Secondly, The Word made flesh is in the eminent sense the Prophet of God, interpreting God to man. As we have seen, he had always been in the world. He had spoken in creation, in providence, in conscience. He had spoken especially to the Jew, uttering himself in law and prophet. But his utterances, compared with those which were to come, had been dim and vague. At length he made himself distinctly articulate in and by his own incarnation. God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son. The Word, by becoming flesh, became by that very act, and in the pre-eminent sense, The Word of God, God's very Prophet, speaking to us for God, interpreting God to us. Yes, the Divine Man is God in self-disclosure.

Heb. i, 1.

Thirdly, The Word made flesh is also the Prophet of man, interpreting man to himself. We know not what giant faculties of moral power lie within us, what capacities of seraphic aspiration, until Jesus Christ speaks to us. We need to be touched by a God-man in order to have aroused what in us is Godlike and Godward. We need to have the Divine Word prophesy to us, to interpret God to us; and we need to have the Divine Word made flesh prophesy in us, to interpret us to ourselves. And so Jehovah our God, as he promised Moses, has raised up unto us from among his brethren a prophet like unto ourselves, born of God and born of man: unto him, then, let us all give heed in all things, lest our souls also be destroyed.

Fourthly, The Word made flesh answers that instinct of perfection of which all of us are more or less conscious, and which is an original, inalienable part of our nature. We instinctively conceive, and in our golden moments long to behold, a perfect Character, or ideal Man. Hence the tendency common to all nations to conceive either a Divine Man, or a human God; either, with the Greek, to believe in the deification of man, as, for example, Hercules; or, with the Hindu, in the incarnation of God, as, for example, Vishnu. These and such as these are but attempts to realize the vague and mighty yearnings of humanity's heart for a Perfect Man. And the Word made flesh fulfills that sublime yearning. Jesus Christ, the God-man, is the perfected Character, *L'homme à venir*, the ideal Man, the embodiment and sum-

The Word
made Flesh
the Prophet
of Man.

Dent. xviii, 15-
19.
Acts iii, 22, 23.

The Word
made Flesh
the Ideal
Man.

total of perfected humanity, the symbol and representative of fulfilled human nature, *The Son of Man*. As in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, so in him dwelleth all the fullness of an unfolded, perfected, fulfilled humanity. Perfect in Jesus Christ.

Col. ii, 9, 10.

Col. i, 28.

The Word
made Flesh
the Pivot of
Christianity.

Fifthly, The Word made flesh is the pivotal truth of Christianity. Everything of the Christian religion depends on the truth of the story of Bethlehem. If he who was born there was not really God, then the religion he set up is but a human religion, and our hopes of a manhood perfected in a Divine Man are quenched. If he who was born there was not really man, but only phantom flesh, then the religion he set up is a deceitful religion, leaving to us—it may be—nothing but a phantom God. Therefore, I say that Christianity from center to circumference is balanced on the pivot of the Divine Nativity. Revelation, mediation, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, return—all revolve around Bethlehem's manger. What is the resurrection of Jesus Christ himself but the resurrection of an embodied God, the Word made flesh?

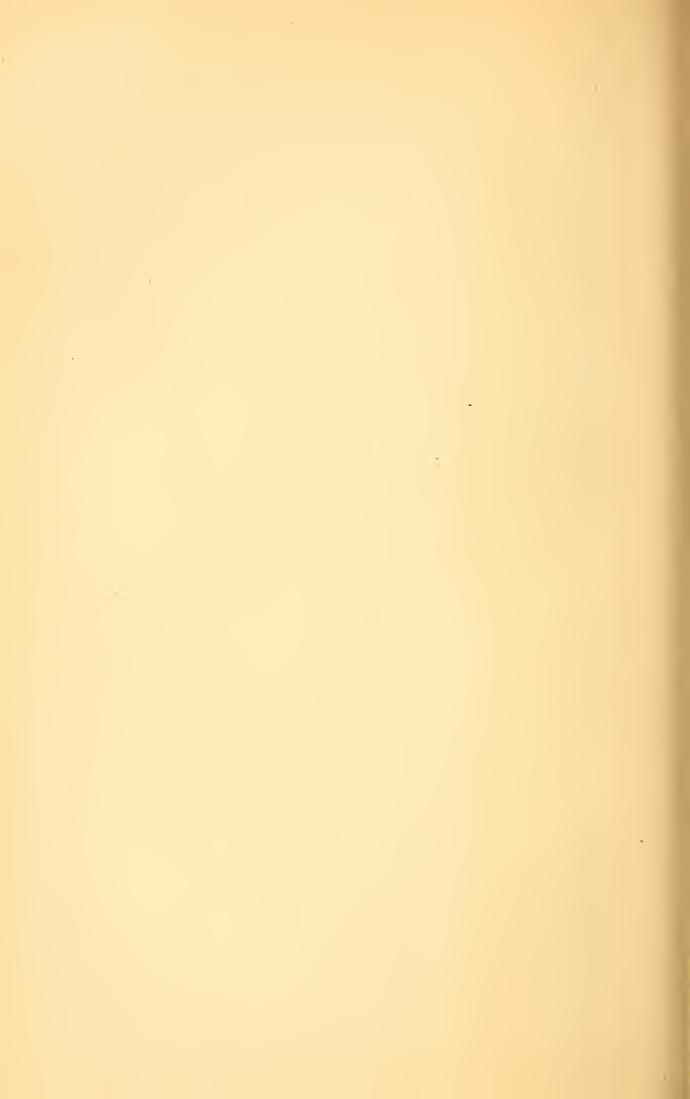
The Word
made Flesh
the Test of
Christianity.

1 John iv, 2.

Lastly, Belief in the incarnation or enfleshment of the eternal Word is the appointed test of Christianity: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." That is to say: Every one who believes that the Babe of Bethlehem was really God and really man—that the Word, who in the beginning was and was with God and was God, really became flesh—every one who really believes and really acts out the belief

that Jesus Christ was really God-man, is born of God. Hold fast then, O friend, to the Godhood of Jesus Christ as the Word who in the beginning was: hold fast to the manhood of Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh. Adore the God in the man—the humanized God: cling to the Man in the God—the divinized Man.

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away Collect.
the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.



THE PREFACE TO THE GOSPELS.

LUKE i, 1-4.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables.

2 Peter i, 16.



II.

THE PREFACE TO THE GOSPELS.

LUKE i, 1-4.

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed.” Luke i, 1-4.

Such are the words with which the Evangelist Luke introduces his story of the Divine Man. It reminds us of his preface to his story of the Primitive Church: “The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen.” In fact, the story of the Apostolic Church is but a continuation of the story of Jesus Christ himself: for Jesus Christ Acts i, 1, 2.

and they who are his are one. Well then might the Evangelist who had written for the excellent Theophilus, Friend of God, the story of all that Jesus both did and taught from the beginning till the day he was taken up, write for the same excellent Theophilus the story of what Jesus' apostles did; for the apostolic church was but the unfolding of the kernel of wheat which had fallen into the ground and died. The seed of the kingdom is Jesus Christ, even the Word made flesh; the harvest of that seed is the church, the fullness of him who filleth all in all.

John xii, 24.

Eph. i, 23.

Many Primitive
"Gos-
pels."

From this preface to St. Luke's Gospel we learn, first, that there were already existing in the Evangelist's day many "gospels": "*Forasmuch as many have undertaken to draw up a consecutive account concerning those matters which have been fully established among us.*"

Christianity has ever been the grand inspirer of Christendom's literature. Probably more has been written about Jesus Christ, his character and teaching and work, than about all other things put together. For it is not in religious books alone that we see the signs of his presence and sway. We can scarcely take up a volume on any grave subject—ethical, philosophical, historic, biographic, æsthetic—without ever and anon catching at least glimpses of the passing shadow of the Son of Mary. The unconscious tributes of literature to Jesus the Nazarene are surprisingly many and emphatic. He is in very truth the perpetual Presence, his line going out through all the earth, and his words to the end of the world; there is no

Matt. xxviii, 20.

Psalm xix, 3, 4.

speech nor language where his voice is not heard. If, then, even amid the materialistic din of our nineteenth century, nothing so moves the hearts and pens of men as the career and character of Jesus Christ, we can easily believe that this inspiration must have been still more powerful in the century of Christ's contemporaries. Among the multitudes who witnessed his wondrous deeds and listened to his matchless sayings and felt the impress of his incomparable character, there must have been not a few who would make memoranda of what they had seen and heard and felt. The impulse to do this would be all the stronger, inasmuch as it was before the age of printing-press and publishing apparatus. We need not be surprised, then, that as time sped on and the number of Christ's contemporaries grew smaller, many of his survivors became his biographers. For so our Preface declares: "Many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us." And thus, although he who spake as never man spake does not seem to have written a single word, yet many who did know him, either personally or indirectly through his apostles, committed to writing reminiscences of his words and ways; and so there arose in the apostolic era numerous "gospels." And, observe, our Evangelist does not censure these attempts at biography. He does not hint that these *memorabilia* are to be rejected. For aught we know, some of these sketches were as truly inspired as the Gospel of St. Luke himself. What though they have not come down to us?

John vii, 46.

1 Cor. v, 9.

There is reason for believing that some scriptures, for instance, a letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, have been lost. But this does not detract from the worth of those we do have. That these primitive memoirs of Jesus Christ, in addition to those by Matthew and Mark and Luke and John, have not come down to us may be occasion for regret; certainly it is not occasion for complaint. Eternity will not exhaust what Memoirs of the Divine Man we do have.

Source of the Gospels.

From this Preface to St. Luke's Gospel, we learn, secondly, the Source of the Gospels: "*Even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word.*"

Acts i, 21, 22.

These early memoirs or primitive Gospels to which our Evangelist alludes were evidently written by those who had not been personally acquainted with the Prophet of Nazareth. Nevertheless, their source of information was accurate; for it was the apostolic tradition or oral testimony of those who had been eyewitnesses, and servants of the word, all the time that the Lord Jesus had gone in and gone out among them, from the days of John the Baptizer unto the day he was taken up from them. Two of the four Gospels which have come down to us—Matthew's and John's—were written by apostles. The two others—Mark's and Luke's—were written by evangelists, gathering their materials directly from apostles. Thus Luke, the writer of our Preface, like the many others who had undertaken to write a connected account of what Jesus Christ had said and done,

distinctly bases his narrative on the apostolic testimony or tradition: "Even as those handed them down to us who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word." The source and basis, then, of these primitive Gospels was the contemporaneous oral Gospel or Tradition of the original apostles. Need I add that it is still the only kind of Tradition which the Church is at liberty to accept as the authorized Gospel and Doctrine of Jesus Christ?

From this Preface to St. Luke's Gospel, we learn, thirdly, that inspiration is compatible with free-will: "*It seemed good to me also to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.*"

Inspiration
Compatible
with Free-
will.

According to the judgment of the early Church, by which judgment the Church has ever since stood, the Gospel according to St. Luke was acknowledged to be a constituent part of the inspired canon. Yet there is no evidence to show that Luke felt laid on him a resistless necessity to write his Gospel, or that in writing it he was conscious of any special, overmastering inspiration. Others had undertaken to arrange a narrative of the Christian Facts; and it seemed good to Luke also to undertake the same. So far as his own consciousness was concerned, he seems to have set himself to his task spontaneously, and arranged his narrative as seemed to him best. Yet the judgment of the Christian sense from the beginning has been that in thus composing his recital he was Divinely inspired.

These facts cast light on the doctrine of Inspiration. They show that one may be inspired,

and yet act with entire freeness. The sacred writers have often been compared to Æolian harps, played on by the Holy Spirit or divine Breath of God. The comparison is beautiful and just, so far as it goes. But it does not cover the whole truth; it fails to recognize the human element in inspiration. But let the sacred writers be compared to different musical instruments, for example, a flute, a cornet, a trumpet, an organ, etc., played on, indeed, by one and the same divine Breath, but giving forth different melodies, according to the character of each distinct instrument; and the comparison becomes more complete and just. The source of the melody is Divine, and common to them all; the character of the melody is human, varying according to the temperament and peculiarity of the writer. In brief, the thoughts are Divine, the words are human. And this it is which gives to each Gospel of the canon its peculiarity. Each writer wrote according to his idiosyncrasy, as seemed to him good. And this it is which gives to us one and the same Gospel—the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and also different gospels—a gospel according to Matthew; a gospel according to Mark; a gospel according to Luke; a gospel according to John. Each of them doubtless said, “It seemed good to me also to write a life of Jesus Christ.” But we shall recur to this point.

Qualifications
of Luke.

From this preface to St. Luke’s Gospel we learn, fourthly, that our evangelist was qualified to write a gospel: “*Having traced the course of all things accurately from the first.*”

An educated, intelligent observer, an intimate

of apostles, perhaps the brother whose praise in 2 Cor. viii, 18.
 the Gospel was spread through all the churches,
 St. Luke the Evangelist was in a condition to
 know the facts of the Christ's career. His habits
 of observation as a physician would naturally lead Col. iv, 14.
 him to scrutinize closely all alleged facts. He at
 least would know whether the church of his day
 was following cunningly devised myths. He had 2 Peter i, 16.
 a reputation for honesty, and he puts his own per-
 sonal veracity into the issue. He himself assures
 us that his first step in preparing his narrative was
 to trace down from the beginning everything ac-
 curately. In short, he exercised the "critical
 faculty." He was a rationalist in the true sense
 of that noble but prostituted word, proving all
 things, holding fast that which is good, throwing
 away that which is bad. Thus was he qualified to
 write an intelligent, credible narrative of the great
 Christian facts.

1 Thess. v, 21,
22.

From this preface to St. Luke's Gospel we
 learn, fifthly, our evangelist's purpose in writing :
 "That thou mightest know the certainty concern-
 ing the things wherein thou wast instructed."

Luke's Pur-
 pose in Writ-
 ing.

Doubtless a good deal of misapprehension
 touching the facts of Christ's career was already
 prevalent. These facts were so transcendent that
 they might be easily misunderstood, and, in pass-
 ing from mouth to mouth in that age of tradition
 rather than of printed page, would naturally ac-
 cumulate unauthorized additions. These alien
 additions would sooner or later be seen to be dis-
 crepant with the apostolic statements, and so a sus-
 picion, especially under assaults by the enemies of

Christianity, might spring up touching the original statements themselves. Our evangelist seems to have had this possibility in view, and therefore, having personally and minutely investigated all the facts in the case, would assure his noble friend Theophilus of the absolute truthfulness of the apostolic traditions: so that he might always be ready to give answer to every man who should ask him a reason concerning the hope that was in him. For knowledge of facts rather than theories was then, as it still is, the need of the times. And St. Luke undertook to meet the need: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to arrange a narrative of the things which are fully believed among us, even as those handed them down to us who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having accurately traced down everything from the very first, to write to thee a connected account, most noble Theophilus, in order that thou mayest thoroughly know the certainty of those statements in which thou hast been catechized."

Such is the preface to the Gospel according to St. Luke. And as St. John's prologue may be taken as the prologue to the Gospel, so St. Luke's preface may be taken as the preface to the Gospels.

And this suggests our first concluding thought: The advantage of having several Gospels. Of course, there might have been but one Gospel. But Providence has graciously preserved for us four Gospels. And herein is an immense advantage. First, the having several Gospels is a key

1 Peter iii, 15.

Advantage of
Several Gos-
pels.

to the detection of imposture: where the testimony is false, it is perilous to multiply witnesses. Again, the having several Gospels helps us to understand better the myriad-sided Divine Man. His aspect changes with our point of vision, and the four evangelists give us four view-points. To speak in way of swift, rough characterization: Matthew's Gospel is Hebrew, Messianic, the Gospel of fulfillment; Mark's Gospel is dramatic, Petrine, the Gospel of action; Luke's Gospel is catholic, Pauline, the Gospel of humanity; John's Gospel is doctrinal, spiritual, the Gospel of Divinity. And yet the four Gospels are but one Gospel. Accordingly, the tropical fancy of the fathers took delight in comparing them to the four faces of the one cherub, to the four sides of the one New Jerusalem, to the four rivers flowing from the one stream of Eden, etc. Nobly does Adam of St. Victor, in the twelfth century, express the current view of the cherubic symbolism of the Gospels:

See, far above the starry height,
Beholding, with unclouded sight,
The brightness of the sun,
John doth, as eagle swift, appear,
Still gazing on the vision clear
Of Christ, the Eternal Son.

Adam of St.
Victor.

Dean E. H.
Plumptre's
Translation.

To Mark belongs the lion's form,
With voice loud-roaring as the storm,
His risen Lord to own;
Called by the Father from the grave,
As victor crowned, and strong to save,
We see him on his throne.

The face of man is Matthew's share,
 Who shows the Son of man doth bear
 Man's form with might divine,
 And tracks the line of high descent
 Through which the Word with flesh was blent,
 In David's kingly line.

To Luke the ox belongs, for he,
 More clearly than the rest, doth see
 Christ as the victim slain ;
 Upon the cross, as altar true,
 The bleeding, spotless Lamb we view,
 And see all else is vain.

So from their source in Paradise .
 The four mysterious rivers rise,
 And life to earth is given :
 On these four wheels and staves, behold,
 God and his ark are onward rolled,
 High above earth in heaven.

Our Debt to
 the Evan-
 gelists.

But while we may smile at such fancies, it is not fanciful to say that the four evangelists have given us four different portraits of one and the same Divine Man, presenting him from four points of vision, and so delineating him more vividly in his manifold perfectness, making him more apprehensible to all classes, conditions, and temperaments of men, and to all ages of the world. This is the circumstance which makes it so profitable for us to study the Gospels in synchronous lessons. The habit protects us from partial and unsymmetrical views ; for the Gospels, like stones in mosaic, are mutually complementary. It is of immense benefit, therefore, to study them in light of one another ; for, like the trilingual inscription

of the Rosetta Stone, the four Gospels interpret and confirm each other.

Secondly, let us thank God that he prompted his servants to note down, so early in the Christian era, statements of the apostolic testimony; for the rich result is that, instead of uncertain and fickle tradition, we have permanent contemporary records. And so the Gospels are the foundation of all that is to be believed concerning Jesus Christ. They are the true "apostolic constitutions" for Christendom; Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone.

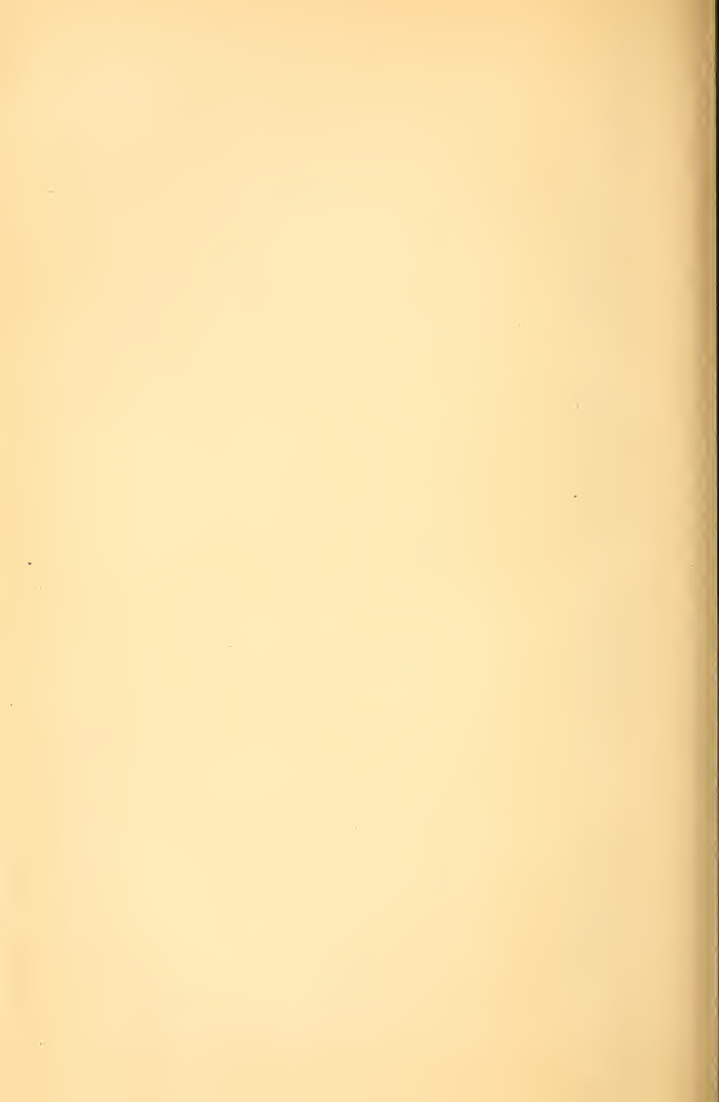
Eph. ii, 20-22.

Lastly, be thou thyself a Theophilus, Friend of God; and the Spirit will write a gospel to thee also.

Theophilus.

Almighty God, who calledst Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, to be an Evangelist, and Physician of the soul; May it please thee, that, by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed; through the merits of thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Collect.



THE ANNUNCIATION TO ZACHARIAS.

LUKE i, 5-25.

Whiles I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

Daniel ix, 21.



III.

THE ANNUNCIATION TO ZACHARIAS.

LUKE i, 5-25.

It was not meet that the Son of God should come into the world unheralded. Himself the Sun of Righteousness, it was fit that he should be harbingered by morning star. Let us, then, ponder the annunciation of the coming of Immanuel's forerunner.

Wretched indeed was the political plight of the Hebrew people. Herod the Great, alien and pagan, had usurped the throne of David, and so the scepter had departed from Judah and the ruler's staff from between his feet. But, although the political independence of Israel had been crushed, one venerable institution survived: it was the priesthood which, thirteen centuries before, had been inaugurated under Aaron. Among the sacred personages who still inherited the prerogatives of the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron was a venerable man whose name was Zacharias. And he was doubly honored; for Elisabeth, his wife, was also of the daughters of Aaron. A reverend couple they were, worthy of their sacred descent, righteous before God, loyal

The Reverend
Couple.

Luke i, 5-7.

Genesis xlix, 10.

to the institutions and ritual of Moses, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the God of their fathers blameless. But, exemplary as they were, a cloud overshadowed their household. The honor of being the parents of the long-promised Messiah was the unique, sacred honor which every devout Hebrew couple coveted. And the sorrow of the saintly Zacharias was this: they were aged, and they were childless.

The Sacred
Service.
Luke i, 8-10.

The priestly service, from the time of David, had been divided into twenty-four courses, each course serving a week. Zacharias belonged to the eighth course, known as Abijah's. It came to pass that, while he was serving in the order of his course, the lot fell on him to go into the temple and burn the incense. An honorable service this was, and as solemn as honorable. The offering of incense seems to have been symbolic of the offering of prayer:

Psalm cxli, 2.

Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee;
The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Rev. v, 8.

When the Lamb had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before him, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne: and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's

Rev. viii, 3, 4.

hand. It was this solemn service of burning the incense which had fallen by lot to Zacharias. And, while he was discharging his holy office in the sacred precincts, the whole multitude of devout worshipers was praying without. For not then had the veil of the temple been rent in twain, so that all the people could enter and worship each for himself.

As the aged priest was discharging his office in the solemn seclusion, there suddenly appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Although apparitions of this kind had often occurred in earlier ages, no angel, so far as we are informed, had been seen for centuries. No wonder Zacharias was terror-stricken. But the angel immediately soothed him: "Fear not, Zacharias! Thy prayer of many a year has been heard, and is now about to be answered. Thy wife Elisabeth will bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John [that is, Jehovah's gracious gift]. Not only in thy household will there be joy and gladness, multitudes of others will also rejoice in consequence of his birth. For he will be great in Jehovah's sight, greater than all who have gone before him. Like the ancient Rechabite, like the still more ancient Nazarite, he will be an ascetic, drinking neither wine nor strong drink. Like the great son of Hilkiab, he will be completely a consecrate, filled with the Holy Spirit from his very birth. Mighty will be his success as a reformer, restoring many of the sons of Israel to the Lord God of their fathers. Yea, he is to be that great forerunner promised by

The Glorious
Annun-
tiation.

Luke i, 11-17.

Jer. xxxv.

Num. vi.

Jer. i, 5.

Mal. iii, 1; iv,
5, 6.

the last of the prophets, even the harbinger who is to go before Jehovah God in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the way before the Son of the Highest, bringing back the hearts of the apostates to the religion of their forefathers, and so making ready for the Lord a prepared people."

The Patri-
arch's In-
credulity.

Luke i, 18.

But the angel's glorious announcement was too much for our aged priest. He could not forget that he and his wife were far advanced in years, and, blameless Jew though he was, his faith could not soar into the supernatural. How different and nobler the faith of his ancestor Abraham

Rom. iv, 18-22.

under circumstances strikingly similar: Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed

Gen. xv, 5.

be; and, without being weakened in faith, he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb: yea, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that, what he had promised, he was also able to perform; wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Ah! this is what we in these modern times very especially need—a revival of the Abrahamic, simple-hearted faith in God's supernatural power. No

Luke xvii, 5.

prayer befits us better than this, "Lord, increase our faith!"

The Patri-
arch's Pun-
ishment.

Luke i, 19-23.

And now the angel discloses himself: "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak unto thee, and to bring unto

thee these good tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be silent and not able to speak until the day that these things shall come to pass, because thou believedst not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." Ah, friends, if God were as strict to punish us for our distrust of his word as he was to punish Zacharias for his, how many of us also would he strike dumb! Who knows but that some of the calamities which befall us are really punishments for our own unbelief? Meantime the people, ignorant of what had occurred in the holy place, were wondering why the priest tarried so long in the temple. And when at length he came out of the shrine, and they saw that he was speechless, making signs unto them, they perceived that something supernatural had happened to him. An impressive spectacle surely it must have been: the aged priest, instead of pronouncing the benediction which for so many centuries had been falling from the lips of the sons of Aaron—

Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee;

Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace—

Num. vi, 24-26.

only motions before them in helpless silence. Whether or not Zacharias explained to the wondering multitudes in some way the cause of his sudden calamity, we are not told. We only know that, as soon as the days of his ministration as belonging to Abijah's course were fulfilled, he returned to his own home.

The Modest
Seclusion.

Luke i, 24, 25.

And as the angel's menace was fulfilled, so was the angel's promise. After these days, Elisabeth, his wife, conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men." It is a beautiful instance of matronly meekness, trust, and gratitude.

Such is the story of Gabriel's prophecy of Immanuel's harbinger.

This incident of the annunciation to Zacharias is rich in lessons. I will mention but two.

Ministration
of Angels.

First, The ministration of angels. Nor can we do better here than simply to cite some scriptural instances. For example, it was through the ministry of angels that Hagar was found in the wilderness, and promised the birth of Ishmael; that Lot was delivered from the doom of Sodom; that Isaac was rescued from Abraham's knife; that Jacob's name was changed into Israel; that Moses was commissioned to deliver his people; that Israel was guided from the land of bondage into the land of promise; that the law was ordained on Sinai; that Balaam was arrested in his perverse way; that Gideon was commissioned to deliver his countrymen from the Midianites; that the birth of Samson was foretold; that David was bidden to rear an altar unto Jehovah in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite; that Elijah was fed under the broom-shrub; that Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego were delivered out of the fiery furnace; that the prophecy of the seventy weeks was made to Daniel; that the birth of

John the Baptizer was foretold to Zacharias; that the great annunciation was made to Mary; that the name JESUS was given to the Divine Babe; that the advent of the Saviour was announced to the shepherds; that the wise men and Joseph were warned against Herod; that Jesus was ministered unto at the close of the threefold temptation and in Gethsemane; that the great stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre; that the ministering women were comforted with the evangel of the resurrection; that the prison-doors of the apostles were opened; that Philip was bidden to go down from Jerusalem toward Gaza; that Cornelius was directed to send for Peter; that Peter was delivered out of prison; that Paul was cheered in his shipwreck; that John was vouchsafed glimpses of New Jerusalem. In fact, the Bible from beginning to end is radiant with angels.

And as it was in the past, so it is to-day. Angels are still ministers of God, executing his will alike in the physical and in the spiritual world. Alas! the Church, in her just recoil from the pretensions of spiritualism, and in her just recognition of sense-tests in the domain of physics, has too often been tempted into a practical denial of spirit-powers, virtually saying with the ancient Sadducee that there is no angel. Let her also beware lest, in denying that there are angels, she also, with the ancient Sadducee, denies that there is either resurrection or spirit. What though we do not see angels? It does not follow that, because they are invisible, they are therefore, according to our sci-

Acts xxiii, 8.

entific tests, unreal or inoperative. In fact, it is the invisible things which are the most real. Did any human being ever see the Holy Spirit? Yet what Christian doubts his existence? Were our spiritual eyes open, as were the eyes of Elisha's servant at Dothan, doubtless we also would see all around us horses and chariots of fire circling to protect us. I believe that angels wait on us as truly as they ever waited on Abraham, or Jacob, or Moses, or Elijah, or Mary, or Jesus himself. The mediæval painters were fond of filling the background of the Infancy with countless angels; the representation, though literally false, was morally true. I believe that angels are still a part of Heaven's mediatorial economy; still encamping round about them that fear Jehovah, and delivering them; still ascending and descending upon the Son of man; still rejoicing over every sinner that repenteth; still bearing the spirits of the redeemed into Abraham's bosom; in brief, still ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation.

2 Kings vi, 17.

Psalms xxxiv, 7.

John i, 51.

Luke xv, 10.

Luke xvi, 22.

Heb. i, 14.

"The Faerie
Queene,"
Book ii, Canto
viii.

And is there care in heaven? And is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move?
There is:—else much more wretched were the case
Of men than beasts. But, oh, th' exceeding grace
Of Highest God that loves his creatures so,
And all his works with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe.

How oft do they their silver bowers leave
To come to succor us that succor want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,

Against foul fiends to aid us militant !
 They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant :
 And all for love and nothing for reward :
 Oh, why should Heavenly God to men have such regard !

Most meet, then, it was that when the Divine Man, even he who was in the eminent sense the Angel of Jehovah, made his advent into the world, all other angels should with reverent gladness form his body-guard. And if angels, untouched by sin, and therefore needing not his redemption, welcomed him to the humiliation of the manger, shall not sinful man, saved by the grace of his incarnation, join with angels in welcoming him to the glorification of his return? For the time is coming when angels shall again serve as the visible ministers of God executing his purposes. As the first advent was ushered in by an "overture of angels," so shall be ushered in the second advent. The Son of man shall come in his own glory, and in the glory of the Father, and in the glory of his holy angels. Then, in the harvest of the world, he will send forth his angel reapers; and they shall sever the wicked from among the righteous, gathering out of his kingdom all them that do iniquity, and gathering together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other. Then shall be fulfilled in a sense which the Church has never yet witnessed the Divine Man's own saying at the beginning of his public ministry: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending

Mark viii, 38.

Matt. xiii, 37-43.

Matt. xxiv, 31.

John i, 51.

Luke xii, 8.

upon the Son of man." God grant that every one of us may confess him before men, so that in the day of his return he also shall confess us before the angels of God.

Hours of Wor-
ship Hours
of Annun-
ciation.

Lastly: Hours of worship are hours of angels' annunciation. Not that we may ever expect in this eon of the world to behold visions of angels; for ours it is to have something better than to have glimpses of supernatural figures; ours it is to have the presence of the Holy Spirit himself. Nevertheless, the closet-shrine is in an eminent sense the meeting-place of God and man, the trysting-place of Bridegroom and bride. It is at the time of the offering of incense, even the hour of prayer, that we are the most likely to be caught up into paradise, and hear unspeakable words. Then, if ever, we shall hear the summons: "Prepare thou the way of the Lord: for thou also art one of his harbingers." And when such summons comes to thee, oh, be not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Collect.

O everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the service of Angels and men in a wonderful order; Mercifully grant, that as thy holy Angels always do thee service in heaven, so, by thy appointment, they may succor and defend us on earth: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE ANNUNCIATION TO MARY.

LUKE i, 26-38.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah vii, 14.



IV.

THE ANNUNCIATION TO MARY.

LUKE i, 26-38.

It was not the first time that Gabriel, Strength of God, had visited earth. Five and a half centuries before, as the prophet Daniel was praying, and confessing his sins and the sins of his people Israel, and presenting his supplication before Jehovah his God for the holy mountain of his God, even while he was speaking in prayer, the angel Gabriel, having been caused to fly swiftly, touched him about the time of the evening oblation, and announced to him the glorious advent of Prince Messiah. Centuries roll on. Men are born, grow old, die. Empires rise, flourish, decay, perish. But heaven knows no decay; only immortal growth. In heaven is everlasting youthhood. Half a millennium after Gabriel, Strength of God, had visited the Hebrew exile on the banks of the Ulai, and touched him at the time of the evening oblation, he descends to earth again as vital and radiant as ever, and on the same errand of Messianic annunciation. But he comes not now, as erst he had come to stately prophet in imperial Babylonia. He comes not, as he had come five months before to anointed priest

The Angelic
Visitant.

Luke i, 26, 27.
Daniel viii, 9.

Luke i, 5-25.

in holy Jerusalem. But he comes to a lowly, pure-hearted, saintly maiden, betrothed to a carpenter, in obscure Nazareth of scorned Galilee. He comes to her, it may be, as five hundred years before he had come to Daniel, at the time of the evening sacrifice.

The Great An-
nunciation.
Luke i, 28-38.

“*Hail!*” the Strength of God exclaims, “*Thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee!*” This angelic apparition, perhaps the only startling event which had ever occurred in her whole quiet life-time, the reverential greeting of a supernatural stranger to her, an obscure village maiden; all this throws the gentle virgin into bewilderment: She is greatly troubled at the saying, and casts in her mind what manner of salutation this may be. And now the angel makes distinct annunciation: “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 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 his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Thus the glorious hope of being the mother of the Coming One, which for nearly two millenniums had been inspiring Hebrew matrons, from Princess Sarah onward, and which had been awakened in Eden itself, is at last fulfilled, and the long-promised, majestic boon is conferred on the betrothed of a village artificer. And not the least wonderful part of this annunciation is that it is made to one who is unwedded. Mary herself feels it to be

so, and in chastest surprise exclaims, "How can this be, seeing I am a virgin?" This exquisite touch of heavenly simplicity is more really a coronation of Mary than all the elaborated honors of the Romish virgin worship. And now follows a saying of divinest mystery: The angel answered and said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God." And now behold a picture of sublimest trustfulness. Remembering how much this prophecy of the overshadowing Spirit involves, what tragical condition on Mary's part, what exposure to misunderstanding and dark insinuation, what loss in eyes of men of that honor dearer to woman than life itself—remembering all this, how sublimely trustful the virgin's answer: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word!" I do not think that there is in all history a lowliness so celestial, a trust so nearly infinite.

Such is the story of the annunciation to Mary. The scene itself has been made the theme of numerous pictures, some of them among the highest triumphs of Christian art. Nor need we wonder at it; for there is not a more exquisite scene in sacred story. And now let us seize on some of its salient features, and ponder the lessons they teach.

And, first, survey the character of Mary as indicated in the story of the annunciation. Character of
Mary.

"Hail, thou that art highly graced!
The Lord is with thee!"

It is, indeed, an *Ave Maria*, the only true Ave Maria of the church of Scripture. What a contrast to the false Ave Maria, the Ave Maria of the church of tradition: "Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus! Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and in the hour of death. Amen." Still more idolatrous is the blasphemous adoration of Bonaventura's Psalter: "We praise thee, mother of God! . . . All the earth doth worship thee, the spouse of the eternal Father! All the angels and archangels, all thrones and powers, do faithfully serve thee. To thee all angels cry aloud, with a never ceasing voice, Holy, Holy, Holy Mary, mother of God! . . . The whole court of heaven doth honor thee as queen. Thou sittest with thy Son on the right hand of the Father. . . . In thee, sweet Mary, is our hope; defend us evermore! Praise becometh thee! Empire becometh thee! Virtue and glory be unto thee for ever and ever!" But the nadir of blasphemy was not reached till December 8, 1854, when Pío Nono from his pontifical throne in St. Peter's announced the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, that is, the dogma that the Virgin Mary herself was conceived and born and continued through life absolutely without sin, original as well as actual. How different all this elaborate adoration of the Virgin from the simple representation of her in the holy records! Not the favorer of men is she, but the favored of God; not the mother of grace, but grace's daugh-

ter;* not the enthroned above women, but the blessed among women; not the queen of archangels, but the handmaid of the Lord; not the sinless child of the skies, but the sinful daughter of Adam, needing and receiving her own Divine Son's redemption.

Say of me as the angel said, "Thou art
The blessedest of women!"—blessedest,
Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
Whose height, misplaced, may pierce me like a shame
When I sit meek in heaven!

Mrs. Brown-
ing.

How prophetic a warning against Mariolatry, that Divine Son's own words: It came to pass that a certain woman out of the multitude lifted up her voice, and said unto him, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts which thou didst suck!" But he said, "Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it!" And again: While he was speaking to the multitudes, behold, his mother and his brothers stood without, seeking to speak with him, but could not for the throng; and it was told him. But he answered and said, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Behold my mother and my brothers! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Luke xi, 27, 28.

Matt. xii, 46-50.

Nevertheless, a peculiar sacredness will evermore attach to the name and character of Mary of Nazareth. And most justly. For she alone of

* *Non mater gratiæ, sed filia gratiæ.*—BENGEL.

all earth's women was permitted to become the mother of the Divine Man. And her whole character, as disclosed in the occasional hints of the holy memoirs, seems to have been in beautiful harmony with that august destination. Pensive, guileless, pure, gentle, meek, affectionate, trustful, reverent—in Mary of Galilee, as the fittest of women, was fulfilled, after centuries of waiting, the glowing vision of evangelic prophecy.

Isaiah vii, 14.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
And shall call his name Immanuel [God with us].

This is Mary's unique glory—the glory of being the virgin-mother of the Word made flesh, the Divine Man. Herself the true Parthenos, our reverence for her is the true Parthenon.

John Keble.

Ave Maria! blessed maid!
Lily of Eden's fragrant shade,
Who can express the love
That nurtured thee, so pure and sweet,
Making thy heart a shelter meet
For Jesus' holy dove?

Ave Maria! mother blest,
To whom, caressing and caress'd,
Clings the Eternal Child;
Favor'd beyond archangels' dream,
When first on thee with tenderest gleam
Thy new-born Saviour smiled.

Ave Maria! thou whose name
All but adoring love may claim,
Yet may we reach thy shrine;
For he, thy Son and Saviour, vows
To crown all lofty brows
With love and joy like thine.

Bless'd is the womb that bare him—bless'd
 The bosom where his lips were press'd,
 But rather bless'd are they
 Who hear his word and keep it well,
 The living homes where Christ shall dwell,
 And never pass away.

But turn we now to a diviner theme. Ponder for a moment with sacred awe the ineffable mystery of the incarnation, the Word made flesh, divinity and humanity in one person, the Divine Man.

The Divine Man.

Such an incarnation is a demand of human reason. Assuming that man is a fallen being (alas! who can deny it?); assuming also that he desires salvation:—an incarnation—that is, a God-man—is a logical necessity. The argument in brief is this: Given a lost world, desiring salvation; Given the law, Like begets like and nothing but like: And the conclusion is inevitable—he who saves a lost world must be above nature and also in nature, supernatural and natural, divine and human. Or the argument may be put in a briefer form, thus: Needed a God to touch man; Needed a man to touch God: Needed a God-man to touch God and man. That is to say: Needed in order to man's salvation a Divine Man, such as Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be. And all this, be it observed, is *a priori*; the inevitable conclusion of human reason in advance of any divine revelation.

The Incarnation a Philosophical Necessity.

And the story of the annunciation to Mary meets this logical, philosophical necessity. First, it gives us a God: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall

overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God." The divine conception gives us a God. Secondly, the annunciation gives us a man: "Thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." The virgin's delivery gives us a human product—that is to say, a man. Thirdly, the annunciation gives us, not a God and a man, but the God-man. The Word became flesh.

Thus Scripture answers to reason, Jesus Christ answers to human want. In the divinely conceived Son of the virgin of Nazareth we have a Saviour who is both divine and human—one who was conceived from the divine essence, yet born through a human mother—a God and yet a man. Or, as phrased in the so-called Apostles' Creed: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary": deifically conceived, humanly born; deifically generated into humanity—in a word, The Divine Man. It is earth's most mighty yet most blessed enigma. It is a theme ineffable. All we can say is this: The Word became flesh—God became man.

This, then, is the testimony of the annunciation: Immanuel, God with us.

Thus is the fall reversed, Eden restored, and Jehovah God walks again with man even as he walked with our first parents in the garden in the breeze of the day. What a stupendous contrast! Lucifer, fallen son of the morning, in Eden; Gabriel, unfallen strength of God, in Nazareth. And as Gabriel heralded the first advent, so it may be Gabriel will herald the second advent, when the

Lord himself, no longer a babe, but the Judge of the quick and the dead, shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. Oh, let us hasten, then, with shepherd and with Magian to the cradle of the new-born King, bringing our gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Recognizing that holy thing cradled in the manger as Mary's son and Mary's Lord, and bowing down before him as God manifest in the flesh, Deity incarnate, God-man, we shall be his, and so saved, world without end. 1 Thess. iv, 16.

O Holy and ever-blessed Spirit, who didst overshadow the holy Virgin of our Lord, and cause her to conceive by a miraculous and mysterious manner; Be pleased to overshadow my soul and enlighten my spirit, that I may conceive the holy Jesus in my heart, and may bear him in my mind, and may grow up to the fullness of the stature of Christ, to be a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Amen. Prayer of Jeremy Taylor.

THE VISIT OF MARY TO
ELISABETH.

LUKE i, 39 56.

Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and
spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your
heart to the Lord.

Ephesians v, 19.

V.

THE VISIT OF MARY TO ELISABETH.

LUKE i, 39-56.

GABRIEL'S annunciation to the virgin of Nazareth—an annunciation so majestic and yet so mysterious, so glorious and yet so ominous of misunderstanding and ignominy—is too much for the lowly maiden to bear alone. She yearns to confide the wondrous secret to some pure-hearted, trusty friend. Who shall that confidant be? Some female friend at Nazareth? No; the secret is too sacred. He to whom she has plighted her troth? No; the secret is too feminine—too divinely peculiar. To whom, then, shall she turn? Far to the south dwells an aged and saintly kinswoman, concerning whom this same Gabriel has also made a glorious annunciation. To her she now feels drawn by the sense of a double kinship—a kinship in spirit as well as in nature. To Elisabeth, therefore, Mary now betakes herself with sacred haste. Considering those days of slow locomotion, it was a long and formidable journey for a solitary maiden to take. Yet how her steps must have been beguiled as she passed such memorable spots as Jezreel, and Samaria, and Jacob's

The Sacred
Journey.

Luke i, 39, 40.

Luke i, 5-25.

Well, and Ramah, and Bethel, and Jerusalem, and Rachel's Tomb, and Hebron! What thoughts, too, must have absorbed her in her strange journey—thoughts of the angel's promise; her glorious future; her relation to her betrothed; the effect the disclosure of her secret would have on Elisabeth! Did ever mortal perform a journey so wondrously unique?

The Homage-
ful Saluta-
tion.

Luke i, 41-45.

And now she has arrived at the priestly city. Entering the house of Zacharias, she salutes her aged kinswoman. Unexpectedly reverential and joyous is the answer to her greeting: It came to pass, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. It was the recognition and adoration by the yet unborn son of the desert. It was also a prophecy of the homage by the Jordan: Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him. But John would have hindered him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?" And not only does the unborn babe salute, the reverend mother joins in the salutation: Elisabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, lifts up her voice, and exclaims, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me? For, behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a fulfillment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord." It is a beautiful instance of humility. For Mary was Elisabeth's

Matt. iii, 13-15.

inferior in age and in station. Yet Elisabeth bowed before Mary, as the aged and anointed Eli had bowed before the youthful and unmitered Samuel. Freedom from jealousy is ever a mark of greatness.

1 Sam. iii, 1-18.

Then burst forth from the lips of the Nazarene virgin that glorious pæan known as the *Magnificat*, and which to this day is still chanted in many of our temples. And Mary said :

The Magnificat.

Luke i, 46-55.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath looked upon the low estate of his hand-
maiden :

For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call
me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things ;
And holy is his name.

And his mercy is unto generations and generations
On them that fear him.

He hath showed strength with his arm ;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their
heart.

He hath put down princes from their thrones,
And hath exalted them of low degree.

The hungry he hath filled with good things ;
And the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath holpen Israel his servant,
That he might remember mercy

(As he spake unto our fathers)

Toward Abraham and his seed for ever.

In glancing at the *Magnificat*, observe, first, that it is marked by that peculiar characteristic of Hebrew poetry known as parallelism. Our rhythm is the rhythm of meter, our rhyme is the rhyme of sound. The Hebrew rhythm was the rhythm

Peculiarities
of the
Magnificat.

of clause or statement, the Hebrew rhyme was the rhyme of thought and sentiment; or, as Ewald beautifully expresses it, "The rapid stroke as of alternate wings," "The heaving and sinking as of the troubled heart." Viewed in this light, the Hebrew poetry is as much nobler than the classic as rhyme of thought is nobler than rhyme of sound. When will our colleges teach Job, and David, and Isaiah, and Habbakuk, as well as Homer, and Virgil, and Dante, and Shakespeare? Again, observe the intensely Jewish character of the *Magnificat*, alike in its phraseology and in its reminiscences. Especially is it imbued with the spirit of Hannah's thanksgiving song, improvised a thousand years before under circumstances somewhat similar. But intensely Jewish as both these songs are, they are at the same time intensely maternal, and so as true for mothers to-day as in the days of Mary or Hannah. Motherhood deepens into richer glory in the luster of these sacred lyrics. Once more, observe how in the holy strains of the *Magnificat* the Old Testament glides into the New. Mary's cadences are the interlude between law and gospel—at once the finale to the old covenant and the overture to the new—and so linking Sinai and Calvary, temple and church, Moses and Jesus. Very beautiful is the picture, this mutual greeting of aged Elisabeth and youthful Mary; it is the emblem of the mutual greeting of type and antitype, of law and grace.

Such is the story of the visitation.

Devotion and
Poetry.

In dismissing the story, it will not be amiss to say a few words on the matter of devotion and

poetry. All deep feeling is essentially poetical. It is so in all lands, and has been so in all ages. All deep emotion, whether of joy or of grief, instinctively yearns for the accompaniment of sound and measure. Hence the pæans of Miriam, and Deborah, and Hannah, and Mary; the laments of Job, and David, and Jeremiah, and captives of Babylon. Even the Delphian pythoness was wont to breathe forth the oracle in hexameter. All this is pre-eminently true of religious feeling. The truest devotion is the highest poetry. Accordingly, the Bible is in way of eminence a book of poems. And the Psalter of the Bible has ever been the favorite praise-book of the Church. What does not the Church owe in way of devotion to the ancient doxologies and hymns, such as *Gloria Patri, Gloria in Excelsis, Te Deum, Trisagion, Veni Creator Spiritus!* What does she not owe in way of worship to Anatolius, and Ambrose, and Bernard of Clairveau, and Bernard of Cluny, and Thomas Aquinas; to Tauler, and Luther, and Eber, and Weiss, and Gerhard; to Quarles, and Herbert, and Vaughan, and Addison, and Watts, and Doddridge, and Wesley, and Toplady, and Olivers, and Cennick, and Beddome, and Newton, and Cowper, and Montgomery, and Lyte, and Bowring, and Heber, and Faber, and Newman, and Bonar, and Palmer, and Smith; to Anne Steele, and Letitia Barbauld, and Elisabeth Browning, and Sarah Adams, and Charlotte Elliott, and Alice and Phœbe Carey! Ah! here is the real concord of the ages—here is the true ecumenical.

Devotion and
Music.

And as there is a profound relation between devotion and poetry, so there is a profound relation between devotion and music.

Devotion borrows music's tone,
And music takes devotion's wing ;
And, like the bird that hails the sun,
They soar to heaven, and soaring sing.

Eph. v, 19.

Col. iii, 16.

Accordingly, music is an essential, vital part of public worship. It was so in the ancient temple service. In fact, many of the psalms were composed for a distinctively liturgical purpose ; for example, Psalms xx, xxix, xlvi, xlviii, lxvi-lxviii, xcii, xcv, c, etc. It was so in the apostolic church : Be filled with the Spirit, speaking one to another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God. It was so in the Church just succeeding the apostolic. The heathen Pliny, writing to his imperial master Trajan, about the close of the first century, describes the early Church as wont to assemble before light, and sing responsively a song to Christ as to God.* It has been so evermore and everywhere since. Even the Quakers, although they allow not music, yet preach intoningly, in a sing-song way. Music is the natural outlet of devotion.

* *Ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem.*—Epist. x, 97.

But the music, not less than the feeling and the words, must be religious; singing with grace in our hearts unto God, making melody in our hearts unto the Lord. And herein lies the superiority of chanting. It is in certain respects the simplest form of music, and therefore offers the least temptation to pride of artistic execution. Moreover, chanting is intelligible. Even things without life, giving a voice, whether pipe or harp, if they give not a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war? So also ye, unless ye utter by the tongue speech easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye will be speaking into the air. Once more, chanting is the most natural as well as ancient form of temple music. Instruments may be improved, but not the spontaneous expression of feeling. To the reflective worshiper, few things are more inspiring and sublime than the sense of joining in strains centuries old.

Superiority of
Chanting.

1 Cor. xiv, 7-9.

But devotion is even more than a song, it is a life. And here even the deaf and dumb may sing, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord. Oh, how many spiritual Beethovens there are!

Worship, a
Life.

There are in this loud, stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

John Keble.

What God is like our God, who giveth songs in the night, turning the raven's croak into the nightingale's warble! God be praised! there is such a thing as rhythm of life, an inward life-psalm, and so an outward—heaven the phone, earth the antiphone. Our heavenly Father, thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth! The real liturgy, after all, is the service of daily character. Thus warbling on earth, we shall be trained to take our place in the celestial choir of the true *Notre Dame*, even Mother Jerusalem, which is above and free, and where, with the saints of all lands, and ages, and names, we shall chant world without end the true *Magnificat*: Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing! Amen and amen!

Gal. iv, 26.

Rev. v, 12.

Collect.

O Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the whole fullness of the Godhead and manhead, without sin, dwelleth in one Person forever; who, for us men and for our salvation, didst die and rise again, and now sittest at the right hand of the Father Almighty as our Prophet, Priest, and King, able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by thee: Thou art worthy to receive the grateful homage of all ages and creeds and tongues; and, with the glorious company of the apostles, with the goodly fellowship of the prophets, with the noble army of martyrs, with the holy Church throughout all the world, with the heavenly Jerusalem, the joyful assembly of the first-born on high, with the innumerable host of angels around thy throne, the heaven of heavens, and all the powers therein, we worship and adore thy glorious name, saying with a loud voice:

Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever! Amen!

THE BIRTH AND TRAINING OF
JOHN THE BAPTIST.

LUKE i, 57-80.

Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare
the way before me.

Malachi iii, 1.

VI.

THE BIRTH AND TRAINING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

LUKE I, 57-80.

THE promise made by the angel Gabriel to the aged Zacharias in Jerusalem's temple has been fulfilled. In one of the quiet towns of the hill country of Judea a son has been born to the saintly Elisabeth. Neighbors and kinsfolk, true to the instincts of a nature not yet dulled by the forced proprieties of an overwrought civilization, gather around her to offer their congratulations. On the arrival of the eighth day they hold a formal gathering, to celebrate the Abrahamic rite which would make the new-born child a member of Jehovah's covenant people, and also to give him his name. In accordance with a custom of the times, and indeed an instinct of humanity, they are about to call him Zacharias, after the name of his father. The devout mother, remembering Gabriel's bidding in the temple, refuses consent: "Not so; but he shall be called John [Jehovah's grace]." The company, surprised by this decision of the mother, protest: "There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name." Confident

The Birth and
Naming.

Luke i, 57-66.

Luke i, 13.

that the father would in paternal pride insist that his son should bear his own name, they turn to him, and, making signs, ask how he would have him named. The mute old man asks for a writing-tablet, and pens the simple words: "His name is John." No sooner has he penned this than his tongue, which has been locked for months, is loosed, and he speaks, praising God. The sudden return of the power of speech and his evidently rapt state fill the spectators with amazement, and, recalling, it may be, the ancient and precious prophecy of the coming Messiah, they exclaim, "What, then, shall this child be?" Nor is this all. The Holy Spirit takes possession of the aged priest, he is filled with the prophetic rapture, and, as Mary weeks before had chanted her *Magnificat*, so now Zacharias chants his *Benedictus*:

Luke i, 46-55.

The Benedic-
tus.

Luke i, 68-79.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
For he hath visited and wrought redemption for his
people,
And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of his servant David
(As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have
been of old),
Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that
hate us;
To shew mercy towards our fathers,
And to remember his holy covenant;
The oath which he sware unto Abraham our father,
To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand
of our enemies
Should serve him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
Yea and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most
High:

For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready
 his ways ;
 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people
 In the remission of their sins,
 Because of the tender mercy of our God,
 Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us,
 To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of
 death ;
 To guide our feet into the way of peace.

Nor has that ancient *Benedictus* of Zacharias lost its power. Like the *Magnificat* of Mary, it is still chanted in many of our temples, and will continue to be the Church's song of inspiration till the day-spring from on high, even the bright morning star, sparkles again in the horizon of the new heavens and earth, nevermore to set.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel. Then began to be fulfilled, in outline, at least, Gabriel's prophecy to Zacharias, as he was serving by the altar of incense, touching his coming Son : " He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink ; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." The child John seems to have grown up in strictest seclusion and self-denial, according to the ancient law of the Nazarite. His home, if home it might be called, was the wilderness of Judea—the rugged desert west of the Dead Sea ; his garb a raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle ; his food locusts and wild honey ; himself the very counterpart of Elijah the Tishbite.

Training of the
 Forerunner.

Luke i, 80.

Luke i, 15.

Matt. iii, 4.

2 Kings i, 8.

Parnell's "Hermit."

Far in the wild, unknown to public view,
 From youth to age a reverend hermit grew;
 The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
 His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well:
 Remote from man, he spent his days,
 Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise.

Luke iii, 23.

Thus grew up in desert obscurity and Nazarite asceticism, John, the Forerunner, till the time, when about thirty years old, he was manifested unto Israel, suddenly bursting forth as a meteor in the sky of the Hebrew night.

Such is the story of the birth and training of the Harbinger.

The story suggests many lessons. I will mention but two.

"Coming Events cast their Shadows Before."

And, first, it is a fine illustration of the proverb, "Coming events cast their shadows before." It was meet that the King of kings, in making advent, should have his *avant-courier*. It is glorious to know that, when he did make his advent, John, the son of Zacharias, emerged from his seclusion, and came into all the region about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins, saying: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; thus fulfilling a prediction already seven hundred years old, even the prophecy of the son of Amoz:

Luke iii, 1-3.

Isaiah xl, 3-5.

The voice of one that crieth,
 Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah,
 Make straight in the desert a high way for our God.
 Every valley shall be exalted,
 And every mountain and hill shall be made low;
 And the crooked shall be made straight,

And the rough places plain,
 And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed,
 And all flesh shall see it together :
 For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

Yes, it was meet that the Sun of Righteousness should have his morning star.

Secondly, The place of asceticism in the Christian life. For it can not be denied that Christ's religion demands as one of its essential conditions self-denial. Presupposing a fallen, inverted nature, where the outward has usurped the inward—the flesh, the spirit — Christianity undertakes a restoration of the primal order, proposing victory in the very sphere of defeat. It cages the wild beasts of the lusts of the flesh, and scourges refractory passions. Thus, St. Paul himself buffeted his own body, and brought it into bondage. It is a sure way to get spiritual robustness. Much is said in our day about the need of "muscular Christianity." Would God as much were said about the need of Christian muscle! As a matter of fact, the stalwart, majestic characters of Scripture were in the habit of putting themselves ever and anon under an ascetic regimen. It was true of Moses, of David, of Daniel. Our blessed Lord himself went into the wilderness, and fasted forty days and forty nights. So, also, many of the noblest characters in Christian history have been ascetics: witness a Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Jerome, Columba, Augustine of Canterbury. Their power lay, in part at least, in their asceticism. It certainly was so in the case of John of the Desert. His hermit-life gave him simplicity

Place of Christian Asceticism.

1 Cor. ix, 27.

Matt. iv, 1, 2.

of manners, freedom from the entanglements of society and the elaborate artifices of a complicated civilization. It also gave him self-reliance, fortitude, courage. An ascetic life is ever apt to make what in some respects is a grand character. It was the secret of John's famous power when, in the day of his shewing to Israel, Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out unto him, to be baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Matt. iii, 5, 6.

Asceticism
fraught with
Perils.

Yet an ascetic life is fraught with perils. It tempts to self-righteousness, morbid gloom, and fanaticism. We only need recall the abominable vices of the mediæval monks—their indolence, avarice, hypocrisy, and sensuality—to be certified that monasticism has no just place in the Christian economy. Happy the day for those European countries when the monasteries were suppressed! No, man was made for man. He may escape society; but in escaping society, he disowns duty. The leaven of the kingdom must be put into the meal of the world. Viewed in this light, monasticism is both selfish and cowardly. "I can not praise," said John Milton, "a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversaries, but slinks out of the race, where the immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." The asceticism which Jesus Christ, alike by word and by example, demands is self-denial, not for self-denial's own sake, but for the sake of others. The gallant Sir Philip Sidney, fatally wounded on the field of Zutphen, and calling in his fever for drink,

Matt. xiii, 33.

Milton's "Areopagistica."

and then observing a wounded comrade, and bidding the bottle to be carried to him, saying, "Thy necessity is greater than mine," is an exquisite instance of the true asceticism. Christian self-denial means vicarious self-sacrifice.

And the Divine Man is here as everywhere else our blessed model. He was in the world, but he was not of the world; and as he was, so we are to be. Asceticism is not a form; but a spirit: not a will-worship, and willful humiliation, and severity to the body; but a mortification of our evil passions. It is easier to follow John the Hermit than to follow Jesus the Comrade. And so he that is least in the kingdom of the Son is greater than John the Baptizer. After all, the followers of Jesus are the true "Knights of St. John," and this because they are the true "Order of Jesuits."

Jesus, not
John, our
Model.

John xvii, 16.

Col. ii, 23.

Col. iii, 5.

Matt. xi, 11.

Almighty God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour, by preaching repentance; Make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect.

THE ANNUNCIATION TO JOSEPH.

MATTHEW i, 18-25.

The name which is above every name.

Philippians ii, 9.

VII.

THE ANNUNCIATION TO JOSEPH.

MATTHEW i, 18-25.

THE promise of a supernatural motherhood which had been announced by Gabriel to the virgin of Nazareth was a secret as awful as blessed. It was a secret which she, spotless virgin that she was, could not divulge to others, least of all to her affianced. When, therefore, the signs of coming maternity became evident, the virgin's condition was truly and inexpressibly tragical. Profound emblem it was of the unspeakable abasement of the Divine Man himself; a cloud rested on him from the very beginning, the shadow fell on his very cradle. Verily, God sent forth his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. The betrothed carpenter of Nazareth, ignorant, as we can easily believe, of Gabriel's annunciation to his affianced, would naturally be the first to feel a dark surmise. But he was, as a blessed Providence had graciously arranged, a just, considerate man. Unspeakably grieved though he was, he had a sense of the sacred dignity which belongs to man as the instinctive guardian of woman. And so, though forced by the pressure of circumstances to disown his be-

The Delicate
Resolve.
Matt. i, 18, 19.

Rom. viii, 3.

trothed, yet he humanely resolved to disown her as gently and inconspicuously as possible. Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

The Blessed
Annuncia-
tion.

Matt. i, 20, 21.

Now, while Joseph was thinking of these things, behold an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." It is a wonderful annunciation. Let us ponder it in detail.

The Name,
JESUS.

And, first, the wonderful name: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS [that is, Jehovah our Salvation]; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." From this name and from the reason assigned for it we learn three great things: First, there is something to be saved from—it is sins; secondly, there is some one who will save—it is Jesus; thirdly, there are those whom Jesus will save—it is his people.

Saved from
Sin.

And, first, there is something to be saved from—**SIN**.

Man needs to be saved, first, from the *penalty* of sin. For it is not possible that sin should not incur the wrath of God; and God's wrath is sin's penalty. The penal consequence of God's disobeyed law is not an appendage arbitrarily annexed to his law: it grows out of his law, or rather out of his very being and nature, spontaneously, normally, naturally, without volition on his part. It

is not that God by an act of sovereign will chooses to punish sin : it is that, being what he is, he can not help punishing sin. For that great law, alike written and unwritten, which all mankind have broken and under whose condemnation all mankind lie, is not a piece of legislation, not a statute or edict which God has chosen to frame and impose on our race : but it is a part of his very being, eternal as his nature, immortal as his character, infinite as his perfections. And as God did not frame this law, so God can not destroy it or soften its penalty. Existing by no edict or volition of his own, but consubstantial with himself, he can no more detach or reduce its penalty than he can change or annihilate himself. From the very nature of the case, in simple virtue of his own being and perfections, he is compelled to feel the wrath. And this feeling the wrath must inexorably issue in the infliction of the penalty. And this penalty is death—death of the spirit, of which death of the body is a consequence, and in some awful sense a symbol and type.

Again, man needs to be saved from the *guilt* of sin. For there is something worse than the being punished—it is the deserving punishment. Remitting the penalty of sin is not the same as cleansing from the guilt of sin. To illustrate : Here is a man who has murdered another in cold blood. He has been detected, tried, convicted, sentenced. The Governor has been persuaded to remit the penalty. The news is brought to the cell of the condemned. Doubtless he feels a great relief. But, after all, is he any purer in soul ?

Has the pardon made him innocent of murder? Is he not just as much an assassin still as he was the moment he fired the fatal shot? He might receive from the Governor ten thousand pardons; the whole world might join in pronouncing him innocent: it matters not; the red stain still is and evermore will be on his guilty soul. Pardon may save from the gallows; but pardon will not save from guilt. The sinner may be saved from hell; but that does not make him holy. Man needs to be saved from the guilt of sin not less than from the penalty of sin; from the wretched sense of being sinful not less than from sin's penal consequences.

Once more, man needs to be saved from the *power* of sin. It is not enough that he is rescued from the penalty of sin, not even enough that he is cleansed from the guilt of sin: he also needs to be freed from the sway of sin; so that sin shall no longer be over him an influence or power. It is not enough that the murderer is absolved from the murder; he needs to have the evil heart—the possibility of being a murderer—taken out of him. The sinner not only needs cleansing from the past, he also needs protection for the future. He needs to be lifted into that state of blessed invulnerableness in which he will not sin and can not sin.*

These, then, are the three things from which man needs to be saved: the doom of sin, the guilt of sin, the sway of sin. Can he be thus saved?

Secondly: One there is who will save—JESUS,

Jesus the Sav-
iour.

* *Beata necessitas boni.*—AUGUSTINE.

Son of God and Son of man, the Word made flesh, the Divine Man.

Listen to St. Paul, even him who felt himself to be the chief of sinners: "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i, 15. And how does Christ Jesus save sinners? He saves them, practically speaking, by becoming himself a man, and so getting himself into connection with man's nature and condition and feelings and doom; by reconciling fallen men to God, assuring them, 2 Cor. v, 18-21. through his own blessed sympathies and compassions, that God is reconciled to them in Christ; by winning guilty man's attention and gratitude and reverence and trust and love through his own unutterable condescension in sharing with him sympathetically his trials and woes, bearing his griefs, carrying his sorrows, dying his death; by diverting the sinner's penalty from him, becoming in some mysterious, awfully inexplicable way his substitute before God; by cleansing him from his sins, bathing him in his own lustrating blood; by answering the demands of the sinner's conscience in respect to the vindication of God's law and righteousness, assuring him that he—the Reconciler—is God as well as man, and that, if God himself can be willing and just to forgive, the sinner ought also to be willing to be forgiven; by breaking the power of indwelling sin through "the expulsive power of a new affection"; by covering the sinner's guilt with his own infinite righteousness; by drowning the sinner's sense of guilt in the ocean of his own infinite blessedness.

Thus does the Divine Man save from sin. Rightly, then, is he named **JESUS**, that is, Jehovah-Saviour. And in no other name is there salvation; for there is no other name under heaven given among men wherein we must be saved.

Acts iv, 12.

There is none other name than thine,
 Jehovah Jesus! Name divine!
 On which to rest for sins forgiven,
 For peace with God, for hope of heaven.

Name above every name! thy praise
 Shall fill the remnant of my days:
 Jehovah Jesus! Name divine!
 Rock of salvation! thou art mine.

Jesus' People
 Saved.

Thirdly: There are those whom Jesus will save—his **PEOPLE**.

Heb. ii, 9.

1 Tim. iv, 10.

Mark xvi, 15.

Rev. xxii, 17.

There is a sense, indeed, in which it is gloriously true that Jesus Christ has, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, being the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe. Accordingly, he has authorized his evangelists to proffer his salvation to every human being: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the glad tidings to the whole creation." The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And he that heareth, let him say, Come! And he that is athirst, let him come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

But while all this is precious true—while, to use the language of Andrew Fuller, "the salvation which Jesus offers is sufficient for all who will take it, yet it is efficient for only those who do take it." And it is precisely those who do take it whom Jesus Christ calls his people; and these are

they whom he will save. Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. And none others will he save. How can he? Since the Christian salvation implies voluntary, glad acceptance on the part of him who is saved, as well as gracious power on the part of him who saves, how can Jesus Christ save the man who refuses to be saved? Omnipotence itself, considered as simple, sheer force, can not compel joyous obedience, glad love, real loyalty of heart. It is of the very essence of a moral nature that its will is free. How, then, can Jesus Christ save a man who will not be saved? In fact, Christ's salvation hinges on this very thing—the willingness to be saved: “Ye *will* not come to me, that ye may have life.” John v, 40. Already under condemnation, and refusing or simply neglecting the great salvation, what right has he to escape if he could; how can he escape if he would? He that believeth not is twice condemned: first, because he has disobeyed Sinai's law; and secondly, because, having disobeyed Sinai's law, he accepts not Calvary's pardon. The Gospel, therefore, is and must be either a savor of 2 Cor. ii, 16. life unto life, or a savor of death unto death.

God be praised, he has given his incarnate Son a multitude which no man can number. And these shall never perish, and no one shall snatch John x, 28. them out of his hand. They are his in the eternal council of grace, elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of 1 Peter i, 2, 3. the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Listen to our blessed Lord's own prayer:

John xvii.

Holy Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine; and all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them; and the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me: Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Phil. ii, 9-11.

Ah, this it is to be one of Christ's people! This it is to be saved by one whose name is Jesus! Who does not feel that this wondrous name, even JESUS, is the name which is above every name? In the sphere of this peerless name what knee will refuse to bow, what tongue refuse to confess?

Edward Perro-
net.

All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all!

Immanuel.

Matt. i, 22, 23.

And now let us briefly ponder St. Matthew's comment on Gabriel's annunciation to Joseph: "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

Isaiah vii, 14.

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth
a son,
And they shall call his name Immanuel;

which is, being interpreted, God with us." This prophecy of Isaiah has been one of the great battle-

fields of the scholars. The various interpretations may be divided into three classes : First, the class which asserts a single and immediate fulfillment in the time of King Ahaz : this justifies Isaiah, but disallows Matthew. Secondly, the class which asserts an exclusive fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth : this justifies Matthew, but disallows Isaiah. Thirdly, the class which asserts a double fulfillment ; immediate, as foretold by Isaiah ; historic, as recorded by Matthew : this disallows neither Isaiah nor Matthew, and justifies both. And this is manifestly the true interpretation. God's promises are infinitely inexhaustible.* They are ever growing in scope and meaning, like concentric waves of the sea, ever multiplying and widening with the flow of time. Or, to use the familiar words of Francis Bacon :

The fulfillments of divine prophecies are taking place continually, and not at the particular time only. For they are of the nature of their Author, 'to whom a thousand years are but as one day, and one day as a thousand years ;' and though the height or fullness of them is commonly referred to some one age or particular period, yet they have at the same time certain gradations and processes, springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many divers ages of the world.

Bacon's "De
Augustinis,"
ii, 2.

Take, now, this prophecy of Isaiah. In God's counsel, the fact, we must believe, was before the prophecy. God adjusted the prophecy to the fact, not the fact to the prophecy. The Messianic future was rooted in and grew out of the prophetic present. And all Christian history

* *Habet Scriptura Sacra haustus primos, habet secundos, habet tertios.*—AUGUSTINE.

proves that Matthew interpreted Isaiah aright. The Church of the living God is the perpetual demonstration that there is an Immanuel, God-with-us. Every page of Christian history is illuminated with the caption: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Matt. xxviii, 20.

Joseph's Obedience.

Matt. i, 24, 25.

And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name JESUS. It is a beautiful instance of holy credence and love and trust.

The Name above every Name.

And now, what shall I say in conclusion? What but this—gratefully to repeat these golden words: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he it is that shall save his people from their sins." Ah, friend, it is the only name by which thou canst be saved. Earthly names there are which are dear to thee. But not one of these names can save thee from thy sins. Not one of them can forgive sin, or cleanse from guilt, or speak peace to the troubled conscience. Not one of them can light up thy dying chamber with heavenly visions. Thou wilt want a mightier name than any earthly to plead when thou comest to stand before the great white throne. Thou wilt want that name which is above every name, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. It is the name JESUS, Jehovah-Saviour. It is a name most fragrant; it is as ointment poured forth. That heavenly ointment was poured forth when Jewish priests reviled that sacred name, when Gentile Pilate wrote over the cross, "This is Jesus, the

Eph. i, 21.

Canticles i, 3.

King of the Jews," when the sacred hands were nailed, when the sacred side was pierced. Then was the costly alabaster vase broken; and the precious ointment is filling time and eternity with its fragrance. Plead this precious name, O sinful man, at the judgment bar; and the odors of it, perfumed as it is with memories of Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jerusalem and Calvary and Olivet, will rise like a cloud of sweet incense before the Almighty Judge; and he will say to thee, Accepted, Welcome!

There is no name so sweet on earth,
 No name so sweet in heaven,
 The name before his wondrous birth
 To Christ the Saviour given.

G. W. Bethune.

And when he hung upon the tree,
 They wrote this name above him,
 That all might see the reason we
 For evermore must love him.

O JESUS, by that matchless name,
 Thy grace shall fail us never:
 To-day as yesterday the same,
 Thou art the same for ever.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we render thee most hearty thanks, that after man, created in thine own image, had fallen under the curse of sin and death, thou didst not leave him to perish in helpless misery, but didst provide a Saviour, and proclaim to the fathers, by the mouth of thy prophets and holy men of old, the advent of thy dear Son, the Hope of Israel, the Desire of the nations, the Redeemer of the world, that, by believing on him, we might have the forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting: to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, be glory and thanksgiving, world without end. Amen. Collect.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ii, 1-7.

Unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given ;
And the government shall be upon his shoulder :
And his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah ix, 5, 6.

VIII.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ii, 1-7.

ALTHOUGH the birth of the Divine Man is the pivotal fact of Christianity and the turning-point in human history, yet, strange to say, we do not know the day or even the year in which Jesus Christ was born. Nor is it needful that we should. Our salvation depends on the fact of his birth, not on its time or place. It matters not, then, on what particular day he was born. The grand thing is that he has been born at all. Enough that we know that there has been such a thing as the fullness of the time, and that, when that fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Nevertheless, let me say in passing, there is a fine propriety in celebrating once a year the nativity. Our ignorance of the date is no valid objection. We do not hesitate to date our letters and documents *Anno Domini* 1887, although in doing so we commit an error of at least four years, and perhaps six. The all-important thing here is not the time of the nativity, but the fact of the nativity. And, if one

Chronology of
the Nativ-
ity.

Gal. iv, 4.

day in every week the Church of Immanuel celebrates the resurrection of her Lord, is it unbecoming that she should one day in every year celebrate that nativity without which there had never been either resurrection or redemption, or even the Church herself ?

And now let us attend to the story of the birth of Immanuel.

Micah's Prophecy.

More than seven centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, the prophet Micah gave utterance to the following remarkable prophecy :

Micah v. 2.

Thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah,
Which art little to be among the thousands of Judah,
Out of thee shall One come forth unto me
Who is to be ruler in Israel ;
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting.

Without staying to comment on the details of this prediction, let it be especially noted how particularly the prophet designates the birthplace of the promised Messiah. Gazing down from the mount of prophecy, casting his piercing glance over all the world, his prophetic eye at last rests on a little village six miles south of Jerusalem ; and he announces, with the confidence of one who had been an eyewitness of the scene, and was describing it historically, that in Bethlehem of Judea shall be born One who shall reign, the universal, everlasting King. And, committing his oracle to the keeping of the God of Abraham and of David, Micah lies down to sleep in the sepulchre of his fathers.

The Prophecy Imperiled.

And now century after century creeps on, each plunging into the abyss of eternity. And

each century, as it takes its awful plunge, carries down with it the ruin of many a scheme and the downfall of many a kingdom. Untold times during these seven hundred years does the cradle of Micah, the seer, seem on the point of dissolving into space. Feebly flickering and glimmering in the dreary night that is creeping over the land of promise, ever and anon it seems as though it must go out forever as some fresh tempest of foreign fury sweeps over and desolates the Holy Land. Invader after invader marches through the country. Uncircumcised heathen sit on the throne of David. The idols of Nebuchadnezzar are enshrined in the holy places. Jerusalem yields the key of her fortress to Alexander. The Egyptian Ptolemies renew the yoke imposed by the ancient Pharaohs. The bugles of Antiochus the Great resound from Lebanon to the Sea of the Dead. At length Judea shakes beneath the heavy tramp of the legions of Pompey. The scepter has departed from Judah, and the ruler's staff from between his feet. The throne of David, once so august, has crumbled into ruins. Flocks of sheep still graze on the hill-sides of Bethlehem, but no scion of the royal house is there to tend them, or to echo the pastoral song of the monarch-minstrel :

Genesis xlix, 10.

Jehovah is my shepherd ; I shall not want.

Psalm xxiii.

Nevertheless, the oracle has gone forth that out of Bethlehem Ephratah shall go forth One who shall shepherd Israel. But how can the oracle be fulfilled?

Behold, then, a wonderful movement of that almighty finger at whose touch creation sways.

Cæsar's Decree.
Luke ii, 1-6.

Far off across the Mediterranean, on another continent, revels in imperial splendor Cæsar Augustus. Little does this monarch, on whose brow glitters the crown of an almost universal empire, dream that, while the world is kneeling before him, he himself is an appointed instrument for the execution of a purpose conceived from before the world was. That same Almighty God who, through the restlessness of a Persian monarch, had rescued from annihilation the national stock from which his anointed was to spring, prepared a birthplace for his anointed through the edict of a Roman emperor. For, when the fullness of the time had come, and the Christ was to be born, Cæsar Augustus issued a decree that all the world should be enrolled. And, since it was the Jewish custom that each Israelite should be registered in the birthplace of his chief ancestor, Joseph and Mary went up from Nazareth in Galilee, where they were living, to Bethlehem in Judea, where their ancestor David had been born, to be enrolled. And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered; and she brought forth her first-born son, even Immanuel. And thus a minute prophecy, a thousand times imperiled in the course of seven centuries, was at last minutely accomplished. Oh, who does not feel that a God is here? Who can resist the conviction that this God has had from the beginning his purposes, and actually controls every movement of every human will?

Book of Esther.

Gal. iv, 4.

Cæsar's Freedom.

Yet there is no reason for supposing that Augustus Cæsar, in issuing his decree for a universal

census, was conscious that in so doing he was preparing the way for the accomplishment of an ancient prediction. A Roman, he cared nothing for the Hebrews. A pagan, he knew nothing of Messianic prophecies. His issuing a decree of enrollment was nothing unnatural or extraordinary; it was one of the commonest acts of a political ruler, and he himself was one of the most methodical of men. Yet who can doubt that Cæsar Augustus, in issuing this decree, was accomplishing a predetermined purpose of the Ancient of Days? Nevertheless, nothing is clearer than this: Cæsar Augustus, in publishing this edict, and Joseph and Mary, in visiting Bethlehem in accordance with its requirements, acted as perfectly free, voluntary beings. They governed themselves according to circumstances—circumstances perfectly natural in themselves. Augustus ordered the registration because he was a man of method, and wanted imperial statistics; Joseph and Mary visited Bethlehem in order to obey the mandate. And yet in doing so were they not fulfilling—it matters not how unconsciously to themselves—a certain prediction? Were they not chosen to be instruments of a certain purpose? Was it not divinely foreseen, and divinely foreseen because divinely foreordained, that Cæsar Augustus should issue this decree, and that Joseph and Mary should visit Bethlehem?

Now, I have not alluded to this matter for the purpose of attempting to solve a frequently propounded problem—namely, the reconciliation of divine sovereignty and human freedom. I have alluded to it simply for the purpose of showing

Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom.

that when we look at this problem in its historic, practical, matter-of-fact aspect, the difficulties vanish. When God, through his prophet Micah, foretold that his Messiah would be born at Bethlehem, he intended that the virgin mother of that Messiah should be brought to her ancestral city by a decree of a Roman emperor. But this Roman emperor issued this decree, not because he was aware of this prophecy, and wished to fulfill it, but because he was an emperor, and desired a census. He simply did as he chose. Just here we leave the point. Considered practically in its matter-of-fact aspect, this subject presents no difficulty. It is only when we pry into that domain of infinite problems which God has not opened to us that we become bewildered and lost. Let us be content with reverently believing what God has been pleased to reveal to us; that will be quite enough for the blissful contemplations of an eternity. The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. Duty, not metaphysics, is our rule for life.

And now let us revert to the story of the nativity.

Bethlehem.

Six miles south of Jerusalem, on a limestone ridge, lies the beautiful hamlet of Bethlehem. Little as it was among the thousands of Judah, it had already earned an illustrious place in Hebrew history. Hard by, seventeen centuries before, the patriarch Jacob had buried his beloved Rachel, and reared a pillar over her grave; it is called the Pillar of Rachel's Tomb to this day. On its em-

Micah v, 2.

Gen. xxxv, 16-20.

erald slopes, in the field of Boaz, had occurred that sacred courtship which makes the story of Ruth one of the most exquisite idyls of literature. Here had been born the man after God's own heart, alike shepherd, musician, poet, soldier, king, covenanted ancestor of the Christ. Here Chimham, son of Barzillai the Gileadite, who had shown kindness to David in his flight from Absalom, had received from the grateful king on his restoration a possession, building a caravansary, or khan, known as the House of Chimham. And here was born the Divine Man, God-with-us. Difficult it is to say whether Calvary or Bethlehem is the holiest spot on earth!

² Sam. xix, 31-40.

At this venerable hamlet arrived a weary couple. It is the Galilean artisan and his bride, mysteriously pregnant with the Holy Ghost. All the way from Nazareth have they come to obey Cæsar's decree to be enrolled. They are tired and footsore. They climb the ridge of Bethlehem, and apply for lodgings at the caravansary, it may be the very inn which Barzillai's son had built, and which was known as the House of Chimham. But others are there before them, and the inn is full, and they are obliged to turn away. Hard by is a cave, one of the numerous limestone caverns of Palestine, perhaps used by the proprietor of the inn as a stable. The pangs of maternity seize the virgin of Nazareth, and a section of a cave is hastily appropriated.* And here, amid the beasts

The Manger.

* There seems but little reason for rejecting the tradition, as old as the time of Justin Martyr, who was born at Shechem, and lived less than a century after our Lord—a tradition confirmed by

of the stall, the blessed maiden presents to sin-cursed humanity its Saviour, even the Divine Man, Jehovah's holy Christ, wrapping him in swaddling-clothes, and laying him in a manger, because there is no room for them in the inn. Meet birthplace was it for him who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich.

2 Cor. viii, 9.

Aurelius Cle-
mens Pruden-
tius: Fourth
Century.

Oh, that birth forever blessed,
When the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bare the Saviour of our race;
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed his sacred face,
Evermore and evermore!

This is he whom seers in old time
Chanted of with one accord;
Whom the voices of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word;
Now he shines the long-expected;
Let creation praise its Lord:
Evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heaven, adore him!
Angel-hosts his praises sing!
All dominions bow before him
And extol our God and King:

Jerome, who spent thirty years of his life in a cavern hard by, where he made his translation of the Scriptures known as the Vulgate—that Jesus Christ was born in a cave, and that the present Church of the Nativity, founded by the mother of Constantine, really domes the site of the holy manger. Few are the persons who can enter the Grotto of the Nativity, and, gazing on the silver star encircled by sixteen ever-burning lamps, read without a thrill of awe the legend: *Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est.*

Let no tongue on earth be silent,
 Every voice in concert ring,
 Evermore and evermore!

Thee let old men, thee let young men,
 Thee let boys in chorus sing;
 Matrons, virgins, little maidens,
 With glad voices answering;
 Let their guileless songs re-echo,
 And the heart its praises bring,
 Evermore and evermore!

Christ! to thee, with God the Father,
 And, O Holy Ghost, to thee!
 Hymn, and chant, and high thanksgiving,
 And unwearied praises be,
 Honor, glory, and dominion,
 And eternal victory,
 Evermore and evermore. Amen.

Such is the story of the nativity. Let me conclude with three reflections.

And, first, the birth at Bethlehem consecrated and glorified all infancy. As Athena was fabled to have sprung full-grown and panoplied from the cloven brow of Zeus, so the Christ and Son of God might have descended into humanity an unborn, adult Adam; for the distance between babe and man is infinitely less than the distance between man and God. But, no; he descended into humanity through the avenue of birth and babyhood, coming, like any other infant, under the law of growth, and so consecrating all life from cradle to grave, hallowing birth as well as death. The birth at Bethlehem made babyhood a sacred thing. And so the very infancy of Jesus is a gospel. It makes every cradle—oh,

Glorification
 of Infancy.

that parents would discern and believe it!—a holy fane.

Christianity
still Stabled
rather than
Inned.

Again: The treatment of the holy family at Bethlehem's inn was a prophecy of the world's treatment of Jesus Christ ever since. The Divine Child, instead of being comfortably housed, was left to be rudely mangered, not because repulse was meant, but simply because the inn was already full. It is, I repeat, a picture of the world's treatment of Jesus Christ ever since. It does not repulse him; it simply has no room for him; every apartment of the soul is already engaged. There are the pre-occupations, for example, of worldly cares, wealth, poverty, selfishness, pleasure, sensuality, fashion, avarice, ambition, self-complacency, ritualism, ecclesiasticism, "orthodoxy," family love. No rudeness is meant; but every chamber of the soul is already taken and occupied. The inn is large, and there is room for every person except one, and that is the Babe of Bethlehem, Deity incarnate. Even the Church—the church nominal—oftentimes offers but a manger. The world seizes the inn; Christianity must put up with a stable.

The Coming
Hospitality.

But it shall not always be so. The Son of God will descend to earth again. But when he does descend again, it will not be as the Divine Babe, but as the Divine Man, sitting on the clouds of heaven, escorted by ten thousand times ten thousand chariots and all the shining ones of God. Then every knee will bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Phil. ii, 10, 11.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates :
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors :
And the King of glory shall come in.

Psalm xxiv.

Who is this King of glory ?

Jehovah of hosts,
He is the King of glory.

Ay, the Word made flesh, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Divine Man, Immanuel, He is the King of glory.

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten **Collect.**
Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin ; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit ; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THE TWO GENEALOGIES OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW i, 1-17; LUKE iii, 23-38.

The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Matthew i, 1.

Being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, . . . the son of Adam, the son of God.

Luke iii, 23-38.

IX.

THE TWO GENEALOGIES OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW i, 1-17; LUKE iii, 23-38.

THE average American cares little for genealogy. Our country is too young; it has been settled by too many emigrating families; the intermarriage between their descendants has been too free; the vicissitudes of fortune have been too frequent and extreme; the distance between the average man and the great man has been too small; the rejection of the Old World principle of primogeniture has been too complete; the resources of the country are too abounding; the confidence of the people in "manifest destiny" has been too glowing—to permit, with here and there an exception, any special passion for the preservation of pedigrees. Not so with the civilized nations beyond the deep. Their inspiration is largely the inspiration of the past. Their treasures are the treasures of antique relics; their songs the songs of auld lang syne; their constitutions the constitutions of precedents; their authorities the authorities of traditions; their customs the

Jewish Pride
in Pedigree.

customs of immemorial mintages. Moreover, the facts that primogeniture has been in large part the law of inheritance for the ancient world, and that each of the nations, in most instances, owes or supposes it owes its origin to a single and conspicuous founder, escorted by a brilliant court, have tended to cultivate the genealogical instinct. Hence, the many family-trees and heraldries and muniment-rooms of our motherland, the venerable Celtic clans perpetuated from generation to generation, the ancient patronymics of Greece and Rome. But nowhere was this passion for preserving pedigrees so intense as among the ancient Jews. And nowhere with so good reason: for to them, from Abraham onward, had been promised the peerless honor of giving birth to the Divine Deliverer. Hence the jealous care with which they guarded their tables of lineage; witness, for example, the genealogical registers of the books of the Chronicles and of Ezra. Accordingly, when Cæsar Augustus issued his decree that all the world should be enrolled, and all went to enroll themselves, every one to his own city—that is, the city of his family ancestor—Joseph also went up from Nazareth of Galilee to the city of David, which was called Bethlehem, knowing, doubtless from the official registry, that he was of the house and family of David, to enroll himself with Mary, his betrothed. This hope of being the ancestor of the promised Messiah, cherished by every family of the Abrahamic race, and especially of the Davidic stock, was the majestic hope which, alike in prosperity and in adversity, in independence

Luke ii, 1-5.

and in captivity, tended to keep the Hebrew pedigree in unbroken continuity from Abraham to Jesus.

Two genealogies have been bequeathed to us under guidance of the Holy Spirit: the first by the apostle Matthew, which is a descending and Jewish pedigree, tracing the lineage of Jesus from Abraham downward; the second by the evangelist Luke, which is an ascending and human pedigree, tracing the lineage of Jesus upward through Abraham to Adam. Nor is this to be wondered at, for Matthew wrote his memoir for the Jews, hence his genealogy is Abrahamic; whereas, Luke wrote his memoir for Jews and Gentiles, hence his genealogy is Abrahamic and Adamic.

Now, when we come to compare these two genealogies in detail, we find differences which, let it be honestly confessed, are somewhat difficult to reconcile. For example, Luke inserts some names which Matthew omits; again, from the time of David downward, the corresponding names in the two tables do not agree. The enemies of Christianity have seized on these variations as points of elaborate assault. And no wonder, for the apparent weakness at this point of the Christian citadel does seem to invite attack. Nevertheless, I believe that these difficulties have been greatly overrated, and that they will, in the main, vanish before an honestly conducted, searching examination. Various methods of solution have been proposed. They may be reduced to two. The first is this: Both genealogies are genealogies

The Two Genealogies.

Matt. i, 1-17.

Luke iii, 23-38.

The Pedigrees
Seemingly
Discrepant:
Really Con-
cordant.

of Joseph, the supposed father of Jesus, Matthew giving the legal or royal pedigree from David along the regal line of Solomon, and Luke giving the personal or actual pedigree along the private or collateral line of Nathan. This is the view of Alford, Calvin, Ellicott, Fairbairn, Farrar, Fausset, Geikie, Hervey, Mansel, Meyer, Mill, Westcott, Winer, Wordsworth, etc. The second theory is this: Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke the genealogy of Mary, both being descendants of David—the one along the royal line of Solomon, the other along the private line of Nathan. This is the view of Alexander, Andrews, Auberlen, Bengel, Broadus, Ebrard, Gardiner, Godet, Grotius, Kitto, Kurtz, Lange, Lightfoot, Luther, Neander, Olshausen, Plumptre, Robinson, Schaff, Strong, Wieseler, Weiss, etc. On the whole, the latter seems to be the better theory. But, in light of either of these methods, most of the difficulties vanish. Nor should it be forgotten—for it is a point of supreme importance in technical matters of this kind—that we do not have the advantage here of contemporaneous light. There is no evidence that these tables occasioned any difficulty in the first century of the Christian era. Had there been any real discrepancy between these two pedigrees, we may be sure that the contemporaries of the sacred biographers, with the public registries of Palestine doubtless at command, would have detected it, and the enemies of Christianity, from the very beginning watching for flaws, would have made the most of it. Since then, centuries have rolled away, and facts and

explanations which were in possession of contemporaries are forever lost. Surely no one would venture to say that our ignorance is the circumference of truth. But let us not dwell too long on this aspect of the matter, lest peradventure we disregard the apostle's injunction, not to give heed to endless genealogies, the which minister questionings rather than a dispensation of God, which is in faith.

1 Tim. i, 4.

And yet in these very genealogies of Jesus Christ there are hinted profound truths well worthy of our most serious consideration. Let us rapidly glance at some of them.

Suggestions of the Genealogy.

And, first, the fact that there is any genealogy at all is significant. For it is conceivable that the Son of God might have descended into the world an unborn Gabriel, or a full-grown, unmothered Adam. But when we read such words as the opening verse of the New Testament, "The book of the generation [genesis, birth-record, pedigree] of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," we feel that the Son of God has indeed become the Son of man—the Word has indeed become flesh, bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh. Let us thank God, then, that he moved his evangelists to give us these pedigrees; for the simple fact that there is any pedigree at all puts Jesus Christ into the category of man.

The Genealogy a Token of Christ's Manhood.

Matt. i, 1.

Again, observe the pedigree itself. How many and striking its vicissitudes! How thrilling some of its names! How momentous some of the events it recalls! Glance for a moment at some

Vicissitudes of the Genealogy.

Luke iii, 23.

of these peculiarities. For example, how profound the obscurity and hinted shame which rested over Bethlehem's manger, as suggested by the evangelist's comment: "Being, *as was supposed*, the son of Joseph." How homely his descent, as indicated by the fact that eighteen of his immediate ancestors are unknown except by name! How illustrious his descent, as indicated in such names as Zerubbabel, Josiah, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, Solomon, David, Boaz, Jacob, Abraham, Noah, Enoch, Seth, Adam! What dark scenes in Hebrew history are recalled by such names as Jehoiachin, Amon, Manasseh, Ahaz, Jehoram, Rehoboam, Bathsheba, Tamar! How thrilling the vicissitudes of David's line, as vibrating in the stories of Rehoboam, Joash, Esther, the Maccabees, the Virgin Mary! Verily, the genealogy of Jesus Christ is a book of startling providences. And it is a significant fact that, since the birth of the Divine Man, the Davidic pedigree has been hopelessly lost, so that none but Jesus of Bethlehem can claim from the Hebrew genealogical tables to be David's promised son, and so David's Lord, even Jehovah's very Christ. But Jesus Christ was not only the son of David and the son of Abraham, he was also the son of Adam—even that seed of the woman who, as had been foretold by the gates of Eden, would crush the serpent's head. Thus, the genealogy of Jesus Christ includes all extremes and all vicissitudes, so that he is in very truth the Son of man. And not only is he the Son of man, he is also the Son of God. I never read the closing words of Luke's account of

Gen. iii, 15.

the genealogy without a thrill of awe at the remembrance of my august paternity: "The son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." And both the Adams were, so to speak, born of the Holy Ghost: Into the first Adam, Jehovah God breathed his own Spirit, or breath; and upon the mother of the second Adam the Holy Spirit came, and the power of the Most High overshadowed.

Luke iii, 38.

Gen. ii, 7.

Luke i, 35.

Such are some of the meaningful peculiarities of this most wonderful genealogy.

Lastly, the genealogy of Jesus Christ is the oldest in the world. Men think it a great thing to have an ancient lineage. But here is a lineage which is older than that of William of Normandy, or Romulus, or Priam, or Nimrod, or Adam. Verily, his goings forth have been from of old—from the days of eternity. Verily, here is the Ancient of Days. Ah! the true heraldry is the device of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; the true shield is the crimson escutcheon of the Cross.

Christ's Genealogy the Oldest in the World.

Micah v, 2.

Dost thou, O friend, belong to the lineage of Jesus Christ? If so, thy name has already been entered in the heavenly register, even the Lamb's roll of life. Like Jesus Christ himself, thou art not only a son of Adam, thou art also a son of God. Live, then, worthily of thy sonship. And so, when he who is our life shall appear, thou also shalt appear with him in glory.

A Momentous Question.

Col. iii, 4.

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of

Collect.

God and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure; that, when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE
SHEPHERDS.

LUKE ii, 8-20.

Praise ye him, all his angels:
Praise ye him, all his host.

Psalm cxlviii, 2.

X.

THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS.

LUKE ii, 8-20.

ON the night Jesus Christ was born, shepherds were abiding in a field, keeping watch over their flock. It was and still is a common Oriental scene. Nightly exposed to the ravages of the jackal, and wolf, and robber, flocks need the watchful protection of shepherds. And meet it was that, when annunciation was to be made of the birth of him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of souls,—leading them forth as his flock, calling each of them by name, guarding them against prowlers, laying down his life for them, going after the lost ones, carrying the lambs in his bosom, himself Lamb as well as Shepherd—that annunciation should be made first of all, not to king in palace or high-priest in temple, not to Pharisee in synagogue or rabbi in sanhedrin, but to shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And no wonder; for

The Lowly
Watchers.
Luke ii, 8.

1 Peter ii, 25.
John x, 1-16.

The Dazzling
Apparition.
Luke ii, 9.

the phenomenon was most extraordinary. Who the angel was, we are not told. Quite probably it was the same angel who had already made annunciation to Zacharias in the temple, to Mary at Nazareth, to Joseph in his slumber—even the same Gabriel, Strength of God, who, five centuries before, had made annunciation to the exile by the Ulai. The glory of the Lord which shone round about these shepherds was doubtless that same miraculous effulgence in which Deity had been wont in the earlier ages to enshrine himself, and which the rabbins called the Shechinah. Diversified as well as extraordinary were the appearances of that Shechinah in ancient days. It had gleamed as a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life; it had flickered as a lambent flame in the brier-bush of Horeb; it had hung as a stupendous canopy over the mountain of the law; it had hovered as a glittering cloud above the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat; it had marshaled the hosts of Israel for forty years, towering like a pillar of cloud by day and like a pillar of fire by night; it had filled the temple of Solomon, flooding it with a brightness so intense that the priests could not enter to minister; it was to be the radiant cloud which should enfold out of sight the ascending Lord; it will be the great white throne on which that ascended Lord will descend when he returns in the pomp of his second advent. But never had it served a purpose so august and blissful as on this most memorable of nights when, after centuries of eclipse, it suddenly reappeared and shone around the astonished

Luke i, 5-38.

Matt. i, 18-25.

Daniel vii-ix.

Gen. iii, 24.

Exodus iii, 2.

Exodus xix, 16.

Psalms lxxx, 1.

Exod. xl, 36-38.

2 Chron. v, 13, 14.

Acts i, 9.

Matt. xxvi, 64.

shepherds. Well might the effulgent cloud now return, as though in glad homage to the incarnation; for on this night is born he who is to be his own Church's true pillar of fire-cloud, to marshal her through sea and wilderness into the true promised land. Oh, since the day was as the night when Jesus Christ died, let us be grateful that the night was as the day when Jesus Christ was born.

Matt. xxvii, 45.

And the angel said unto them, "Be not afraid; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Hitherto Gabriel has announced only prophetically, now he announces historically. And well may he call his annunciation an evangel: "I announce to you an evangel of great joy." Yes, angels were the first evangelists. But what is the evangel which the angel brings to these Hebrew shepherds? Even this: the accomplishment of an ancient, oft-repeated, most precious prophecy. For ages One, who was to be in the eminent sense God's Anointed, had been the glowing theme of rite and symbol, of prophecy and oracle, of statute and song. And now after centuries of waiting, when expectation has almost died into despair, the announcement is suddenly made that the long-yearned-for Messiah has actually come: "Lo, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people: for this day, in the city of David, there hath been born to you a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord." Verily, the annunciation was an evangel.

The Heavenly
Evangel.

Luke ii, 10, 11.

Immanuel's
Twofold
Sign.
Luke ii, 12.

But where shall we find this mighty Deliverer? How shall we know him when we see him? What mark does he bear? Surely he will be found in some stately palace, with angel-courtiers kneeling before him, the scepter in his hand, the sword on his thigh, Godhead gleaming on his brow. Ah, no; listen to the angel's words: "And this is the sign unto you, ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." This, then, is the credential that a Divine Saviour has come into the world. Let us note it particularly. The sign is twofold.

A Babe.

The first sign is this: "Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." The Christ of God might have descended an archangel, glittering with celestial emblazonry. He might have descended a full-grown man, having the stature of a son of Anak, and the strength of the son of Manoa. He might have descended a king confessed, the government visibly on his shoulder, the diadem on his brow, the perpetual hills bowing before him, the empires yielding him tribute. He might have descended a sage, rich in the lore of all antiquity, human and seraphic. But no; he descended a little, helpless infant, wrapped, like any other new-born babe of earth, in swaddling clothes. And this is the sign that he is the Saviour of the world, the Christ of Jehovah, "very God of very God." And it is a sign as powerful as simple. Had he descended otherwise, we might not have believed so easily in the reality of the incarnation. We might have said that he was an angel. But when we behold him a helpless little babe, we feel

that the incarnation was no acting—no phantom. We feel that Deity has in very truth come down within our sphere, linking his fortunes with ours, taking our life, like ourselves, at its germ as well as at its fruit, sharing with us the cradle as well as the grave, the swaddling clothes of Mary of Bethlehem as well as the burial linen of Joseph of Arimathea. Of him it can be said in deepest truth, although not precisely in the sense the poet meant :

Heaven lies about us in our infancy.

William Wordsworth.

His power as King of men dates from his cradle.
He was *born* King of the Jews.

Matt. ii, 2.

Thy people are free-will offerings in the day of thy power ;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
Thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Psalm cx, 3.

But the angel gives a second sign : “ Lying in a manger.” Not, then, in choice apartments of an inn, not in sumptuous nurseries of the opulent, not in palaces of royalty, was the King of kings and Lord of lords to be cradled ; but in a crib, amid the beasts of the stall. And this was to be one of the secrets of his kingdom. In fact, all society is built up from below.* It is pre-eminently true of the Nazarene, and the Nazarene’s

Lying in a Manger.

* “ The roof is more dependent upon the foundation than the foundation upon the roof. Nearly all, if not quite all, the movements which have changed the thinking and determined the new courses of the world have been upward, not downward. The great revolutionists have generally been cradled in mangers, and gone through rough discipline in early life. Civilization is debtor to lowly cradles, and unknown mothers hold a heavy account against the world.”—“ Ecce Deus,” by JOSEPH PARKER, D. D.

Acts xvii, 6.

religion, and the Nazarene's church. The men that have turned the world upside down, bringing things to pass that are contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus, are not the wise, and the mighty, and the noble of earth, but the foolish, and the weak, and the despised—Galilean fishermen and Corinthian tent-makers, Mansfeld street-singers and Northamptonshire cobblers. The mightiest Revolutionist of the ages, rising up against the empire of darkness and toppling it, coming up with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength, was born, not in a damask-lined cradle, but in a straw-littered manger. The world's throne to-day is the crib of Bethlehem's stable.

1 Cor. i, 26-29.

Isaiah lxiii, 1-3.

Robert Southwell.

This stable is a Prince's court,
The crib his chair of state ;
The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
The wooden dish his plate.

The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear ;
The Prince himself has come from heaven ;
This pomp is praised there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight ;
Do homage to thy King ;
And highly praise this humble pomp,
Which he from heaven doth bring.

These, then, are the signs by which the shepherds should know the Divine Deliverer that had come into the world : first, they would find a babe ; and, secondly, they would find that babe in a manger.

And suddenly there was with them a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying :

The Angel-Song.
Luke ii, 13, 14.

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.

It was the first *Gloria in Excelsis*. Not that it was the first time that the heavenly host had descended, and joined in exultant song. When the Maker of heaven and earth fastened the foundations of the universe and laid its corner-stone, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. But how different that song from this ! Then they sang God's skill and might as Creator—the order and beauty of his fair work ; now they sing God's righteousness and love as Redeemer—the peace and good-will of his grace. Then they sang creation by Christ ; now they sing creation in Christ and for Christ. Then they sang a heaven and earth that shall be dissolved in fervent heat ; now they sing a new heaven and earth that shall abide forever. Nay, the Church of the living God, raised to the superior throne whence she shall judge angels themselves, is graced with a song nobler than the song of Bethlehem's angels, even this : The making known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages had been hidden in God, even his manifold wisdom, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the true *Gloria in Excelsis*, an anthem in which not

Job xxxviii, 6, 7.

2 Peter iii, 10-13.

1 Cor. vi, 3.

Eph. iii, 9-11.

even angels can join. With millions of living Christians, and myriads of sainted dead of many a century past, let us also take up the pæan-prayer, and echo it each for himself:

Gloria in Ex-
celsis.

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good-will toward men! We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee, for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy; thou only the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Pax in Terræ.

But the angels' song was not only a *Gloria in Excelsis*, it was also a *Pax in Terræ*: "On earth peace, good-will toward men!" It is the peace of God's reconciliation to man, the peace of man's reconciliation to God, the peace of man's reconciliation to himself, the peace of man's reconciliation to his fellow-man. The angels' song was the prelude to the reign of the Prince of Peace. Ay, then came down

Milton's
"Hymn on the
Nativity."

The meek-eyed Peace:

She, crowned with green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

No war or battle's sound
 Was heard the world around ;
 The idle spear and shield were high up hung ;
 The hookéd chariot stood
 Unstained with hostile blood ;
 The trumpet spake not to the arméd throng ;
 And kings sat still with awful eye,
 As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

Yea, Truth and Justice then
 Will down return to men,
 Orb'd in a rainbow ; and, like glories wearing,
 Mercy will sit between,
 Throned in celestial sheen,
 With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering ;
 And Heaven, as at some festival,
 Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

Does this seem a still unfulfilled prophecy ?
 Yes, if we take note only of the wars and rumors
 of wars that ever and anon startle the world. Yes,
 if we recall our own desolating civil strife, when
 fort and battle-line so often boomed forth death,
 and bayonets quenched their gleam in blood. Yes,
 if we remember the discords and sorrows of socie-
 ty—its tiger-voiced denunciations and serpent-
 hissed insinuations, its ruptured friendships and
 partitioned homes. When we remember all this,
 who is not disheartened, fearing that the promised
 day of peace is still as distant as on the night the
 angel-song surged on Bethlehem's air ?

Trust not, then, in man, nor put your confi-
 dence in princes. From the battle-fields of war-
 riors, with their garments rolled in blood, from
 cabinet and forum, scar into that purer, diviner

Psalm cxviii,
 8, 9.

Isaiah ix, 5.

realm where the ambassadors of the Prince of Peace hold high court. Ah! here is the secret of the world's true reconciliation and immortal amity. What no earthly force—legislative, executive, judicial, international, academic, æsthetic—has ever been able to accomplish, or ever can accomplish, the Church of the Babe of Bethlehem, without staff, or purse, or sword, can, with the blessing of her Chief, serenely achieve. Marching under the banner of the Prince of Peace, repeating his precepts, breathing his spirit, reproducing his graces, feeling and illustrating in daily life his manifold loves, the Church of the Beatitudes will yet girdle earth with the shining zone of love, and then shall

all men's good

Be each man's rule, and universal Peace
Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,
Through all the circle of the Golden Year.

Tennyson's
"Golden
Year."

Eph. ii, 11-22.

For Jesus Christ is our peace, making all men one, breaking down all walls of partition between them, blending them all into one new man in himself, reconciling all into one body in the blood of his cross, slaying thereon the enmity. The Divine Man is the world's true pacificator, the peace-making Prince. The manger is the true solvent of humanity.

Longfellow's
"Arsenal at
Springfield."

Down the dark future, through long generations,
The echoing sounds grow fainter, and then cease;
And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,
I hear once more the voice of Christ say, Peace!

Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals
 The blast of war's huge organ shakes the skies ;
 But, beautiful as songs of the immortals,
 The melodies of love arise.

Such was the angel's annunciation, and such the attestation of the angelic choir. And now let us return to the shepherds.

No sooner had the heavenly host ascended to their home than the wondering shepherds exclaimed, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." It is the curiosity of faith, not of doubt. And they hasten, night though it still is, and, lo, all that the angel had said is true : they find both Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. And they adore. The scene has been an immortal theme for music and art. But the shepherds are not content with simple verification of the angel-given sign : they make known abroad what they had heard and seen concerning this wondrous Child. Next to angels, shepherds were the first evangelists. And so they returned to their nightly watch over their flock, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it had been spoken unto them. But Mary, the blessed among women, the virgin-mother, might not speak of these ineffable things ; enough that she could ponder them in her heart. Such is the story of the annunciation to the shepherds.

The Rustic
 Adoration.
 Luke ii, 15-20.

Luke i, 42.

O thou only-begotten Son of God, Light of Light, God of God, very God of very God, who, in the fullness of time, wast made flesh, and didst take upon thyself all our sins and Collect.

infirmities, that we might have salvation from sin and eternal life in thee: we bless thee for thy holy incarnation; and with the multitude of angels who proclaimed thy birth, and with thy people among all nations, we unite in singing:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. Amen.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ii, 21.

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every male among you shall be circumcised.

Genesis xvii, 10.

XI.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ii, 21.

THE august promise of many a century has at length been fulfilled. The Word, who in the beginning was and was with God and was God, has become flesh, having been divinely conceived in Nazareth of Galilee, and humanly born in Bethlehem of Judea. And now, seven days having elapsed since the holy birth, the Divine Babe, in accordance with Jehovah's commandment in his covenant with Abraham, is duly circumcised. By that rite he is officially enrolled as a member of the Hebrew nationality, and, as such, entitled to all the privileges and prerogatives belonging to a son of the Covenant.

But why, we can not help asking, must he, who came to be the propitiation, not only for the sins of the Jew, but also for the sins of the whole world, be subjected to a rite so intensely Jewish? Let Holy Scripture itself answer: When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. God in his wisdom saw fit to prepare

The Circumcision.

John i, 1, 14.

Luke i, 35.

Luke ii, 7.

Luke ii, 21.

Genesis xvii.

Reason of the Circumcision.

1 John ii, 2.

Gal. iv, 4, 5.

a lost world for its Saviour through the separation and training of the Jewish nation—through the rites and symbols, the ordinances and prophecies of the Jewish economy. Hence it behooved the Saviour of the world in all things to be made like unto his brethren. Accordingly, he became a Jew, and a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, in order to save both Jew and Gentile.

Heb. ii, 17.

Rom. xv, 8-12.

The True Circumcision.

Heb. ii, 9.

Col. ii, 14.

Gal. iii, 28.

Col. iii, 11.

Rom. ii, 28, 29.

But the Jewish economy was not to last forever. Jesus Christ, having accomplished the work which the Father had given him to do, having by the grace of God tasted death for every man, has forever blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. Henceforth there is in him neither Jew nor Gentile, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither Greek nor Scythian, neither male nor female; but all are one in Christ; and Christ is all, and in all. Henceforth the true circumcision is inward. And so is fulfilled the apostle's saying: "He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Collect.

Almighty God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; Grant us the true Circumcision of the Spirit; that our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS
CHRIST.

LUKE ii, 22-24.

Sanctify unto me all the first-born.

Exodus xiii, 2.

XII.

THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ii, 22-24.

FORTY days having now elapsed since the holy birth, Joseph and Mary take the little Jesus—for so had they named him, in obedience to the twice-given direction of Gabriel—and carry him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as required by the law of Moses. What a wonderful scene! “The Lord of the temple presented in the temple to the Lord!” And yet there is no reason to suppose that the presentation excited any general interest. When the priest saw the lowly carpenter and his wife entering the temple court, bringing their little One, and the prescribed offering of a pair of turtle-doves, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he saw what doubtless seemed to him but an every-day occurrence. When, having offered the turtle doves, and gone through the prescribed routine, he pronounced the little Stranger, still in swaddling clothes and fresh from the manger, a duly enrolled son of Abraham, he doubtless felt that he had done a very commonplace thing. And yet he had done a tremendous thing. He had sounded the death knell of the

The Presentation.

Luke ii, 22, 23.

Matt. i, 21 ;

Luke i, 31.

Bonaventura.

Mosaic dispensation and of his own priesthood: for the little Babe, whom he has just declared to be a member of the Jewish commonwealth, is none other than he for whom the Jewish commonwealth had been the divinely ordained preparation, and who in due time shall be seen to be the world's sole and true and everlasting Priest.

Joseph and Mary in presenting the infant Jesus to the Lord observed two Mosaic ordinances.

Purification of
the Mother.

The first was the purification of the mother from legal or ceremonial uncleanness as set forth in the twelfth chapter of the book of Leviticus. We need not go into particulars. Enough to be reminded that the ordinance required among other things the sacrifice of a lamb of the first year, or, in case of poverty, the sacrifice of two young pigeons; the one for a sin-offering, the other for a burnt-offering. Thus it was in humble Mary's case. Yet she brought the very costliest of sacrifices, even the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. But how profound our Saviour's humiliation! What could more touchingly set forth his utter abasement than this fact of his mother's purification according to the law of Moses! Verily, God sent forth his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Lev. xii, 8.

John i, 29.

Rom. viii, 2.

Redemption of
the First-
born.

The other prescribed rite was the redemption of the little Child from priestly service as being his mother's first-born. When Jehovah destroyed all the first-born of Egypt and spared all the first-born of Israel, he ordained that that unexampled night should be kept in everlasting remembrance by the consecration of the first-born of every

Exo. xiii, 11-16.

Israelite to his own special service. When in process of time the tribe of Levi had been specially set apart to the priesthood, he allowed the first-born of the other tribes to be redeemed from the priestly service by the presentation of them in the tabernacle and the payment of five shekels into the treasury. Thus was Jesus, as the first-born of Mary, redeemed from priestly service, although he himself was the world's only true Priest. Thus it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Num. xviii, 14-16.

Luke ii, 7.

Heb. ii, 17.

Almighty and ever-living God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty, that as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect.

THE HOMAGE OF SIMEON AND ANNA.

LUKE ii, 25-38.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts :
There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets
of Jerusalem,
Every man with his staff in his hand for very age.
And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls
Playing in the streets thereof.

Zechariah viii, 4, 5.

XIII.

THE HOMAGE OF SIMEON AND ANNA.

LUKE ii, 25-38.

“AND behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” Brief as this description is, it sets the aged Simeon before us in a clear and most engaging light. First, he was “righteous and devout,” a conscientious and strict worshiper according to the rites of Judaism. Like his contemporaries Zacharias and Elisabeth, he was righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Again, he was “looking for the consolation of Israel.” A choice spirit was Simeon in that Sadducean age, earnestly believing in the long-promised Redeemer, and yearning for his advent. Nor was his yearning unsatisfied. In his own case was literally fulfilled the last prophet’s memorable prediction :

The Saintly
Character.
Luke ii, 25.

Luke i, 6.

Behold, I send my messenger,
And he shall prepare the way before me :
And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple ;
And the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in,
Behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts.

Malachi iii, 1.

Heb. ix, 23.

In like manner will the consolation of Israel suddenly return, when he shall appear a second time, apart from sin, for the salvation of those who, like Simeon, are looking for him. Once more : "The Hôly Spirit was upon" Simeon ; that is to say, he was in a marked degree the subject of the Spirit's influence. He was emphatically a child of the Spirit. And so, to sum it all up, Simeon, like ancient Enoch, walked with God ; and, although he was not translated, yet he received a still richer blessing ; for he was permitted to gaze with the eyes of the flesh on the long-expected Messiah of Jehovah.

Gen. v, 24.

The Gracious
Revelation.

Luke ii, 26.

"And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." This pre-intimation, be it observed, was not a mere presentiment ; it was a direct revelation by the Holy Spirit. Yet, if Simeon had been questioned about it any time before this memorable day in the temple, I doubt whether he would have affirmed that he was conscious of having received any distinctively supernatural communication. He probably would have answered : "I have a strong conviction that I shall not die until I behold the consolation of Israel." However this may have been, I believe that something like this has often occurred in the history of the Church, and may often occur again. Although the Holy Spirit is a supernatural being, yet, generally speaking, he acts so naturally on our feelings and expectations that we are not distinctly conscious of being under his influence. Who shall venture to affirm that those strong pre-

sentiments which we sometimes have—for example, concerning the conversion of children or kindred, or the restoration to health and home of far distant sick friends—may not be intimations to us by that Holy One who is emphatically the comforter and teacher and guide and helper and inspirer of his people? If the Holy Spirit can act on us in respect to duty, as we believe he does, why can not he act on us in respect to desire and foresight? But let us not imagine that every presentiment is his impulse. How often are our saintliest and intensest expectations disappointed! Blessed are we if, like the patriarchs, we die as well as live in faith, although we have not received the promised blessings, but only seen them, and greeted them from afar. In all events, no one who has ever heard the glad tidings need die before he has in the truest sense seen the Lord's Christ. God grant that we may all be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Heb. xi, 13.

Eph. i, 13, 14.

“And he came in the Spirit into the temple.” The Holy Spirit then not only revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he had seen Jehovah's Anointed: the Holy Spirit also prompted Simeon to visit the temple the precise hour the Divine Babe was to be brought in. Ah, little do we imagine how many of the blessed coincidences of life are really arranged by that Holy One under whose administration we are living. Little did Simeon, although looking for the consolation of Israel, imagine that he would see the Lord's

The Divine
Impulse.
Luke ii, 27.

Christ that day in his temple. Little did Joseph and Mary imagine that on that day the Divine Babe would receive such reverential salutation. Little did Cornelius in Cæsarea and Peter in Joppa imagine that the Holy Spirit was arranging for them an interview momentous in consequences. Little did Philip and the treasurer of Ethiopia imagine that they would meet each other on the desert way between Jerusalem and Gaza. Little do we imagine that many of the so-called accidental conjunctions of life are really the gracious arrangements by One who, hidden behind earth's thrones and nature's laws, is administering the affairs of the universe in the interest of Christ and Christ's church. When will the world and the church learn that Almighty God is Ruler as well as Maker?

Acts x-xi.

Acts viii, 25-40.

The Patriarchal
Blessing.
Luke ii, 27, 28.

“And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law, then he received him into his arms, and blessed God.” An exquisite picture this: “The infant Gospel cradled in the arms of dying Law.” Verily, while, without any dispute, the less is blessed of the better, here, at least, the greater is blessed of the less.

Heb. vii, 7.

And Simeon said :

Nunc Dimittis.
Luke ii, 29-32.

Now lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord,
According to thy word, in peace;
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples;
A light for revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of thy people Israel.

It was not only the vesper song of the vanishing Jewish church: it was also the swan-like song

of a dying saint, the true *Nunc Dimittis* of a ransomed spirit. Not that it was, as we so often take it, a prayer for death : rather was it a declaration both of willingness to depart and an assurance that the departure would be in peace :

Now lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord,
According to thy word, in peace ;
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

The long-awaited-for consolation has come, and now the aged saint is ready to go. So, thirty-six centuries ago, the aged Jacob said to his favorite Joseph : “ Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive.” So, a half century ago, a heroic dying missionary about to be borne in a litter to witness the baptism of thirty Karens, murmured : “ If I live to see this one ingathering, I may well exclaim with happy Simeon, ‘ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.’ ” Friends, it is the Christian, and none but the Christian, who can chant Simeon’s dying song. One word more touching this triumphal lay. How remarkable it is for the sweep of its vision :

Mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples ;
A light for revelation to the Gentiles,
And the splendor of thy people Israel.

Thus, at the very beginning of the Christian era, and at a single bound, does Simeon leap over the Jewish barriers which, even a generation later, seemed insurmountable to evangelist and apostle.

Luke ii, 33.

No wonder that the parents of the Holy Child marveled at the things which were spoken concerning him.

Stabat Mater.

Luke ii, 34, 35.

“And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.” *Behold, this child is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel.* Of every listener to the glad tidings it must be said that he who is not for

Matt. xii, 30.

Christ is against Christ; that is to say, Jesus Christ is either a corner-stone and rock of salvation, or a stumbling-stone and rock of perdition. Not that he is a changeling, without fixed purpose or character, treating men capriciously.

1 Peter ii, 4-8.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever. And just because he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever, he is a stepping-stone of salvation to those who are for him, and a stumbling-stone of perdition to those who are against him. The vapor which rises from the salubrious lake and the vapor which rises from the pestilential marsh are both raised by the same sun. *And for a sign which is spoken against.* It is a presentiment of Calvary. The shadow of the sepulchre falls even on

Heb. xiii, 8.

Gal. v, 11.

the manger. Nor has the offense of the cross ceased. To-day the sign is spoken against in saloon and academy, in club-house and workshop. *Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.* When that virgin-mother, now gazing

so fondly on her divine Babe as he lies sweetly in Simeon's arms, shall hereafter see him wearing a crown of thorns and receiving in his side a spear-thrust, then shall a sword indeed pierce through her own soul also.

Stood the mournful mother weeping,
 By the cross her vigil keeping,
 While her Jesus hung thereon ;
 Through her heart, in sorrow moaning,
 With him grieving, for him groaning,
 Through that heart the sword hath gone.

Jacobus de
 Benedictus.
 Translated by
 Rev. Dr. J. S.
 B. Monsell.

What though the Mighty One has done great things for Mary, so that all generations henceforth shall call her blessed? In every cup of joy there is a bitter drop. Even the blessed mother herself can not soar to heaven except by way of the cross. *That thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.* Jesus Christ is the great unfold-er and interpreter of men. No one knows what he has been, or is, or can be, till he stands up by the side of the Divine Man. The voluptuary does not know how gross he is, the miser how sordid he is, the man of the world how worthless he is, the seeker after God how potential of great experience he is, till light streams in on him from Bethlehem and Calvary. Our attitude toward Jesus Christ is the test and index of our own character. If we follow him, we are like him, and so are righteous. If we neglect him, we are unlike him, and so are wicked. The character of Jesus Christ is the universal, infallible prober. The same lancet which lays bare the healthy nerve, lays bare the diseased. The same glad tidings

Luke i, 46-54.

which disclosed and saved a Simon Peter, disclosed and doomed a Judas Iscariot. Jesus Christ is the touch-stone of human hearts.

The Adoring
Prophetess.
Luke ii, 36-38.

“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (she was of great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, and she had been a widow even unto fourscore and four years), which departed not from the temple, worshiping with fastings and supplications night and day. And coming up at that very hour, she gave thanks unto God, and spake of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.” It is the companion picture of the portrait of Simeon, and it is quite as beautiful. This aged prophetess may stand as the type of Christian widowhood, such as St. Paul commends; for a widow indeed she was, setting her hope on God, and continuing in supplications and prayers night and day. Not that we are to suppose that she literally dwelt in the temple day and night. But she worshiped in the temple daily, never failing to observe the morning and the evening sacrifice. It was a beautiful instance of a consecrated career. And coming up at that very hour—for doubtless Anna also was under the Spirit’s inspiration, so that her steps were guided even as Simeon’s had been—she in her turn gave thanks to God, recognizing in Bethlehem’s Babe the promised Messiah, and speaking of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. And so the blessed privilege vouchsafed this aged and saintly couple carries us back to Malachi’s golden saying :

1 Tim. v, 5.

Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another : Malachi iii, 16,
 And Jehovah hearkened, and heard, 17.
 And a book of remembrance was written before him,
 For them that feared Jehovah,
 And that thought upon his name.
 And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts,
 In the day wherein I do make a peculiar treasure ;
 And I will spare them,
 As a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Let me conclude with two thoughts.

And, first, we can not but be impressed by the The Universal
 universal welcome which greeted the infant Jesus. Welcome.
 Toil welcomed him in the adoration of the shep- Luke ii, 18-20.
 herds. Intellect welcomed him in the adoration Matt. ii, 1-12.
 of the wise men. Infancy welcomed him in the Luke i, 44.
 adoration of the unborn son of Elisabeth. Old Luke ii, 25-38.
 age welcomed him in the adoration of Simeon and
 Anna. And well might all classes thus welcome
 him ; for he is the Son of man, and so the Christ
 for all men. In him can be neither Jew nor Gen- Gal. iii, 28.
 tile, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female ;
 but all are one in Christ Jesus. And in this uni-
 versal welcome we have the first fulfillment of
 that beautiful promise of Zechariah when, fore-
 telling Messiah's return to New Jerusalem, he
 prophesies :

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts : Zech. viii, 4, 5.
 There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the
 streets of Jerusalem,
 Every man with his staff in his hand for very age.
 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls
 Playing in the streets thereof.

Secondly, nothing is more beautiful than a Chris- Beauty of a
 tian old age. For it brings, as it did to Simeon, Christian
 Old Age.

three beautiful things.* First, it brings depth of spiritual insight: Simeon took the Child into his arms, and blessed God, saying, "Lord, mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Secondly, it brings catholicity of spirit: "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Thirdly, it brings peace in view of death: "O Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And these three beautiful things—depth of spiritual insight, catholicity of spirit, and peace in view of death—are in an eminent degree the peculiar treasure of a Christian old age. And these are the three things which make a Christian old age so beautiful. These, also, are the things which make a Christian old age young and vigorous. As the sturdy eagle ever and anon molts its plumes, so he who waits upon Jehovah renews his youth like the eagle. The truth is, age does not depend on years. Some are old at twenty, others are young at ninety. As the poet sings:

Psalm ciii, 5.

Bailey's "Festus."

We live in deeds, not words; in thoughts, not breaths;
 In feelings, not in figures on a dial:
 We should count time by heart-throbs.

He most lives

Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.

Age is far more a matter of indolence, and use-

* For this analysis of Simeon's character, I am indebted to the suggestive volume, entitled "Christ in Modern Life," by Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, Sermon XXVII.

lessness, and *ennui*, than of chronology. And a Christian old age is ever youthful.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, Isaiah xl, 30, 31.
 And the young men shall utterly fall :
 But they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their
 strength ;
 They shall mount up with wings as eagles ;
 They shall run, and not be weary ;
 They shall walk, and not faint.

The aged Simeon who holds Christ in his arms has immortal youthhood. For the infant Jesus is also the Father of Eternity, whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity. And so he and those who are his are immortally young. Isaiah ix, 6.
Micah v, 2.

O aged saints, patriarchs of the church, Simeons and Annas of the true temple, ye are in richest sense welcomers of the infant Christ, and so also prophets of his glory. God grant us all light at eventide ! Zech. xiv, 7.

O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord ; Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Collect.

THE HOMAGE OF THE WISE MEN.

MATTHEW ii, 1-12.

There shall come forth a star out of Jacob.

Numbers xxiv, 17.

XIV.

THE HOMAGE OF THE WISE MEN.

MATTHEW ii, 1-12.

NEARLY nineteen hundred years ago, in the first year of grace, a party of travelers were wending their way to Judea. They are from the far-off east—from Arabia, or Persia, or Chaldea, or Parthia, or it may be the very land where once stood the Tree of Life and the Tree of Death. They are Magian sages, men renowned for their mastery of a hoary, occult wisdom. Disciples of the purest and most spiritual religion of heathen antiquity, followers of Zoroaster, worshipers of Ormuzd (God of Light), watchers of the heavenly hosts—they have left their far-off eastern home, and, after, it may be, months of weary travel, have reached the city of the great King. What has been guiding them in their long journey? A mysterious star. Respecting the nature of this star we know nothing, and therefore little should be said. The opinions concerning it may be divided into two classes.

First, the star may have been simply a natural phenomenon. Let it not be supposed, however, that those who hold this opinion are necessarily to

The Star in
the East.

Matt. ii, 1, 2.

The Star possi-
bly Natural.

be ranked with skeptics. A heartier believer in Holy Writ or a devouter spirit never lived than the illustrious astronomer who first advanced this opinion—John Kepler. Feeling that Omnipotence itself would not work a miracle where a natural phenomenon would equally subserve the divine purpose, Kepler reverentially inquired whether there are any indications to show that the star in the east was a natural phenomenon. His investigations, corrected by others who succeeded him, have led to the following interesting result: In the year of Rome 747—the year fixed on by many scholars as the year of our Lord's birth—a remarkably brilliant planetary conjunction took place in the constellation *Pisces*, that constellation being the astrological symbol of Judea. In May, September, and December of that year, Jupiter and Saturn came into conjunction. Supposing, now, that the Magians, who belonged to an order renowned for their devotion to astronomy, having been arrested by the first planetary conjunction which occurred in May and in the Judean constellation of *Pisces*, immediately began their journey westward, the interval between the first conjunction in May and the third conjunction in December would more than cover the time ordinarily required in passing from Chaldea to Judea. This coincidence of the conjunctions with Matthew's account of the star is certainly quite remarkable; and it is easy to see why such an explanation of the strange star would seem satisfactory and fascinating to scholars devoutly inclined.

Nevertheless, in spite of the weighty names which may be cited in defense of this view, I am constrained to believe that the star in question was purely supernatural. It certainly appears so on the surface of the sacred narrative. Besides, Professor Pritchard has shown that Jupiter and Saturn, at their conjunctions, were never seen as a single star, but, at their nearest, were at the very considerable distance of double the moon's diameter. Again: It is difficult to see how a planet or star could be said to go before the wise men, and then suddenly come to a stand-still over a precise spot. Once more: Most of the other exceptional events recorded in connection with the nativity were supernatural; for example, an angel appeared to Zacharias in the temple, to Mary and to Joseph at Nazareth, to the shepherds near Bethlehem. The incarnation itself—the birth of Deity into humanity through the overshadowing by the Holy Spirit—what was it but the miracle of miracles? He who can believe the miracle of the incarnation can easily believe the miracle of the star. Besides, we know not what mystic links of sympathy bind together matter and spirit, earth and heaven. If nature felt the curse when Adam fell, if darkness was over all the land from the sixth hour to the ninth when the Lord of nature died, if the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall withdraw her light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken when the Lord of nature returns, we can not wonder that a new star jeweled the heavens when the Lord of nature was born. Whether the

The Star probably Supernatural.

Matt. i, 20;
Luke i, 11, 26,
27; ii, 9.

Luke i, 35.

Gen. iii, 18.

Matt. xxvii, 45.

Matt. xxiv, 29.

star was actually a new orb, suddenly appearing and as suddenly vanishing, like Tycho Brahe's star in 1572, or Kepler's star in 1664; or whether it was a resplendent meteoric body, ever and anon hovering in the atmospheric heavens; or whether, as I am inclined to believe, it was the reappearance in a new form of the ancient Shechinah which, embodied in the pillar of fire-cloud, had marshaled Israel from Egypt into Canaan, we know not. All we know about this is that a star in the east guided the Magians to Bethlehem of Judea.

But what has prompted the wise men to yield to the guidance of this wonderful star? I know not. Perhaps it is the expectation, strange, undefined, which has been prevailing in the east that a mighty and blessed portent is about to occur in the land of Abraham. Perhaps it is the knowledge diffused through the east by the dispersed Jews of the ten lost tribes. Perhaps it is the traditional remembrance of Daniel's famous Messianic prophecy, uttered more than five centuries before, when that interpreter of dreams and inspector of the Magian order stood before the courts of Babylon and Persia. Perhaps it is a traditional reminiscence floating down the stream of fifteen centuries of the mysterious prophecy of Balaam, son of Beor—himself a dweller in or near the land whence these Oriental sages have come—when, falling down in prophetic trance, he saw a star coming out of Jacob, and a scepter rising out of Israel. Perhaps it is a combination of these mystic reminiscences with the yearnings of their own devout natures and the inspiration of the Holy

Daniel ix.

Num. xxiv, 17.

One which has prompted these sages from the Orient to undertake their long and reverential journey. What we are told is this : They followed the guidance of a star. And now, having at last entered the city beautiful for situation, the way-worn travelers ask of the citizens, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

The unexpected arrival of these reverent Magicians from a far-off realm ; the startling significance of their question, "Where is the King of the Jews that is born?" the celestial portent which they declare has been guiding them and heralding his dominion ; the homageful errand on which they have come—all this plunges Herod and his court into profound agitation. Nor is it strange. Herod, the Idumean usurper, half-Jew, half-Arab, wholly heathen, fears the new-born King as One who may rise up against him, and dethrone him. Conscience also troubles him, for he is aware of the Messianic expectation among the Jews. The people also, weary of tumults and slaughter, dread what may prove another revolution. As soon, then, as the rumor spreads through the city, Herod is troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Instantly convoking the sanhedrin, he puts to them, as the constitutional interpreters of the law and the prophets, the question, "Where is the Christ, the Anointed King you are expecting, to be born?" Pharisee and priest, rabbi and scribe, familiar with the letter of Scripture, promptly answer : "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written through the prophet :

Herod's
Alarm.
Matt. ii, 3-8.

Micah v, 2.

And thou, Beth-lem, land of Judah,
Art in nowise least among the princes of Judah :
For out of thee shall come forth a governor,
Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel."

The crafty, unscrupulous, treacherous Herod, supposing that the first appearance of the star and the birth of the new King were simultaneous, and concealing his bloody purpose under the cloak of devotion, summons the Magians to a private audience; and, having learned from them carefully what time the star had first appeared, he sends them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search out carefully concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him."

The Adoring
Offerings.
Matt. ii, 9-12.

No sooner has the treacherous king issued his mandate than the illustrious visitants depart from the city, and wend their way southward to rural Bethlehem. And, lo, the star, which months before they had seen in their distant eastern home, is seen again, and goes before them, till it suddenly stops motionless over a particular house. Seeing the star once more, they rejoice with exceeding great joy; and, hastening into the house, they see the young Child with Mary, his mother; and, falling down, they worship him, and, opening their treasures, they offer unto him gifts—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And now, having ended their adoration, they are about to return to Jerusalem, in obedience to Herod's mandate. But the God of Abraham warns them in a dream against the Idumean tiger, and so they escape into their own country by another way.

Such is the story of the homage of the wise men. The story is rich in lessons. Let us now ponder some of them.

And, first, in this guidance of the Magians by means of what seemed to them a star, we see an instance of the truth that our heavenly Father ever adjusts our duties to our conditions, our obligations to our opportunities. He would lead every human being throughout the world to the one common home—even his own blessed self. Nevertheless, different men he leads by different paths, adjusting the method to each man's peculiar circumstances. The Magians were astronomers, and so he led them by a star. True, astronomy in the case of the Magian order was debased by astrology. Originally worshiping God under the symbol of light, they began their career as Magians; but at a later stage worshiping the symbol instead of the Being symbolized, they ended their career as magicians. But we may not doubt that the Magians of our story belonged to the earlier class, still inheritors of the purer faith; for they came to the cradle, not as conjurers, but as worshipers. And they were led thither by a star. What a beautiful instance of that manifold wisdom and grace by which the Father in heaven adjusts each man's duties and privileges to his own peculiar environment. Just as the young son of Jesse was led to the royal pastorhood of Israel by the staff, and bag, and pipe of his own shepherd life; just as Galilean fishermen were led to become fishers of men through the training of net and hook and bait, of skill and toil and patience; just as the lame, and

God's
ance
fold. Guid-
Mani-

2 Sam. vii, 8.

Luke v, 1-11.

the blind, and the palsied, and the lunatic were led to the heavenly Physician by miracles of healing; just as the famishing multitudes of Genesareth were led to the true bread from heaven by the miracle of the multiplied loaves and fishes; just as the thirsty outcast of Samaria was led to the water of life by the water of Jacob's Well: so the astronomers from the Orient were led to the Sun of Righteousness by the star of Bethlehem. It is a rich lesson for us. A thousand different ways does the Lord Christ have of guiding men to himself. True, there is but one way to the Father and the Father's heaven: it is through the only begotten Son. But that only begotten Son is everywhere, beckoning all men to himself. Reverently I say it, there is a sense in which even Jesus Christ himself, not less than the chiefest of his apostles, becometh all things to all men, that he may by all means save some. Let us not, then, be more narrow than our Lord, and insist on identity of experiences, or question the conversion of a brother because he has reached the Cross by a path different from our own. There is only one Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; but the pathway to him is not a single iron groove, along which every child of grace is to be inexorably worked. Himself the true Sun, his bright love radiates in every direction; and wherever there is a ray from him, there may be a path to him. Oh, that each of us might be as true to his own ray as the heathen sages were to theirs!

Matt. xiv, 14-21.

John iv, 5-30.

1 Cor. ix, 19-21.

And this leads us to a second lesson : Wherever God puts a new star before us, we must follow it whithersoever it leads us.

God's Stars
must be
Heeded.

Thus did the Magians. Not content with noting the position, and dimensions, and quality of the strange star, or talking about the wonderful phenomenon, they recognized in it some heavenly hint, and gave themselves up to its guidance. What though the star seemed to hover over a distant spot? They were earnest men, and would know the truth. And so they left their kindred and home, and undertook an expedition longer and more formidable to them than a journey to Australia would be to us. Onward, across mountain-ranges, and sandy wastes, and broad streams, and through hordes of spear-armed Bedouin, week after week, week after week, these brave spirits journey. At length, passing over Scopas or Olivet, their straining eyes catch glimpse of Herod's gleaming temple. Here surely in the Hebrew capitol shall be found the new-born King of the Jews! No; sanhedrin and king, church and state, have not even heard of the advent of the royal Babe. Will these stalwart spirits, who have already braved wilderness and river, fatigue and peril, turn back, now that the long sought-for prize seems to have vanished the very moment they had hoped to grasp it? No; they still keep loyal to their star. And so, issuing out by Zion's gate, they press on southward; and, lo, the star which they had seen in the east suddenly reappears, and, going before them, guides them to the long-sought goal; and there they find the infant King, and

there they offer him costliest adoration. Mighty the faith that sees a Monarch in a foreigner's manger. Yet it is no wonder, for long before has the day dawned and the day-star arisen in their hearts.

2 Peter i, 19.

The lesson is very plain, and as rich as plain : He who honestly follows what light God gives him, even though it be but a star in the night, shall ere long find God's very sun itself. The lesson is capable of many applications.

Let me apply it, first, to the student of Nature. A great deal is said in these days about the true method of scientific inquiry. It is one thing to study Nature for Nature's own sake ; it is another and nobler thing to study Nature for sake of what Nature may mean for her Lord. There are elect, earnest spirits in the world of science and philosophy. They are searching for truth, even for a Saviour, though they hardly know it. And the reason why they do not find a Saviour is because they are looking for him in a star ; whereas, the Saviour is behind the star, and gives to it all the splendor it has. They have not learned the first essential lesson of all true philosophy : to distinguish between Nature as a goal and Nature as a way to the goal. Would they but study the star, not for the star's own sake, but for sake of what the star hints, and faithfully follow its guidings, they would soon stand upon

Tennyson.

the shining table-lands
To which our God himself is moon and sun.

Again : Let me apply our lesson to the student of duty. Night has overtaken a weary traveler.

He is in a rugged, unfamiliar country. Nevertheless he plods on as best he may in darkness and solitude. Suddenly he comes to a spot where the road forks. The one path seems as likely to be right as the other. But no guide-board is there to point the way, no human being near of whom to inquire. As he stands there perplexed, he fancies he sees in the distance a dim glimmer. He knows not what it is. Perhaps it is a glow-worm on some neighboring bush; perhaps a will-o'-the-wisp in some noisome marsh; perhaps a sparkle from the fire of some robber's cave; perhaps the glimmer of some candle in a peasant's hut. He knows not whence the light comes; but he takes counsel of hope, and gropes toward it. As he advances, the light grows steadier and brighter, and at length he finds himself by the cheerful fireside of an honest and friendly cottager. Even so there are times in the lives of all true men when night overtakes them and the path of duty seems to fork. They stand perplexed, not knowing which way to take; whether, for example, to accept this or that as the truth, whether to undertake a certain enterprise or not, whether to go into business or the pulpit, whether to join the church of their fathers or another which they have some reasons for surmising is nearer the Apostolic Church. In their uncertainty they suddenly see something which looks as though it might be a hint of the true path. It matters not what it be; whether the suggestion of a valued friend, or a clause of Holy Scripture, or a providential incident, or an indefinable inner impulse. They think they discern in it the point-

ing of a mystic hand, and they bravely commit themselves to its guidance. Onward they press, through days of toil and nights of vigil, across mountain and swamp, wilderness and torrent. By and by their feet touch the land their eyes had seen from afar; and lo, that which had seemed only a star in Chaldea suddenly bursts into the Sun at Bethlehem. Thus to him that hath it shall be given, and he shall have abundance. The light followed is a light multiplied; for the harvest is ever larger than the seed. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The light of the moon becomes as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, as the light of seven days.

Matt. xiii, 12.

Psalm xcvi, 11.

Isaiah xxx, 26.

The Epiphany
to the Gen-
tiles.

Again: In this coming of Gentile Magians to do homage to a Jewish King-Babe, we see a prophecy of the coming of the heathen world to Jesus Christ. Not that these Magians were the first of the Gentiles to search for a redeemer. Long before their pilgrimage, even from the beginning, there had been, and there still is, a yearning for a deliverer, a desire of the nations. In the painful gropings after light by a Zoroaster and a Confucius, a Socrates and a Plato, an Epicurus and an Aurelius; in the pilgrimages and self-tortures and sacrifices of the heathen world; in the very myths of Prometheus and Hercules, of Brahma and Boodh—in all these we see the beckoning phantom of Macedonia multiplied a myriadfold, and we hear his plaintive cry:

Haggai ii, 9.

Acts xvi, 9.

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
 And gather dust and chaff, and call
 To what I feel is Lord of all,
 And faintly trust the larger hope.

"In Memoriam."

Who does not discern in these longings and sighings and groanings of a travailing creation after a Something, it knows not what or whence or how, the vast, indefinable outlines of one whose form is like to that of the Son of God? And the Deliverer has always been in the world. Long before the birth at Bethlehem, Messiah was among men through prophecy and type, ordinance and symbol, human needs and heavenly inspirations. The true light, which lighteth every man, has ever been coming into the world. But he took on him the visible conditions of humanity when the star shone over Bethlehem. And the Magians were the first of the Gentiles to salute the new-born Prince, discerning in the Babe of the manger not so much the King of the Jews as the Jew-King of men. And in this coming of the heathen sages from the east and in their adoration of the infant King, the church has ever loved to read the prophecy of that coming day when

Daniel iii, 25.

John i, 9.

The nations shall come to his light,
 And kings to the brightness of his rising ;
 The abundance of the sea shall be turned unto him,
 The wealth of the nations shall come unto him ;
 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents,
 The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts ;
 Yea, all kings shall fall down before,
 All nations shall serve him :
 He shall have dominion from sea to sea,
 And from the river to the ends of the earth.

Psalm lxxii.
 Isaiah lx.

Pledge of the
Coming
Homage by
Intellect.

Col. ii, 8.

1 Tim. vi, 20.

Luke ii, 8-20.

Again: In this following of the star by the Magians and in their adoration of the infant King, we see a prophecy of the coming allegiance of human intellect to the Nazarene. Oh, not always shall genius and unbelief go hand in hand. Not always shall learning be a philosophy of vain deceit. Not always shall science be an opposition of a knowledge falsely so called. In the homage of the wise men from the east at the shrine of the nativity, faith and science were betrothed, and the world will yet celebrate their open bridal. Then will it be confessed that the Lord of creation and the Lord of redemption is one Lord; that the finger which wrote on the tables of the Silurian sandstone is the finger which also wrote on the tables of the Sinaitic granite; that the hand which reared the gigantic forests of the Carboniferous era is also the hand which was nailed to the Judean tree; that the *Dixit* which peopled primeval space with nebulous masses is also the *Dixit* which gemmed the night dome with the star of Bethlehem. Nor were sages from the east the only ones to hail in homage the new-born King: rustic shepherds also left their nightly watch over their flock to join in the homageful greeting. And in this beautiful fact that peasant and scholar bowed in common adoration before their infant Lord, I discern the prophetic assurance that in the golden hereafter all the products of bodily labor and all the achievements of mental toil shall alike be reverently laid at the feet of him who, although he was the son of an artisan's bride, is also from eternity to eternity the infinite Wisdom.

Lastly: Another advent is yet to startle the world. It is when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire—on the one hand, to render vengeance to them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; on the other hand, to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believe. Not as a manger-child shall the Son of Man then reappear; but as the universal King, throned on clouds of heaven, many diadems on his brow, the keys of death and of Hades in his grasp. Although no strange star shall then gently herald his approach, his descending pathway shall be illuminated with lurid flames of a world in conflagration; and, although no choir of angels shall chant a peaceful anthem, the peal of the archangel's trump shall reverberate through the universe—to the Christian, a joyous summons to the Tree of Life in the paradise of our God; to the incorrigible, a requiem over his everlasting death.

Oh, then, join with shepherd and Magian in the blissful adoration. Let not the Queen of Sheba rise up in the judgment to condemn thee: for she came from afar to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and lo, a greater than Solomon is here. Let not the wise men from the east rise up in the judgment to condemn thee: for they came to a cradle; and lo, a throne is here. Starlight was enough to guide them to a crib: beware lest sunlight be too little to guide thee to a throne. Come, then, to the Divine Son of Mary! Kneel down before him, and offer him thy costliest gifts—gold

The Second
Advent.

2 Thess. i, 7-10.

Rev. ii, 7.

A Personal In-
vitation.

Matt. xii, 42.

in beneficence to his poor ones, frankincense in homage to himself, myrrh in enshrinement of him in thy heart's most sacred niche.

Jeremy Taylor.

They gave to thee
 Myrrh, frankincense, and gold ;
 But, Lord, with what shall we
 Present ourselves before thy Majesty,
 Whom thou redeem'st when we were sold ?
 We've nothing but ourselves, and scarce that neither ;
 Vile dirt and clay ;
 Yet it is soft, and may
 Impression take.
 Accept it, Lord, and say, this thou hadst rather :
 Stamp it, and on this sordid metal make
 Thy holy image, and it shall outshine
 The beauty of the golden mine.

Collect.

O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only begotten Son to the Gentiles ; Mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead : through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

MATTHEW ii, 13-15.

When Israel was a child, then I loved him,
And called my son out of Egypt.

Hosea xi, 1.

XV.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

MATTHEW ii, 13-15.

ALREADY have the wise men from the east been divinely warned in a dream not to return to the treacherous and sanguinary Herod, and so they depart to their own country by another way. No sooner have they departed, perhaps on the very same night, an angel of the Lord, probably the same Gabriel, Strength of God, who had already appeared to Daniel the prophet, and to Zacharias the priest, and to Mary the virgin, and to Joseph the carpenter, now appears the second time to Joseph, and, as before, in a dream. How much we know of ourselves, and yet how little! How learnedly we talk about the laws of sleep and dream, and yet how little do we understand the philosophy of them! Who can tell what exploits we may achieve, what exploits may be achieved in us, when rapt into dream land? We venture not to peer into the mystery. Enough that we read that an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. And he comes with a note of warning. And well he may. For the fiendish Herod, quaking on his throne before a Babe in his manger, lest

The Angel-
Warning.
Matt. ii, 12, 13.

Daniel ix, 25.
Matt. i, 20-25.
Luke i, 5-20.

that Babe should dethrone him, has resolved on a massacre of the babes of Bethlehem. And now behold a fine instance of the blending of the supernatural and the natural. Divine though the Babe of Bethlehem is, he is also human, and as such must be protected like any other human infant. And so the angel visits Joseph as he dreams, and exclaims: "Arise and take the young Child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy him."

The Nocturnal
Flight.

Matt. ii, 14.

Luke ii, 35.

Isaiah ix, 6.

Micah v, 2.

John viii, 58.

The angel need not repeat his warning. Guardian love will quickly do all the rest. Already has the sword begun to pierce through Mary's soul. That very night, while Herod is dreaming of to-morrow's massacre, and the Magians are wending their way back homeward, the lowly carpenter of Nazareth takes his young bride and her holy Babe, and, gliding through the gates of the City of David, begins the memorable flight into Egypt. We are not told what route they took; probably the shorter and customary one. All we know is that he who is the Father of eternity, whose goings forth had been from of old, who before Abraham was born was the great eternal I AM, is carried a helpless infant into the land of the Pharaohs, and this to escape death at the hands of a tyrant more impious than any Pharaoh. Egypt, once the house of bondage, is now the asylum of the King of men and Son of God. And here he remains until the death of Herod.

The Call out
of Egypt.

Matt. ii, 15.

And so we pass to ponder the evangelist's comment on the flight: "That it might be fulfilled

which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son." The citation is from the first verse of the eleventh chapter of Hosea :

When Israel was a child, then I loved him,
And called my son out of Egypt.

Hosea xi, 1.

But the prophet does not seem to be speaking of the coming Messiah ; he is evidently speaking of the historic Israel, the nation of the Jews. He has been foretelling the awful calamities which awaited them under the Babylonian conquest. But he can not close his prophecies without a word of cheer. His mind goes back to ancestral times. Conceiving the Jewish nation as a single person, having stages of infancy, and youth, and manhood, he goes back to the time when Israel, being an infant, was enthralled in Egypt, and the God of Abraham by the hand of Moses graciously emancipated him. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."

But how can Matthew speak of these words as a prophecy, and of the sojourn of the Divine Babe in Egypt as a fulfillment of the prophecy ? Various answers may be given, and each answer will contain a measure of truth. Thus, it may be answered that Matthew uses Hosea's words, so to speak, rhetorically or classically, declaring that the story of the infant Jesus in Egypt was a fine instance of Hosea's saying, "Out of Egypt I called my son." As a matter of fact, Jehovah ages before had called out of Egypt Israel his child ; and now, as a matter of fact, Jehovah out of the same

Egypt calls his own Son Jesus. The return of the Divine Babe from Egypt fulfilled Hosea's words, not in the sense of their being a prophecy, but in the sense of their being a history, filling out their possible meaning as words. That is to say, the divine return was a splendidly perfect instance of Hosea's saying, "Out of Egypt did I call my son." Again, it may be answered that the literal Israel was the type of the spiritual Israel. Even the Old Testament prophets themselves, particularly Isaiah, seem to have conceived Messiah and the chosen people as one person; so that what was true of the people of God was also true of the Christ of God.

Isaiah lxiii, 9.

In all their affliction he was afflicted,
And the angel of his presence saved them.

At all events, the Divine Man was himself the true, ideal Israel, and as such Jehovah did call him when a child out of Egypt. Once more, it may be answered, in a more general way, that the present is ever the fruit of the past and the seed of the future. Events are born of events, as successive parts of plants are born of preceding parts; the parts are different, but they are radically only repetitions of the original seed. Hence, as we are so fond of saying, history repeats itself. Herein lies the true method of studying history. The historic is ever the prophetic. That which hath been is that which shall be, and that which hath been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. And particularly is it true in a case of special divine election, like that of the Jewish nation, that history will be

Eccles. i, 9.

prophecy. The fulfillments of the prophetic Scriptures, like waves of the sea, are ever multiplying and enlarging concentric circles. And Jesus Christ is evermore the final and crowning fulfillment. In him all the fullness was pleased to dwell. The Divine Man is the universal *pleroma*—like the radiant point and the circumference of all things. Did Jehovah, when Israel was his child, call him out of Egypt? Even so did Jehovah, when Jesus Christ—his own dearly beloved Son—was a child, call him out of Egypt. And as God called out of Egypt his Son, who is the Head, so out of Egypt does he call his Church, which is his Son's body. It was literally true of some of the most eminent of the fathers. Out of Egypt God called Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, Cyprian. It is spiritually true of all Christ's people. To them his summons is: Come up out of the Egypt of a fallen world; come up out of the kingdom of sin, the land of idolatry, the house of bondage; come up into the promised country, the land flowing with milk and honey, the Canaan of the Christ of God. Ay, out of Egypt God is evermore calling his sons. May we be as prompt to obey as Moses was!

Col. i, 19.

O Lord, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succor us; that, whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us, through the satisfaction of thy Son, our Lord; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

Collect.

THE MASSACRE OF THE
INNOCENTS.

MATTHEW ii, 16-18.

Thus saith Jehovah :
A voice is heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, and bitter weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children ;
She refuseth to be comforted for her children,
Because they are not.

Jeremiah xxxi, 15.



XVI.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.

MATTHEW ii, 16-18.

THE immense advance of modern civilization is in few things more strikingly manifest than in the difference between the manner in which a deed of blood affects us and the manner in which the same deed of blood would have affected our fathers. Let a massacre of children like Herod's be perpetrated in our day: the sickening details would be bulletined in every daily throughout the land, and all Christendom for a moment would quiver with horror. But such tragedies were so common in the centuries past that the perpetration of them excited little attention beyond the circle immediately involved. Go back to the age when Rome was mistress of the world and the Cæsar was master of Rome. What an age of arbitrary, irresponsible, absolute government; of imperial maim and dungeon; of secret strangulation and open massacre; of poison and cross. Look at Herod, at once tiger over Palestine and spaniel under Rome, wading through blood to his throne, inaugurating his reign with the massacre of the sanhedrin, murdering his own sons Antipater,

Gentleness of
Christian
Civilization.

Aristobulus, and Alexander, and his own wife Mariamne; so that even the cold-blooded Augustus is said to have uttered concerning him the bitter witticism, "Better be Herod's swine than Herod's son";* and at last, if such a story can be true, commanding on his own death-bed as his final order that the principal Jews, whom he had shut up in the hippodrome of Jericho, should be massacred the moment that he died, in order that there might be at least some mourners at his funeral. What, then, though no contemporary of Herod except the biographer Matthew has told us the horror of Bethlehem's massacre! What was there so extraordinary in the killing of a few infants in the hamlet of Bethlehem, and by a butcher and hyena so notorious as Herod, that should move Josephus or any writer in that period to make special chronicle of it? The very silence here of contemporaneous history is in its way an awful testimony to the reign of barbarity and carnage. And if to-day a massacre, like that of Cawnpore or that by the Indian Modocs, sends a thrill of horror throughout Christendom; if the homicide of a drunken wretch in some obscure purlieu is gazetted the next morning in every journal from Newfoundland to Vancouver, and men talk of the awful depravity of our times—it is because Jesus Christ has been born into the world, and his ministers have preached the glad tidings of his love and peace.

* *Melius est Herodis porcum esse quam filium.*—MACROBIUS.

And now let us go back for a moment to those dark days. Herod—the foreign, heathen, crafty, unscrupulous, despotic, bloodthirsty Herod—is sitting on the throne of David. But he knows that his session is most precarious. For he holds that throne neither by right of election nor by right of inheritance, nor even by right of popular consent, but simply by right of usurpation, brute force, and favor of capricious Cæsar. He knows that that throne may at any moment crumble beneath him. Strange rumors, also, are now in the air—rumors of one who is to restore the throne to David's line. Not alone from Jewish Simeons and Annas, looking for the consolation of Israel and the redemption of Jerusalem, but also from blind and sorrowful heathendom come breathings for and expectations of a heaven-sent deliverer, who shall take earth's kingdoms to himself and reign in universal and endless peace. Such utterances, passing from mouth to mouth, cause the Idumean usurper to tremble on his throne. And now, lo, from the far-off east come wayworn Magian pilgrims, with the startling question: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" and with the no less startling announcement: "For we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him." Consternation seizes Herod and his court. Son of Esau though he is, his relations with the sons of Jacob have made him somewhat familiar with their expectations of a Messiah as based on the sayings of their own prophets. How suddenly Herod convoked the sanhedrin, and inquired of them where they expected their Mes-

Massacre of
the Inno-
cents.

Matt. ii, 16.

Luke ii, 25-38.

Matt. ii, 1, 2.

Matt. ii, 3-15.

siah would be born; how promptly they replied, "In Bethlehem of Judea"; how painstakingly he ascertained from the Magians the exact time when the star appeared; how sanctimoniously he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search out carefully concerning the young child, and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him"; how joyously they departed, still guided by the strange star, till it suddenly rested over Bethlehem's manger; how, entering the humble abode, they fell down before the Divine Babe, and, opening their treasures, offered unto him gifts—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh; how, about to return to report to Herod, a heaven-sent dream warned them of their danger, so that they departed to their own country by another way; how the same night an angel warned Joseph also in a dream, bidding him take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt; how obedient Joseph was to the heavenly vision, remaining in Egypt till Herod's death:—all this we have already seen.

Meantime, the anxious king, decrepit with age, emaciate with disease, furrowed with passion, chafes restlessly in his palace. Hour after hour he strains his vision southward to catch glimpse of the returning Magians; hour after hour creeps away, and no Magians return. At length, convinced that they have in some way divined his purpose, he suddenly changes his policy of sanctimonious homage for a policy of massacre; for there is no rage like the rage of baffled hate. The hand that had not shrunk from the throats of sons

and wife surely may not shrink from crushing the new-born babes of strangers. And so, summoning his caitiffs, he gives his bloody order: "Go, slay all the male children that are in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which I have carefully learned from the wise men." Thank God, Bethlehem was but a hamlet, and so the victims of Herod's butchery could not have been many. How the slaughter was effected I know not. All I know is that every male child in Bethlehem and its borders, from two years old and under, lay a motionless corpse.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying—

The Voice in
Ramah.

Matt. ii, 17.

A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
And she would not be comforted, because they are not.

Jer xxxi, 15.

Seventeen centuries before this massacre at Bethlehem, Jacob and his loved Rachel were journeying southward from Shechem. As they were approaching Ephratah—the ancient name of Bethlehem—Rachel, in giving birth to Benjamin, died. "Ben-oni [the son of my sorrow]!" cried the anguished mother, and breathed her last. There, hard by Bethlehem, Jacob buried his beloved wife; there he reared a pillar over her grave; and there still stands a sepulchre to this day called Rachel's Tomb.

Gen. xxxv, 1-20.

Eleven centuries glide away. On the crests of Ramah, ten miles north of Bethlehem and in the

Jer. xl.

confines of Benjamin, stand a group of chained captives, Jeremiah himself being among the number. Mournfully their eyes are resting for the last time on their holy and beautiful city, ere they go to hang their harps on the willows of Babylon. It is a picture of harrowing desolation. Suddenly from the south is borne to the poet-prophet's ears the wailing of a woman's agony. It is the voice of Rachel, dead in her tomb a thousand years, stirred to a resurrection of sorrow as she sees her children borne into a hopeless exile.

Jer. xxxi, 15.

A voice is heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, and bitter weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children;
She refuseth to be comforted for her children, because
they are not.

Not the Florentine group of Niobe and her children, not the most exquisite figure in the literature of grief, equals the pathos of this Rachel dirge.

Six more centuries roll away. In Bethlehem's peaceful precincts lies another group of captives. Not stalwart men are they, mantling with shame as with chain on wrist and ankle they march to their distant exile. Little infants they are, white and motionless, already in that captivity from which no exile returns. And again from Rachel's Tomb, now hard by, is heard the piercing shriek of a woman's anguish. It is the voice of the incarnate spirit of motherly grief, voicing again the woes of ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of mothers' hearts, since the

day when Eve kissed the white lips of her dead Abel. And so is fulfilled in the ears of poet-evangelist that Rachel-voice of lamentation and bitter weeping which more than half a millennium before had been heard in the ears of poet-prophet.

But how is the voice of Rachel heard in Bethlehem of Judea the fulfillment of the voice of Rachel heard in Ramah of Benjamin? Fulfillment in sense of fullest embodiment and completest consummation. To fulfill is to fill full, filling up and out, completing all hints of spaces and outlines, realizing all potentialities, sphering all segments, and curves, and angles. In Jesus Christ all things do consist, hold together. Himself the center of all things, himself is also the circumference of all things; successive events flowing from him in widening circles, but in circles ever concentric. Being thus the center and the circumference of all things, all the past prophesies the Christ, even as all the future shall commemorate him. In him dwelleth all the fullness. And so around his cradle have been fulfilled all capacities of mothers' woes, as around his diadem shall be fulfilled all capacities of mothers' bliss. Col. i, 17.

Such is the story of the massacre of the innocents, and such is the interpretation of prophet by evangelist. Col. i, 19.

But what is the meaning of this tragedy? Why was this cruel massacre allowed! Why, since Jesus Christ was born into the world for the very purpose of showing that God is Father, and love itself—why, at this very birth of his Christ Meaning of this Tragedy.

and Son into the world, did heavenly God permit this awful butchery of guiltless infants, this awful wrenching of mothers' hearts? Ah, it was the type and prophecy of what has taken place ever since, whenever souls have been born into the kingdom of God. We are born again when the Christ is born in us. And in the case of those who have reached years of self-consciousness, Christ is generally born amid mortal throes—amid the massacre of self-wills, and ambitious schemes, and darling hopes, and fondest loves. It may be that some mother is reading these pages in whose heart the Christ was born amid her throes over her own dying child. The earthly child died that the heavenly Child might be born. In every true cave of the nativity is heard a Rachel wail. And so Jesus Christ has come into the world, not to send peace, but a sword; ay, peace by a sword.

Matt. x, 34.

The Problem
of Infant
Salvation.

And now let us turn our thoughts in another direction. The question must have often occurred in connection with this tale of the massacre of the innocents, and indeed the death of children generally, What is the fate of those who die in infancy?

The question is not one of mere theological speculation or curiosity; the question is one of intensest practical interest, coming home with ineffable tenderness to myriads of bleeding hearts. Oh, who shall count the little graves that hallow with infantile beauty and angel hopes earth's myriad cemeteries! In how many households mothers speak with bated breath as they think of little waxen brows, and moveless lips, and tiny shrouds!

There is no flock, however watched and tended,
 But one dead lamb is there ;
 There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
 But has one vacant chair.

H. W. Longfel-
 low's "Resig-
 nation."

The air is full of farewells to the dying,
 Of mournings for the dead :
 The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,
 Will not be comforted.

In speaking, then, of the death of little children, I know that I am touching the tenderest chord of the human heart. May God give me grace to touch it lightly !

Whither, then, do our little ones go when death tears them from our arms ? To paradise, I can not for an instant doubt. Perish the theology which, as some of our fathers taught, makes so much of God's law as to annihilate God's fatherhood, turning him into a monster of injustice and barbarity ! Of one thing I am absolutely certain : if a little infant is old enough to be lost, it is old enough to be saved. And so long as God is a Father, I prefer to believe that he would rather save life than to destroy life. I speak not for those who have reached the period of self-consciousness ; and the period of self-consciousness may be reached much earlier in life than some of us imagine. I speak not for those who, conscious of hearing the Father's call, grow up and die in neglect and contempt of the call ; for these no fate is just, or morally possible, but the fate of the lost. But for little infants who die before reaching the sense of responsibility, I can say, and in utmost confidence I do say, that in dying they are

taken up in Christ's arms in heaven, even as when living they were taken up in Christ's arms on earth. Not that I can cite any specific scripture for infant salvation. There are some truths for which I need no scripture ; God has already written them with his own finger in the intuitions he has given me. And one of these intuitions is to believe that God is as kind as he is just, and as just as he is kind, and that little children in dying will be drawn up into his bosom as surely as he himself is love. And yet I can cite a scripture which, although it proves nothing in the matter of infant salvation, is very significant in way of hint. Let us read the whole paragraph in Jeremiah from which Matthew quotes a part in recording the massacre at Bethlehem :

Jer. xxxi, 15-17.

Thus saith Jehovah :

A voice is heard in Ramah,

Lamentation, and bitter weeping,

Rachel weeping for her children ;

She refuseth to be comforted for her children, because
they are not.

Thus saith Jehovah :

Refrain thy voice from weeping,

And thine eyes from tears,

For thy work shall be rewarded, saith Jehovah ;

And they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

And there is hope for thy latter end, saith Jehovah ;

And thy children shall come again to their own border.

How Matthew uses the first part of the quotation from Jeremiah, we have already seen : as the prophet by an exquisite figure represents Rachel as lifting up her head from her grave and weeping over Israel's captives, so the evangelist represents

Rachel as again rising and weeping over Bethlehem's babes. And in the manner in which the evangelist applies the first half of Jeremiah's parable, we have the key to the manner in which we may apply the second half. The first half is a lament: "The voice of Rachel, weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are not." The second half is an encouragement: "Thus saith Jehovah: Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope for thy future, and thy children shall return from the land of the enemy to their own border."

Yes, ye slaughtered babes of Bethlehem—ye who gave unconscious testimony to the new-born King of men, ye whom the early Church honored as the first martyrs for Christ and his cross—and ye also, myriad babes of earth's cemeteries, whom death has untimely taken away: all ye shall indeed come back from the land of the enemy, and return to your own border, even that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. 2 Peter iii, 13.

Hail, infant martyrs! new-born victims, hail!
 Hail, earliest flowerets of the Christian spring!
 O'er whom, like rosebuds scattered by the gale,
 The cruel sword such havoc dared to fling.

Prudentius,
 Fourth Century.
 Translated by
 Rev. John
 Chandler.

The Lord's first votive offerings of blood,
 First tender lambs upon the altar laid,
 Around in fearless innocence they stood,
 And sported gayly with the murderous blade.

Oh! what availed thee, Herod, this thy guilt—
 This load of crime that on thy conscience lies?

The Lord alone, whose blood thou wouldst have spilt,
Now mocks thy malice, and thy power defies.

Yes, he alone survived, when all the ground
Drank the red torrents of that carnage wild ;
Though many a childless mother wailed around,
The hand of murder spared the Virgin's child !

O Jesu, virgin-born ! all praise to thee,
And to the Father and to the Holy Ghost !
One God eternal, ever honored be
By saints on earth and by the heavenly host !

Folly of Op-
posing Je-
sus Christ.

Lastly, the story of Herod's massacre teaches this impressive lesson : the futility of opposing Jesus Christ, and his Gospel, and his Church. For Herod's massacre was not the first or the last instance of men's undertaking to thwart the purpose of Almighty God. Fifteen centuries before, Pharaoh, alarmed at the growth of the Hebrews in Egypt, adopted, Herod-like, the policy of infanticide, ordering every male infant to be thrown into the Nile : with what useless result, the majestic story of Moses testifies. And midway between Pharaoh and Herod, Athaliah, daughter of the infamous Ahab and Jezebel of Samaria and queen-consort of Judea, with all the appliances of two kingdoms at her beck, determined, Herod-like, on the annihilation of the royal line of David : with what signal failure and awful disaster to herself, the thrilling story of Joash attests. How Herod's satanic policy was foiled, and that Son of David whom he sought to crush in his cradle sprang up triumphant and reigns to-day King of kings and Lord of lords, the homage done him by myriads on every Christmas and Easter and Sun-

Exodus i, ii.

2 Kings xi.

day sublimely attests. And so it has been ever since. In every age of the Christian Church, kings of the earth have set themselves in battle array, and rulers have taken counsel together against Jehovah and against his Anointed, saying—

Let us break their bands asunder,
And cast away their cords from us!

But in vain have they raged, in vain have they imagined. He that sitteth in the heavens hath laughed: Jehovah hath had them in derision. From age to age all enginery of hate and destruction has been planted against the Babe of Bethlehem: king and subject, pagan and Moslem, unbeliever and bigot, have tried rack and dungeon, fagot and cross, learning and eloquence, fist and brain. And from age to age there has been blazoned on slab of king and subject, pagan and Moslem, unbeliever and bigot, the legend:—*“They who sought the young Child’s life are dead, and the young Child liveth.”* And so shall it ever be. No weapon that is formed against him shall ever prosper. With every morning sun, the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star, shall rise, sending forth the rod of his strength out of Zion, ruling in the midst of his enemies, making his foes his footstool, striking through kings in the day of his wrath, glittering with the dew of immortal youth from the womb of the morning.

Now, therefore, be wise, O ye kings;
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve Jehovah with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.

Isaiah liv, 17.
Rev. xxii, 16.
Psalm cx.
Psalm ii, 10-12.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way ;
For his wrath will soon be kindled.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him !

Collect.

O Almighty God, who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify thee by their deaths ; Mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by thy grace that, by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify thy holy name ; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

THE SETTLEMENT AT NAZARETH.

MATTHEW ii, 19-23 ; LUKE ii, 39.

There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse,
And a branch [*netzer*] out of his roots shall bear fruit.

Isaiah xi, 1.

XVII.

THE SETTLEMENT AT NAZARETH.

MATTHEW ii, 19-23 ; LUKE ii, 39.

How long the Holy Family sojourned in Egypt we can not tell, for we do not know the precise year of our Lord's birth. What we do know is this : When Herod was dead, an angel of the Lord, doubtless the same angel who had already twice appeared to Joseph in a dream, again appears to him in a dream while in Egypt. "Arise," he exclaims to the sleeping Joseph, "and take the young Child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel : for they are dead who sought the young Child's life." No wonder Joseph immediately arose, and, taking the Holy Babe and his blessed mother, hastened back to the land of his fathers.

The Return
from Egypt.
Matt. ii, 19-21.

Matt. i, 23 ; ii, 13.

But where shall the Holy Family take up their abode ? Their first impulse, it would seem, was to settle in Bethlehem of Judea. And no wonder. For that spot had become doubly dear to them : it was the birthplace of their royal ancestor David ; more thrilling still, it was the birthplace of that Holy Thing which had been conceived of the

The Settle-
ment at Naz-
areth.

Matt. ii, 22, 23.

Luke i, 35.

Holy Ghost, even the Divine Man. But their early, sacred impulse was rudely checked. They had heard indeed that Herod was dead; but now they hear that Archelaus, his son, inheritor of his father's wickedness, is reigning in his stead; and so they hesitate to execute their purpose of settling in Bethlehem of Judea. Moreover, they are again divinely warned in a dream to beware of Judea. And so, perhaps much against their choice, they take up their abode in their old home—the obscure, despised, Galilean Nazareth.

Jesus the Nazarene.
Matt. ii, 23.

And so was brought to pass, as Matthew proceeds to tell us, an ancient prophecy: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene." And yet this specific prophecy is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament. The nearest approach to it is a clause in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, where the Hebrew word translated "branch" is "*netzer*":

Isaiah xi, 1.

There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of
Jesse,
And a branch [*netzer*] out of his roots shall bear fruit.

Supposing, now, that Matthew has in mind this memorable saying of Isaiah, it is evident that in declaring it to be fulfilled in the settlement of the Holy Family at Nazareth, he makes, so to speak, a play on the words he quotes: "A branch [*netzer*] out of Jesse's roots shall bear fruit"; "He shall be called a *branch*, a *netzer*, a *Nazarene*." Nor is this inconsistent with any just view of inspiration. Matthew was inspired; but this did not

forbid his being a rhetorician. If inspiration did not prevent St. Paul from using paronomasia, or playing on words for sake of vivacity, as he certainly often did, why should inspiration prevent St. Matthew from doing the same thing? Even the Divine Man himself used paronomasia, as when he said to Simon Bar-Jonah: "Thou art *Peter* [*petros, rock*], and upon this *rock* [*petra*] I will build my church." As a matter of fact, Isaiah did call the coming Messiah a *netzer*; as a matter of fact, the contemporaries of the Messiah when he had come did call him a *Nazarene*. Moreover, the prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah, as well as the prophet Isaiah, call the coming Messiah a Branch. Accordingly, Matthew, taking verbal advantage of the sound of Isaiah's epithet, "A branch [*netzer*] out of Jesse's roots shall bear fruit," declares that the settlement in Nazareth was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "Came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth [branch, sprout, shoot]: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene." This seems to be a simple, natural explanation of Matthew's comment on the settlement at Nazareth.

Matt. xvi, 18.

Jer. xxiii, 5;
xxxiii, 15;
Zech. iii, 8;
vi, 12.

But whether this be the true explanation or not, God grant that all of us may be in very deed Nazarenes, and so scions in the true, immortal, divine branch, even him who is the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning-star:

Rev. xxii, 16.

Holy Saviour, who art the true Vine from which we derive our spiritual life and nourishment, and without

Collect.

whom we can do nothing but wither and die: Be pleased, we beseech thee, so to unite us to thee, by the power of the Holy Ghost and through the bond of a living faith, that, being partakers of thy divine nature, we may bring forth much fruit, and for ever abide in thee, as thou dost abide in us, until we shall see thee as thou art, and glorify and enjoy thee, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE TRAINING OF JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ii, 40-52.

The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that
are taught,
That I should know how to sustain with words him that
is weary:
He wakeneth morning by morning,
He wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught.

Isaiah 1, 4.

XVIII.

THE TRAINING OF JESUS CHRIST.*

LUKE ii, 40-52.

“The child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. . . . Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Such are the words with which St. Luke outlines the growth of Jesus Christ. “But how was this possible?” the reader asks. “Was not Jesus Christ Divine, and therefore infinitely perfect from his very birth? How, then, can it be said that he waxed strong, and grew in wisdom and in favor with God and men?”

The Problem
of Christ's
Growth.

Luke ii, 40, 52.

Observe, then, just where the real difficulty lies: it lies not in the fact of growth; it lies in the fact of incarnation, or the Divine birth itself. For the distance between the Babe of Bethlehem and the Man of Nazareth is infinitely less than the distance between man and God. The real problem is the incarnation. Admit the story of the birth in Bethlehem, and you can easily admit the story of

The Incarna-
tion the Real
Problem.

* This chapter has already appeared among the introductory chapters in the volume entitled “Home Worship,” A. C. Armstrong & Son.

the growth in Nazareth. Be it also remembered that Jesus Christ, although he was Divine, was also human, possessing, like any one of us, a complete human nature, spirit, and soul, and body. As such, he was, like any one of us, under the law of growth. We all admit that he grew physically, dilating from the babe into the man. But it is no more mysterious that he should grow inwardly than that he should grow outwardly, mentally and morally than corporeally. The real problem, let me repeat, is the incarnation itself. Believe the greater thing, that the Word became flesh, and you can believe the lesser thing, that the enfleshed Word grew.

1 Thess. v, 23.

John i, 14.

Christ's
Growth im-
plies no Im-
perfection.

But Christ's growth, be it carefully observed, implies no sort of imperfection. It is no sign of imperfection in a peach-tree that it does not bear peaches in spring. It is not necessary that an acorn should grow into an oak in order to its being perfect as an acorn. Each stage of vegetable growth—seed, blade, ear, full corn in the ear—has its own characteristic perfectness. The Divine Man was perfect along the whole line of his human unfolding—perfect as a babe, perfect as a child, perfect as a youth, perfect as a man. Beware, then, of a phantom Christ. The Word made flesh was all he seemed to be. He was a real babe, with a babe's dawning consciousness; a real child, with a child's feelings, and thoughts, and griefs, and joys; a real youth, with a youth's buoyancies, and temptations, and aspirations, and opening vistas of vocation; a real man, with a man's full sense of mission or Christhood.

Yes, Jesus Christ, as the Word made flesh, was under the law of growth, and as such advanced in wisdom and favor with God as well as in stature.

And this growth does not seem to have been marked by anything striking. Had it been, the presumption is that his biographers would at least have hinted it. But their silence, with one exception, to be presently noticed, is absolute. They give us no hint of his personal appearance, or dress, or habits of life. From this silence—all the more impressive because in such sharp contrast with the apocryphal gospels of the infancy and youth—we may safely infer that the evangelists recorded nothing because they had nothing striking to record. The boy Jesus doubtless grew up like the other boys of Palestine—like them, olive-complexioned, black-eyed, wearing the Jewish dress for youths, joining in innocent sports, attending school, learning a trade, observing the annual festivals, worshiping in the synagogue. Oh, there is something very impressive and touching in this silence of the evangelists concerning the thirty years at Nazareth. Had they told us that he was extraordinarily precocious; that he secluded himself in conscious sanctity from his fellows; that he wrought prodigies; that he grew up manifestly supernatural—we should have felt that he was Divinity indeed, but not humanity; One who was over us, but who was not with us and of us. We should have adored him, but never loved him; we should have knelt before him, but never kissed him. Thank God, it was not so. There does not seem to have been anything unusual in his Naza-

Obscurity of
the Thirty
Years.

rene career. The very silence here of the evangelists is thrilling, for it brings the Divine Man within the range of our human sympathies and affections, thoroughly identifying him with our average humanity. So entirely ordinary and even obscure was that Nazarene life, that Nathanael, who lived in the almost adjacent town of Cana, seems never to have even heard of Jesus. Even his brothers, brought up by his side, we are told with a touch of infinite pathos, did not believe on him. Unlike the pictures of the artists, that sacred head for thirty years was without halo. He grew up, as grows his own kingdom, without observation.

John i, 45, 46.

John vii, 5.

Luke xvii, 20.

The Luminous Exception.

Luke ii, 41-50.

But there was, as just hinted, one exception to this profound obscurity: it was his visit while a lad to Jerusalem. Although it is the only recorded incident of his life between his return as a babe from Egypt and his baptism on entering his public ministry, yet this incident is of rich significance, illuminating, like a broad band of sunlight, the whole of the thirty years. To this memorable exception let us now attend.

The Passover Visit.

Luke ii, 41, 42.

Although Joseph and Mary, as devout Jews, must have been accustomed to go up every year to Jerusalem to attend the great feast of the Passover, it does not appear that Jesus had ever accompanied them. But now he is twelve years old, and therefore, according to the Jewish constitution, a "son of the law," entitled to the privilege of a personal participation in the sacred rites of Judaism. And so he accompanies his parents in their Passover ascent to Jerusalem. We can see the caravan, representing every family in Naza-

reth, starting from that provincial village, and winding between the green hills of Galilee. What historic spots they pass in their eighty miles' journey southward!—Jezreel, and Gilboa, and Dothan, and Samaria, and Shechem, and Jacob's Well, and Shiloh, and Gilgal, and Bethel, and Ramah, and Gibeon, and Mizpeh. At last their straining eyes catch a glimpse of the City of God, so beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the City of the great King. As their feet gain the crest of the last ridge of the mountains that are round about Jerusalem, they burst into one of the pilgrim psalms, or songs of ascent, perhaps the psalm beginning—

Psalm xlviii,
1, 2.

I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of Jehovah.
Our feet are standing
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem!

Psalm cxxii.

Thus chanting, they enter the holy city, and begin the sacred festivities of Passover-week.

And now, having performed all the offices of the great feast, doubtless according to the ritual which Moses fifteen centuries before had prescribed, the Galilean pilgrims break up their encampment, and start homeward. But the lad Jesus for some reason remains behind. As the caravan consists of many Galileans besides those from Nazareth, and as, according to an Eastern custom still prevailing, it starts for the first day late in the afternoon, going but a little distance, Joseph and Mary, taking it for granted that their dear Child, ever so filial and loving, is somewhere

The Missing
Child.
Luke ii, 43, 44.
Exodus xiii.

in the general caravan, do not miss him till they reach their first encampment. Great is their surprise and anxiety when at nightfall they can not find their loved Boy in the tents of any of their kinsfolk or acquaintances.

The Boy Jesus
in the Temple.

Luke ii, 45-50.

And so at early dawn they retrace their steps to Jerusalem, and spend the second day in fruitless search for him. The third day they bethink themselves of what as we might have supposed would have been their first thought, the temple.—Thither they hasten, and there, in one of the cloisters, they find him. And, lo, he is sitting among the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. So searching are his queries and so profound his answers that even the learned doctors themselves are astounded. Not that there is in his manner anything pert or consciously superior. He is simply asking questions, as was the right of any catechumen or son of the law. But he has all the sacred and baffling inquisitiveness of an innocent, guileless, perfect childhood. He has come up from provincial Nazareth to the city of the rabbis and authorized teachers of Israel. He is now in the presence of the most renowned expounders of the law and the prophets. Now he may ask, it may be, of Hillel, the illustrious Looser, himself. And he has a thousand questions to ask—questions which he had pondered in his own village home, but which he has not been able to answer. For example: “What,” we can hear him asking, “is the meaning of this precept of Moses? How shall I understand that saying of Isaiah? What does this rite signify? Why that

ordinance? What did the prophets mean when they speak of One who is Jehovah's Anointed? Has that Anointed One come, or is he yet to make his appearance? How reconcile this precept of the rabbis with that precept of Moses?" Such are some of the questions, unintentionally baffling, which artless childhood intuitively puts. And so, in presence of this guileless Boy from Nazareth, pupilage unconsciously becomes doctorate, and doctorate becomes pupilage. Nor are his parents less amazed. So naturally had the Nazarene flower unfolded that they had failed to perceive that it had been all along supernatural. "Child," reproachfully exclaims the mother, "why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." "How is it that ye sought me?" artlessly replies the heavenly Boy. "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house, about my Father's business?" They are the first recorded words of the Divine Man. They pour a flood of light upon his character and tenor of life. Although he has grown up silently, without observation, yet his unfolding has been profoundly religious. True, this visit to Jerusalem and its temple is a crisis in his career. Doubtless it opens to him a fresh glimpse of his mission and destiny, a new vista of his Christhood. Nevertheless, all is in harmony with his previous career. All these years the heavenly Plant has been unfolding, and now appears the first blossom. Yet the growth has been perfectly natural. And, therefore, his surprise is that his parents are surprised: "How is it that ye have been seeking me? Did ye not

know that I must be about my Father's business?" For it is of the very nature of a tree that it must soar. Ay, that word "must" is the sacred, blessed "must" of a holy, perfect childhood. "And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them." It was not the only time that earth has failed to understand heaven. Verily, he was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not; he came unto his own, and his own received him not. But, although his parents understood him not, it is blessed to know that his mother pondered all these things in her heart.

John i, 10, 11.

Luke ii, 19, 51.

The Return
into Obscur-
ity.

Luke ii, 51.

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them." What a beautiful instance this is of filial subordination and reverence and love, a model for all time. But we shall recur to this point. Meantime it only needs to be added in this connection that, in his return to Nazareth, he re-enters the obscurity which has marked hitherto his boyhood. In that obscurity he remains eighteen years longer, until the day of his manifestation unto Israel and mankind. Yet that period of his obscurity was also the period of his growth and training for his unparalleled mission as Jehovah's Messiah and Lamb. And now let us dwell for a moment on that Nazarene life, and scan in detail the method of his training.

The School of
Home.

And first, there was the school of home. I do not refer here to the lessons consciously taught by parents so much as to the lessons unconsciously taught by the home institution itself. We are

trained for the celestial home in the school of the terrestrial, learning the heavenly sonhood in the exercise of an earthly, the universal brotherhood in the sphere of a personal. For that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. Home—that is to say, true home—is the best soil for the germination and growth of large, solid, abiding character. Sad the day when the child begins to feel a distaste for home. The spendthrift of our Lord's parable began to be the lost son the moment he began to be tired of his father's house. Christ's stay of thirty years beneath his mother's roof is an eternal glorification of the home institution. Himself the Son of man, born of a woman, born under law, he was trained, like other sons of men, in the school of home.

1 Cor. xv, 46.

Luke xv, 12, 13.

Gal. iv, 4.

Again, there was the school of subordination. We have seen how, after his visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve, he returned with his parents to Nazareth, and continued subject unto them. What a marvelous thing: the world's Maker and Law-giver and Judge a subject to a Galilean carpenter and his lowly wife! Yet even he, as the Son of man, needed just such discipline. For him it was no less true than it is for us that it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Loyalty is the mother of royalty.

The School of Subordination.

Lam. iii, 27.

Again, there was the school of toil. There is no reason for supposing that Joseph and Mary were especially poor, and therefore that Jesus was brought up in absolute poverty. They seem, indeed, to have been in lowly circumstances, but not

The School of Toil.

Matt. xiii, 55. in miserable. Joseph was a carpenter, or, as the original may perhaps be better rendered, an artificer; and Jesus was evidently brought up at the same craft. "Is not this the carpenter?" exclaimed his townsmen when they saw his miracles in Nazareth, and heard his wisdom in the synagogue. Behold, then, the Creator of the universe a mechanic, toiling in a Galilean workshop. Ah, how this educates him for sympathy with what must ever be the preponderating class of humanity, the working-class. Himself a workman of the guild of toil, Jesus Christ is emphatically the workman's friend.

The School of Society. Again, there was the school of society. No desert education was his, like that of his forerunner, John the Baptizer. This child is yet to shake mankind, and therefore he must understand mankind. He must feel the quickening, broadening, rounding power of society. And so he is brought up, not in any cave of Quarantania, but amid the social interchanges of his family—his mother Mary, his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas, and his sisters—and of the community of Nazareth.

Matt. xiii, 55, 56
The School of Isolation. Again, there was the school of isolation. What though he was brought up in society? Society comprehended him not. On his very advent as a teacher in the synagogue of Nazareth, his own townsmen, who had known him from infancy, rose up against him, and undertook to hurl him headlong from the brow of the hill on which their city was built. Even his brothers, sons of his own mother, did not believe on him. He came unto

Luke iv, 16-30.
John vii, 5.
John i, 13.

his own, and they that were his own received him not. He was indeed left alone; yet he was not alone, for the Father was with him. And so he grew up amid society; in it, but not of it. And therefore was he duly trained for his mighty work. For the foundations of character are laid in moral solitude. Man's grandest victories are, and ever must be, won single-handed.

John xvi, 32.

Again, there was the school of the synagogue. Every day in the week, and three times every Saturday or the Jewish Sabbath, Jesus went to the synagogue, where he saw a model of the ark of the covenant, and the scrolls of the sacred books, and joined in the prescribed prayers, and listened to the reading of the two lessons—the one from the law, the other from the prophets. Here, in the synagogue of Nazareth, he who was greater than Jerusalem's temple was trained, by gazing on type and ceremony and by listening to law and prophet, for his own mighty service as the world's true and immortal sanctuary.

The School of
Synagogue.

Matt. xii, 6.

Again, there was the school of Providence. That guileless nature, we can easily believe, was especially sensitive to the hints and open to the lessons which the heavenly Father is constantly giving in the events and arrangements of daily life. The Lord God gave him the tongue of the learner, that he should know how to sustain with words him that is weary: he wakened him morning by morning; he wakened his ear to hear as the learner. Daily Providence was his daily teacher.

The School of
Providence.

Isaiah I, 4.

Again, there was the school of Nature. Nazareth, although situated in populous Galilee of the

The School of
Nature.

Gentiles, was itself a secluded spot, somewhat aside from the highways, exquisitely embowered in an amphitheater of thyme-clad hills. The little town itself is nearly twelve hundred feet above the sea, and the height, on the slope of which it is built, is five hundred feet higher. From the crest glorious glimpses of Nature are attainable. One can see to the east graceful Tabor, to the south emerald Esdraelon, to the west blue Mediterranean, to the north snowy Hermon. That noble hill the youthful Jesus must have often climbed to gather its odorous wild-flowers, and listen to the warble of its birds, and drink in the glorious beauty which gleams around. Growing up amid these scenes of rural loveliness, with a heart joyously open to the lessons which Nature pours forth for those who "hold communion with her visible forms," Jesus came to understand her, and take on her language and mien, and so was trained to become her interpreter, or the parable-speaker.

Matt. xiii, 34.

The School of
Routine.

Again, there was the school of routine. There does not seem, let me repeat, to have been anything startling in all those thirty years; otherwise, the evangelists would have mentioned it. Doubtless it was the same unbroken, monotonous routine of family and workshop and synagogue, week after week, month after month, year after year. Yet it was in this very routine of dull monotony that the second Adam trained himself for the gigantic task of undoing the work of the first Adam, and restoring the garden of Eden. Here is a rich lesson for those of us who are chafing against the dry routine of household cares or school

or shop. The frequent and tedious drill is the best preparation for the battle pæan.

Again, there was the school of delay. During those long thirty years Jesus doubtless often yearned to enter at once upon his glorious mission as the Christ of God and the Saviour of men. But, unlike the great lawgiver of Sinai, who in "proud precipitance of soul" unduly hastened the day of Israel's emancipation, Jesus Christ grandly abided his time. Thus grandly abiding his time, he was enabled to achieve in three years what otherwise, humanly speaking, he could not have achieved in twenty years. It is a great lesson for young men. Not that enterprise and courage and energy are not praiseworthy. They are most noble traits. But there is such a thing as prematurity, and prematurity is apt to mean failure. This lesson of patience is especially needed in our times and land. It is an age of swift things, morally as well as physically. Society moves on the principle of high pressure. Young men become disgusted with the tedium of apprenticeship and clerkship and college-course. They are eager while yet youths to launch and manage their own crafts. Hence many become old before their prime, their intellect eccentered or shattered, their character wrecked. Young man, patiently abide your time. There is no heroism like the heroism of patience, no majesty like the majesty of self-continence. Yes, it is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Jehovah. Sooner or later, the trial crisis will come. May we all meet ours as victoriously as the Nazarene met his!

The School of
Delay.

Exod. ii, 11-15.

Lam. iii, 26.

The School of
Temptation.

Again, there was the school of temptation. For no man knows what is in him till he is tempted. And temptation is not only essential to character-disclosing, temptation is also essential to character-building. Temptations felt and vanquished are the stoutest materials out of which to build an adamantine character. And Jesus, as being human, knew what temptation means. Think not that he was tempted only in wilderness, on pinnacle, and on mountain. He was tempted all the way from manger to tomb. Thank God, at whatever time the prince of the world came upon him, he had nothing in him. For this is what enabled him to become our sympathizer and helper. Having been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, he is able to succor all those who are tempted, in that he himself hath suffered being tempted.

John xiv, 30.

Heb. iv, 15.

Heb. ii, 18.

The School of
Experience.

And so, lastly and comprehensively, there was the school of experience. For there is no education like the education of personal experience. Nothing can take the place of it: neither wealth, nor genius, nor splendid opportunities, nor indomitable will. Experience is just what it is, that is, *experience*, and in the nature of the case can never have its equivalent. And experience requires time. It can not be created. It can not be bought. And experience is absolutely indispensable to character-building. For what is character but experience deposited in the sea of time, and petrified into habits? And as in Nature, so in morals: the slower the crystallization, the more perfect and abiding. And all this was as true for

the Christ as it is for you and me. This, in fact, is the meaning of the thirty years' training. The Son of man might have bolted down into the world an unborn adult ; but, then, it would have been only his body which was full-grown. His moral nature would have been as characterless as a babe's ; for character is the aggregate of habits, and habits are the issues of experiences. But no ; he was born of a woman—born under law. As Gal. iv, 4. such, it was as needful for him as it is for us to pass through the unfolding process of a personal experience. And so he was trained, as we have seen, in various schools—the school of home, and subordination, and toil, and society, and isolation, and synagogue, and providence, and nature, and routine, and delay, and temptation, and experience. And so, learning obedience by the things Heb. v, 8, 9. which he suffered, and having thereby been made perfect, he also became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation. And so, through the obedience of that one Man, many Rom. v, 12. have been and, praised be his name, many more shall be made righteous.

Such is the story of the home-life of the Divine Man. As that Greater than Solomon was rearing that temple nobler than Moriah's, no stroke of 1 Kings vi, 7. hammer, or ax, or any tool of iron was heard.

No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung,
Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung.

Heber's "Palestine."

The great lesson, then, of the home-life at Nazareth is this: *Every-day life our training-school for heaven.* What though we are not attending Every-day Life our Training - School for Heaven.

college? No one of us is so poor as not to have Christ's advantages; and among these advantages was the college of commonplace, the university of daily home-life. Chafe not, then, against the bars of routine surroundings. Be content with your inconspicuousness. The training for the crisis of Calvary is the every-day life of Nazareth. When this every-day home-life of ours shall be reviewed at the judgment-bar, may it be for each of us, whether parent or child, master or servant, to hear from the lips of the Nazarene Judge the blessed plaudit—

Matt. xxv, 21.

“Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Collect.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

THE BAPTIST'S HERALDRY.

MATTHEW iii, 1-12; MARK i, 1-8; LUKE iii, 1-18.

The voice of one that crieth in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of Jehovah,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah xl, 3.

XIX.

THE BAPTIST'S HERALDRY.

MATTHEW iii, 1-12; MARK i, 1-8; LUKE iii, 1-18.

“GREAT events cast their shadows before.” Never was the saying truer than in the case of the inauguration of the public ministry of Jesus the Christ. It was not meet that the Sun of Righteousness should rise without the heraldry of morning-star. When, therefore, the Son of man, having been duly trained for his mighty enterprise in the schools of home, and subordination, and toil, and society, and isolation, and synagogue, and providence, and nature, and routine, and delay, and temptation, and experience, had reached the age of about thirty years, and was just entering his public ministry as the Christ of God, there also emerged into public view a striking character, whose glory it was to be the Christ's harbinger. He also has had his training; but, unlike his Master's, it has been in the school of the desert. And now, the day of his showing unto Israel having come, John also begins his public ministry, going into all the region round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins, saying, “Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven

The Voice in
the Wilder-
ness.

Matt. iii, 1-4.

Luke iii, 23.

Luke i, 80.

Luke iii, 2-6.

[the promised Messianic dispensation] is at hand!" And in thus preaching, he proves himself to be that illustrious herald whose advent Jehovah had foretold through his prophet Malachi, saying—

Mal. iii, 1.

Behold, I send my messenger,
And he shall prepare the way before me;

and again through his prophet Isaiah, saying—

Isaiah xl, 3-5.

The voice of one that crieth,
Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be exalted,
And every mountain and hill shall be made low;
And the crooked shall be made straight,
And the rough places plain:
And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together:
For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

The imagery is borrowed from the Oriental custom of preparing the way for monarchs in their royal progresses. Thus, we have records of the triumphal highways built at great expense by Semiramis, Sennacherib, Assurbanipal, and others, through craggy heights and deep gorges.* And admirably does this Eastern custom set forth the office of

* The same thing has occurred lately. "When Ibrahim Pasha proposed to visit certain places on Lebanon, the emirs and sheiks sent forth a general proclamation to all the inhabitants to assemble along the proposed route, and prepare the way before him. The same thing was done in 1854, on a grand scale, when the sultan visited Bresa. The stones were gathered out, crooked places straightened, and rough ones made level and smooth. I had the benefit of their labor a few days after his Majesty's visit." —"The Land and the Book."

John as the Messiah's forerunner. The plowman must go before the sower, breaking up the fallow soil, loosening the dense and tangled sod, uprooting the thorns. Repentance must precede remission, the law the gospel, the preacher of wrath the preacher of love. And so the son of the desert went before the face of the Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.

Luke i, 17.

Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. It must have been a most impressive scene. Let us try to realize it. The locality is the wilderness of Judea—the wild, cavernous, thinly settled pasture region lying to the southeast of Jerusalem, in the direction of the lower Jordan and the Dead Sea. The preacher is a hermit—stern, uncompromising, denunciatory; his dress, a shaggy garment of camel's hair; his food, locusts and wild honey—a genuine son of the desert. His theme is repentance in view of the approaching reign of the Messiah. His audience is all Judea. There is the supercilious Pharisee. There is the scoffing Sadducee. There is the glowering publican. There is the swaggering soldier. And many of these, wonderful to say, are coming to John for baptism, thereby confessing their uncleanness, and desire for purification. It was a striking instance of a general revival or spiritual ferment, recalling the religious awaken-

The Revival
under John.
Matt. iii, 5, 6.

ings under a Hezekiah, a Josiah, an Ezra, a Peter, a Savonarola, a Bernard, a Luther, a Whitefield, a Moody.

Occasion of
the Revival.

Nor is it difficult to account for this widespread and profound agitation. In the first place, the people were chafing under the yoke of pagan Rome. Remembering that they were Jehovah's covenant-people, their yearning for deliverance naturally took on a religious form. Again, there was at this time among the Jews, and perhaps throughout the East, the expectation, more or less distinct, of one who was to be a heaven-sent deliverer. Hearing of the sanctity of Judea's hermit, how natural that the Jews, weary of bondage and shame, should flock to John in the hope that he was the promised one. Again, there is in asceticism something which is fascinating. It betokens an exceptional, earnest character; and men are ever moved by the exceptional, especially when it takes the form of terrible moral earnestness. And John was a terribly earnest ascetic. A startling antithesis was he to the phylacteried, self-complacent, superficial, hollow rabbi of his day; and his power lay largely in being this antithesis. And therefore all Israel flocked to his preaching, feeling the thrall of his magnetism, even as idolatrous Israel centuries before had swayed under stormy Elijah, and as voluptuous Italy centuries afterward bowed before stern Savonarola, and frivolous France centuries still later grew solemn before saintly Lacordaire. Once more, John's message was a message of terror. No soothing words were his, no soporific platitudes,

no oily compliments. His matter was like his manner, his words like his own stony wilds, his rough dress of camel's hair, his food of locusts. His speech was concerning wrath and vipers and repentance and ax and falling trees and winnowing-fan and chaff and fire. Not the dove was his crest: his escutcheon was the ax. And with very many persons terror has always been a fascinating power. So it was in Assyria when heathen Nineveh robed herself in sackcloth before the denunciation of Hebrew Jonah. So it was in France when awakened Europe wept and groaned before the Tartarean oratory of St. Bernard. So it was in New England when Northampton church-member and Stockbridge Indian quailed and wailed before the wrathful eloquence of Edwards. So it was in Palestine when all Judea thronged around the thundering, ax-armed son of the wilderness, and, confessing their sins, besought of him the cleansing of baptism.

And now let us note somewhat in detail the varied counsels of the recluse of Judea's wild to the multitudes who flocked to his preaching and baptism; for, unworldly though he was, he adjusted his deliverances to the varied needs of his diversified listeners, like a wise almoner of treasures, rightly dividing the word of truth. Among the multitudes who lined the shore of the sacred river were many Pharisees and Sadducees. But how came such persons to be there? Were not the Pharisees proud and self-complacent and exemplary, as touching the law blameless? Were not the Sadducees caviling skeptics, denying res-

John's Varied
Counsels.

Luke iii, 7-14.

Phil. iii, 6.

Acts xxiii, 6.

urrection and angel and spirit? How, then, came such persons to the Jordan to listen to the wrathful eloquence of the stern apostle of repentance? Ah, there are times when the proudest, most worldly of natures are stirred to their very depths. There are times when even the Pharisee finds that his rubric is too narrow and icy, and that he has been living a hollow life. There are times when even the Sadducee feels his moral nature asserting itself at cost of every barrier of unbelief and moral petrification. There are times when conscience speaks louder than will or passion. The Pharisees and Sadducees of our John were living in just such a time. The spirit of the Lord God was abroad in the land, and they heard the sound thereof, and so they came trooping to the preaching of John. And what does John say to them? Does he accept their presence as a compliment to himself, and say honeyed things in return? Listen: "O generation of serpents, why are ye here? O brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Repent ye: look back on your wicked past, recall in sorrow its evil perversities, amend your sinful ways, bring forth fruits worthy of reformation, turn back to your fathers' God. Trust not in your mint and anise and cummin and dill, your many and long prayers, your broad phylacteries. Rely not on your lineage and the piety of your ancestors. Think not to say within yourselves: Abraham is our father! For I say unto you that God is able out of these Jordan pebbles to raise up children unto Abraham. Repent, therefore, and forsake your sins—your fanaticism

and self-conceit and hypocrisy. Turn again to the God of your fathers; for so will ye become Abraham's children. Ye will not always be able to deceive. The reader of hearts, even God's Prophet and man's King, is at hand. Already is the ax lying at the root of the trees; and every tree that beareth not good fruit is to be hewn down and cast into the fire. Repent, therefore, for the Messiah's own reign is at hand."

But not only were the aristocracy there; there also were the commonalty. Having heard the stern counsel to Pharisee and Sadducee, they in their turn ask: "What, then, must we do?" The answer is ready and pertinent: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise. For the coming kingdom is to be a brotherhood, or commonwealth, where every one will love his neighbor as himself. Be not anxious, then, to secure riches, except for the purpose of distributing them to the needy; for so will ye become children of your Father in heaven, who giveth liberally to all and upbraideth not." Another class, too, was there—a dishonest, insolent, infamous class. There came also publicans to be baptized, saying: "Master, what must we do?" Again, the answer is prompt and apposite: "Extort no more than that which is appointed you. Ye have great opportunities for deception and extortion and ill-gotten wealth. I do not demand that ye resign your office: I do demand that ye resist the temptations of official life. Exact no more than the law provides." But not only Jews flocked to John's

James i, 5.

ministry; heathen were also there, even stout, haughty, domineering, reckless soldiers from the Roman army of occupation. They, too, have been swept into the torrent of religious excitement, and in their turn ask: "And we, what must we do?" And, again, the answer is prompt and brave and apposite: "Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages." For violence and falsehood and avarice were the three precise sins to which the Roman soldier when on foreign soil was especially tempted. Thus did the desert-preacher rightly divide the word of truth, giving to each his appropriate share, not demanding of the publican repentance for the Pharisee's self-righteousness, nor of the Sadducee penitence for the soldier's crime. In this respect, at least, John of the desert was a model preacher. Would God, all the ministers of his word were as faithful!

The Coming
Baptizer.
Luke iii, 15, 16.

And as the people were in expectation, and all were reasoning in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ, John answered, saying unto them all: "I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance." The question has been greatly debated as to the precise point in Jewish history when the rite of baptism began to be practiced. But the question is not very important. Enough that baptism, as a symbol of moral cleansing, is founded in natural æsthetics, or the instinct

Matt. iii, 11.

of propriety. Hence, the frequent ablutions and lustrations of the Mosaic ritual. As is usual in such matters, the ritual took on in the course of time numerous unauthorized and trivial details, so that in the time of our Lord the Pharisees baptized even their cups, and pots, and brazen vessels. Seizing on this instinctive custom of ablution as a sign of moral cleansing, John adopted it, and put it forward as one of the features of his ministry, so that his habit of baptizing gave him his title—John the Baptizer. But John put into the old rite a new meaning. It was as though he had said: “I indeed baptize you in water; but it is no mere ceremonial cleansing, like the lustrations of Moses, or the Pharisaic baptism of dishes: my baptism means the cleansing of repentance, even a genuine change and rectification of character, unto the remission of sins. I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance.” At the same time, John the Baptizer knew that his baptizing was only a symbol, having no real power to change and cleanse the character. And so he proceeds to add: “But there cometh after me One mightier than I, the latchet of whose sandal I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose; he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire.” It was as though the forerunner had said: “The Messiah, whose menial I am not worthy to be, is at hand: he will bestow upon you the true cleansing; he will flood you with all spiritual influences and blessings, purifying you as by fire—this is why he is mightier than I. My baptism is only a symbol—it conveys no real grace; Messiah’s baptism is the substance—it

Mark vii, 1-4.

really changes, and renews, and saves." Ah, this is the reason why he who is least in the kingdom of heaven—the Messianic reign—is greater than John the Baptist; he has received the baptism of the Spirit.

The Coming
Winnowor.

Luke iii, 17.

But the coming Messiah will not only baptize in the Spirit; he will also discriminate. His winnowing-fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor, and gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. It was as though the hermit-preacher had said: "The time for unerring discrimination and reverseless judgment has come:

Luke ii, 34, 35.

the Divine Child, appointed for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, has been born; and now thoughts out of many hearts will be revealed.

Mal. iii, 1-3.

Ay, the Lord, even the angel of the covenant, has suddenly come to his temple. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap, sitting as a refiner and purifier of silver. Now shall ye discern between the righteous and the wicked—between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. Even now

Mal. iii, 18.

the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree that beareth not good fruit is to be cut down, and cast into the fire. Then shall the strong be as tow,

Isalah i, 31.

and his work as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them. But Jeho-

Mal. iii, 17.

vah knoweth those who are his, and in that day that he is preparing he shall spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall

Matt. xiii, 43.

the righteous shine forth as the sun in the king-

dom of their Father. He that hath ears, let him hear." With these and many other exhortations, preached John unto the people. Luke iii, 18.

Such is the proclamation of the forerunner—the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Has that voice died away? No; the Church of the living God is a second John the Baptist. The Church a
Second John
the Baptizer. Hers it is to lift up her voice in the world's great wilderness, and, making proclamation of the coming King, prepare the way before him, removing all obstructions, filling every valley of want, leveling every mountain of pride, straightening every crooked habit, smoothing every roughness of environment, and so ushering in the day when all flesh shall indeed see the salvation of God. Be it ours, then, to be as true to our mission as John was to his, reduplicating that ancient voice in the wilderness, and shouting to Pharisee and Sadducee, to profligate and reprobate, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen. Collect.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW iii, 13-17; MARK i, 9-11; LUKE iii, 21, 22.

Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.

Leviticus viii, 6.



XX.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW iii, 13-17; MARK i, 9-11; LUKE iii, 21, 22.

THE hermit-preacher is still lifting up his voice in the wilderness. How long he continued his heraldry of the coming King, we have not been told. We only know that, while fulfilling his mission as the harbinger of the approaching kingdom, Jesus himself came from Nazareth of Galilee to the Jordan unto John to be baptized by him. It is the first recorded notice of him since, when twelve years old, he visited Jerusalem to attend the Passover, and, while there, amazed the doctors in the temple, and thence returned to Nazareth, continuing subject to his parents eighteen years longer. But, although this Nazarene life of thirty years was a period of profound obscurity, yet John of the desert must have known Jesus of the workshop. Their mothers seem to have been kinswomen; both the children had been born under supernatural circumstances; John had already done homage to Jesus while as yet both were unborn. What though they had been reared and were living in different parts of the sacred land? They were kinsmen, and must have often

The Baptism
of Jesus.
Matt. iii, 13-15.

Luke ii, 41-52.

John i, 32, 33.

met and exchanged family greetings at the great festivals in the holy city. Accordingly, there is every reason to believe that John was personally acquainted with his cousin Jesus. Not that John on the occasion of his baptizing Jesus was fully aware that his cousin was the promised Messiah. He himself, referring to that memorable occasion, testifies thus: "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit." But, although John does not seem to have been aware of the Christhood and Divinity of his kinsman Jesus, he certainly was aware of his saintliness. When, therefore, this saintly One from Nazareth comes to him and asks baptism at his hands, no wonder he shrinks back in unaffected surprise and humility, saying: "How is it that thou comest to me? My baptism is the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Meet, then, is it that publican and outcast, Sadducee and Pharisee, should come to me for baptism. But thou, O Jesus, hast no sin to repent of. How, then, canst thou ask me to baptize thee—thou so pure, me so sinful? Oh, it is I that have need to be baptized by thee. And dost thou come unto me?" But the Divine Man with serene majesty replies: "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Deferring for a moment the full consideration of these profound words, let it be enough

that we meantime accept them as Christ's declaration of his readiness to submit to every propriety or moral comeliness. And having declared this, John can no longer refuse him. Indeed, further refusal would have been pride instead of humility. For this is pre-eminently a case in which, beyond any dispute, the less is to be blessed by the Better. And so he baptizes him. O sacred Jordan, born of cedared Lebanon, as the Divine Man stands

Breast-high in thee, not snow is half so white,
Nor half so spotless is the unsullied light.

Heb. vii, 7.
Coles's "Evan-
gel in Verse."

He stoops to thee in all his heavenly charms:
I see him sinking in thy jeweled arms,
Lost one amazing moment to the sight,
Then rising radiant dripping gems of light.

And, lo, a twofold credential. As Jesus ascends to the shore, even while he is praying, the heavens open, and baptizer as well as baptized see the skies parting, and the Holy Spirit of God descending upon the Son of man in a bodily form as a dove. It is the divine anointing, or Spirit's chrism, by which the man of Nazareth is visibly Christed as the Messiah of Jehovah. Henceforth the Jesus of earth is the Christ of heaven. Nor is this all. Lo, from the parted heavens peals a divine voice, saying: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." It is the attesting plaudit of eternal God. Yes, the sacred, blessed, adorable, Divine Three are here: the attesting, exultant Father; the baptized, Christed Son; the

The Divine
Attestation.
Matt. iii, 16, 17.

Gloria Patri.

descending, Christing Spirit. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Such is the story of the baptism of Jesus Christ.

Meaning of
Christ's Bap-
tism.

Luke iii, 3.

And here a question of rare and grave interest arises: Why was Jesus Christ baptized? John's baptism was a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins. But Jesus was sinless, and therefore could not repent. What, then, was the meaning of his baptism? Why was he baptized?

Heb. iii, 1.

Exod. xxix, 7.

Various answers have been given. For example: It has been answered that Jesus submitted himself to John's baptism in order to give his sanction to John's ministry. But this can scarcely be; for Jesus was at this time but an obscure Galilean, hardly known beyond the precincts of his own little Nazareth. Again, it has been answered that Jesus was baptized in order to be inducted into the priesthood, he being the high-priest as well as apostle of our confession. But the matter of fact is, that the ancient high-priest was inducted into his office by unction, not by baptism. Again, it has been answered that Jesus was baptized in order to be publicly inaugurated as the promised Messiah. But this was not the significance of baptism. A truer statement would be this: Jesus did not submit to baptism as an inaugurating ceremony, but his baptism furnished a suitable occasion for his inauguration; and accordingly, when he had been baptized and thus

fulfilled all righteousness, the Spirit of God descended upon him, and the Father proclaimed him as his own beloved Son. These approving demonstrations of the godhead, not his baptism, were his inauguration. He was inaugurated as the Christ of Jehovah at his baptism, not by his baptism. Once more, it has been answered that Jesus was baptized in order to set before us an example, that we should follow his steps. Doubtless, there is something of truth in this view. For here, as everywhere else, the Divine Man was our perfect example. And yet I can not believe that Jesus did this or that given thing merely for the sake of setting us an example. Such a view makes his character too artificial and theatrical. His was a solid life, and in every act of his there was, apart from any effect it might be intended to produce on others, an intrinsic, in-born meaning.

And so the question recurs: Why was Jesus Christ baptized? And the true answer seems to be this: Jesus Christ was baptized in order to identify himself with human nature, or rather to make it apparent that he was one with humanity. It is meet that man as fallen should confess his guilt and desire cleansing. Of this confession and desire, baptism is a natural symbol. This was the significance of John's baptism—it was a baptism of repentance. And Jesus was very man as well as very God. Born of a woman, born under law, that he might redeem those who were under the law, it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merci-

Baptized as
the Son of
Man.

Gal. iv, 4.

Heb. ii, 17.

ful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God. Accordingly, as born of a woman, and as under Jewish law, he had already been duly circumcised on the eighth day, and, when the purification of his mother for childbirth had been completed, he had been brought into the temple and duly presented unto the Lord, with the accompanying prescribed sacrifice of a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons. And now, having reached maturity, and about to enter on his public career as the Christ of God and the Saviour of man, he would visibly set forth his fellowship with our humanity by taking the guise of its fallen condition. Not that he entered into the guilt of our fallen nature—perish the thought! but he did enter into the consequences of that guilt. And so, sent forth by his Father in the likeness of sinful flesh, he also, like any other man, comes to the Jordan as to a laver of cleansing, even to John's baptism of repentance unto remission of sins. Not that he needs baptism any more than he had needed circumcision or presentation or passover. But he is in very truth our fellow-man, and as such enters into man's duties. And so he is baptized by John with the baptism of repentance. For thus it becometh even him to fulfill all righteousness. Not that this word "righteousness" is to be taken here in its later, technical, Pauline sense as meaning "justification"; but it is to be taken in its primary, general sense as meaning rightness, fitness, moral propriety. And it is right, even binding, that man should aspire to rise out of his fallen condition. And of this

Luke ii, 21-24.

Rom. viii, 3.

aspiration baptism is a natural emblem. What though baptism was not a Mosaic ordinance? Ablution is instinctively felt to be an emblem of moral cleansing. Listen to the Psalmist :

I will wash mine hands in innocency ;
So will I compass thine altar, O Jehovah !

Psalm xxvi, 6.

Even heathen Pilate would pacify his conscience by washing his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man." So the frightened murderer of King Duncan :

Matt. xxvii, 24.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

"Macbeth,"
Act ii, Sc. 2.

The perfect soul of Jesus, then, needed no Mosaic or formal statute to make him feel that baptism was a duty. His exquisite instinct told him that it was a comely rite for a fallen, aspiring soul; and to his perfect nature comeliness was as imperative as a formal edict. And so, by being baptized with the baptism of repentance, that is to say, the baptism of confession and amendment, he fulfilled all righteousness, all behests of moral propriety.

This, then, was the significance of Christ's baptism. He was baptized in order to show that he would achieve his redeeming work by sharing in the fortunes of our fallen and wrecked humanity, entering sympathetically, and in a certain sense vicariously, into its miserable conditions and

Baptized as
the Representative of
Humanity.

exposures. As the representative of humanity, begrimed with its pollution, he went down into the waters of the Jordan in the likeness of sinful flesh, symbolically washing away sins; and he arose from those waters, so that mankind might rise in him a purified humanity. He was baptized as our fellow-man, our elder brother, the Son of man. And so the meaning of his baptism is precisely the opposite of the meaning of our own baptism. When we are baptized, we are baptized into Christ; when Christ was baptized, he was baptized into us. And as in our baptism we put on Christ, so in his baptism Christ put on us. Christ's baptism was a symbolic investiture of himself with humanity. And therefore it became him, as the Son of man and representative of our race, to be baptized, that so he might fulfill all righteousness. Such was the primary meaning of Christ's baptism.

Prophetic
Meaning of
Christ's Bap-
tism.

But with the flight of time that ancient baptism has taken on a richer meaning and glory. To John the future of Jesus was largely unknown. To us that future has become a blessed past. We know the holy story of cross and empty sepulchre. Keeping these in view, and looking back upon that first baptismal scene, how prophetic it becomes! For so

"In Memoriam," xxiv.

the past will always win
A glory from its being far,
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not when we moved therein.

At the very threshold of his public career, when he was anointed for his redeeming work by the

descending Spirit in a bodily form as a dove, he foreshadowed—whether intentionally or unintentionally, it matters not—his own vocation and destiny. The foundations of St. Paul's Creed, to wit, "Christ died for our sins, and was buried and rose on the third day," were symbolically laid when the Divine Man sank beneath the ripples of Jordan and rose again. As our baptism is historic, commemorating a slain and risen Saviour, so our Saviour's baptism was prophetic, foretelling his own burial and resurrection. And so in his very baptism Jesus Christ himself is the first-fruits, the pledge sheaf, of the harvest of the church of the resurrection. How eloquent, then, that ancient act! How it teems with preludes of Calvary and sepulchre and Olivet! How it transfigures that ancient baptism of repentance unto remission of sins into the baptism of redemption—that pre-resurrection baptism of prophecy into the post-resurrection baptism of fulfillment. What new, vast, august meaning it puts into those meek words: "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

1 Cor. xv, 1-4.

1 Cor. xv, 20.

And now let me close with a personal appeal. If Jesus Christ, the sinless, was not ashamed to take on himself your polluted humanity and symbolically wash away your filth in the laver of the Jordan, will you, the sinful, be ashamed to take on the shining character of Jesus Christ, and walk in his blessed steps? If Jesus Christ, the sinless One, submitted himself for your sake to a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins, will you, redeemed by his blood, refuse to submit yourself for

A Personal Question.

his sake as well as for your own to a baptism of resurrection and immortal life ?

Collect.

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him ; and that through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection ; for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW iv, 1-11; MARK i, 12, 13; LUKE iv, 1-13.

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis iii, 15.

XXI.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW iv, 1-11; MARK i, 12, 13; LUKE iv, 1-13.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” Such are the words with which the first evangelist introduces his account of the temptation of Jesus Christ.

Reality of the
Temptation.
Matt. iv, 1.

An incredible statement, surely! For was not Jesus Christ absolutely holy, and, therefore, absolutely beyond the reach of temptation? Moreover, was he not Divine; and can Divinity be tempted? Such are some of the difficulties which press upon us when we read the story of the temptation. And so we come to think of Jesus as a kind of phantom Christ, tempted only in appearance.

Nevertheless, we must believe the story. For, first, it is made possible by the fact that Jesus was a man, and therefore finite; and temptation is inseparable from finiteness. The very fact that there are limits is also the fact which permits and invites transgression of those limits. Where there is no law, there is no transgression. The very fact of finiteness involves all possibilities of evil. This

Rom. iv, 15.

James i, 13.

is the reason why God can not be tempted: being infinite, occupying all space and all time, there are no limits for him to transcend. Not so was it with his incarnate Son. Jesus Christ was a veritable man, and, as such, finite, and therefore open to temptation. Moreover, although he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and therefore Divinely generated, yet he was also born of sinful woman, and therefore inherited human nature under disabled conditions; so that, like any one of us, he was accessible to temptation. So far, then, from its having been impossible that he should be tempted, we must believe that he was tempted, even though no scripture had asserted it. And scripture does most expressly assert it. Nothing can be more explicit than the language of the evangelists in narrating the story of the temptation. If we doubt here, we may doubt anywhere, even in the matter of the incarnation itself.

Temptation
not necessarily
Sinful.

Gen. iii, 1-6.

Yet in all this was no sin. For we must distinguish between temptation as assault and temptation as conquest. There is no sin in the mere fact of being tempted. Eve was not to blame for the presence of Satan in Eden; nor was she to blame for the fact that the forbidden tree seemed desirable: her blame began when, instead of instantly repelling the tempter, she began to dally with him, and allow herself to look with longing on the tree. Jesus was not to blame for the presence of Satan in the wilderness; nor for the fact that there was force in Satan's suggestion that he should satisfy his hunger by using his miraculous power to turn stones into bread. Had he allowed

Matt. iv, 1-4.

himself to cherish for one fleeting instant Satan's suggestion, then temptation would have swept into sin. But there was no sin in the mere fact of his having been tempted.

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall.

"Measure for Measure," ii, 1.

And the very fact that he was really tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, is the fact which gives to the story of his temptation and victory its glorious power and exhaustless cheer. Heb. iv, 15.

But why was Jesus Christ tempted? Sinless, why should he be exposed to such fierce assault? Remembering who he was, and why he came into the world, we might have supposed that, if ever man would be spared temptation, that man would be the Christ of God. Why, then, was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil? Reasons of the Temptation.

Jesus was tempted, first, for his own sake. He was a man; and therefore, like every other man, he had a character to build. And temptation is essential to character-building. Temptation not only assays the quality of the soul; temptation also tempers it, bringing it by the stress of ordeal into the needed robustness—unfolding it, fortifying it, perfecting it. No man knows what is in him—how weak he is or how strong—until he is tried. And the trial, if he endures the test, not only reveals him, it also girds him. Temptation itself when vanquished becomes a buttress. To be tempted continually, and to conquer continually— Tempted for His own Sake.

this is to attain, as final and blessed issue, to the impossibility of being tempted: temptation ceasing for evermore to be temptation—the *beata necessitas boni* of Augustine. And so it is that temptation perfects the character. And Jesus was a man, and therefore needed the same perfecting. What though the acorn may be perfect as an acorn? It needs to be perfected into the giant oak. Even so was it with the Son of man: born into the world a perfect infant, he needed to soar from the world a perfected man. Well then might the Spirit drive him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Let him go up into that dreary wild that there he may grapple with the lost archangel; for it is by the throes of that awful conflict that he shall be prepared for Gethsemane and Calvary, for Olivet and heaven.

Tempted for
Man's Sake.

Again, Jesus was tempted for man's sake. His own temptation helps him to understand ours. For there is no sympathy like that which springs from the sense of fellow-experience—no compassion so real as that which is born of co-passion. And the Divine Man has passed through all human experience from cradle to grave. And therefore he knows how to sympathize with us, and how to help us. For we have not a high-priest who can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but we have one who hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he

Heb. iv, 15, 16.

Heb. ii, 18.

is able to succor them that are tempted. Glorious day, then, it was for humanity when the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil; for in that deadly encounter he single-handed fought for humanity as well as for himself, and, conquering, shows humanity how to conquer.

And now let us glance at some of the circumstances of the temptation of Jesus Christ.

And, first, in respect to the time of the temptation. It was at the threshold of Christ's public ministry, immediately after his baptism. From the Jordan, where he had seen the heavens parting, and the Spirit of God descending upon himself in a bodily form as a dove, and had heard the voice out of heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" he, while yet full of the Holy Spirit, was straightway driven by that same Spirit forth into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. It is a picture of the Christian life—God's own appointed life of sunshine and cloud, mountain and valley; from Hephzi-bah to Azumah, from Beulah to Shammah; from the third heaven of paradise to the thorn in the flesh, even Satan's buffeting messenger. And, observe, it was the Spirit who took Jesus from Heaven's plaudit to Satan's onset: "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness."

Time of the
Temptation.

Mark i, 9-11.

Isaiah lxii, 4.

2 Cor. xii, 1-7.

Mark i, 12.

Was Jesus
Aware of
the Coming
Temptation?

And here an interesting question arises: When Jesus thus went up from Jordan to the desert, was he aware of the Spirit's purpose? Did he know that he was going up in order to be tempted? Did he go because he consciously felt the Spirit's

impulse, or did he go spontaneously? It is a difficult and sacred question, not to be answered suddenly or irreversibly. All that any of us can do is to give his personal opinion. My own impression is that Jesus went up spontaneously, in answer to the resistless promptings of his own heart. A perfect babe and child and youth, he had grown up, under God's good providence and watch care and guidance, into full manhood. Year by year, as the babe had unfolded into the child, and the child into the youth, and the youth into the man, he had caught clearer and clearer glimpses of the mighty enterprise which awaited him. And now arrived at manhood, fresh from baptism and divine credential of opened heavens and dove and voice, he feels that he is on the threshold of the work which his Father had given him to do. He suddenly awakes to the full sense of his Messiahship. And what a tremendous Messiahship it is! How terrific in its drain on every energy of body, and mind, and heart! How fierce in its woe! Verily, he feels the need of a special equipment and fortification. And so, in answer to the cravings of his own heart, he goes up into the wilderness, that in its solemn stillness and seclusion he may, by meditation and prayer, gird himself for his unparalleled mission. Nevertheless, it was the Spirit who drove him thither, and drove him for the very purpose of having him tempted. It was a striking instance of the daily problem of Divine sovereignty and human freedom. Jesus went up into the wilderness spontaneously, in order to have opportunity for meditation and prayer:

the Spirit drove him thither, in order to have him tempted. Led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. Is it not possible that our blessed Lord had this painful scene of his life in mind when he afterward bade his disciples pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, lead us not into temptation"?

Matt. vi, 9-13.

Respecting the place of the temptation but little can be said. The traditional site is the desolate mountain behind Jericho, called, from the forty days' temptation, *Quarantania*. It is a lofty height of limestone, rising precipitously, pierced in numerous places with caves which for centuries have been tenanted by hermits. But although tradition points out Quarantania as the site of the temptation, I am inclined to look for that sacred locality in the wilderness of Sinai. There is nothing in the Gospel records to forbid such a supposition. On the other hand, such a supposition has the advantage of a sacred propriety. Here, amid these frowning crags and awful wilds,

Place of the
Temptation.

Where all around, on mountain, sand, and sky,
God's chariot's wheels have left distinctest trace,

John Keble.

Moses had fasted forty days and nights; here, in one of its caves, Elijah had dwelt as an exile; here, Paul, when it had pleased God to reveal his Son in him, spent three years in preparing for his majestic calling; and here, as we are permitted to believe, One greater than lawgiver and prophet and apostle betook himself that, amid the memories of the mount of smoke and thunder and law and judgment, he might equip himself for the

Ex. xxxiv, 28.

1 Kings xix, 9.

Gal. i, 15-17.

mighty task of taking on his own head Sinai's burden and doom. But, although it is pleasing to think this, let us not insist on it as a certainty. All we know is that Jesus was in the wilderness forty days and nights, tempted by Satan ; and he was with the wild beasts.

Mark i, 13.

Manner of the
Temptation.

And now let me say a few words about the manner of the temptation. I do not now refer to the closing scenes when the devil put forth his utmost force, but to the preceding forty days. During this long period of nearly six weeks the devil was doubtless ceaselessly tempting him. But how did he tempt him ? In what way did he approach him ? Did he appear in bodily figure, so that Jesus was conscious of his personal presence ? Or did he content himself with presenting suggestions which might seem to have risen in the Nazarene's own mind ? Here again we must speak with reverent caution. My own impression is that Satan tempted Jesus during these forty days in the same way that he tempts us. We have never seen his figure or heard his voice or felt his touch. Yet his temptation has been quite as real as though we had seen him face to face. As it is not needful that the Holy Spirit should approach us body-wise in order to help us, so it is not needful that the devil should approach us body-wise in order to harm us. In fact, his temptation is all the more effective because so insidious, seeming to rise out of our own minds, as though a part of our own selves. Bunyan, who knew so well the windings of the human heart, has admirably illustrated this when he represents his Pilgrim, while walking through

the Valley of the Shadow of Death, as horrified by what seemed to him to be his own blasphemies :

Just as he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put poor Christian more to it than anything that he had met with before, even to think that he should now blaspheme him that he loved so much before. Yet, if he could have helped it, he would not have done it ; but he had not the discretion either to stop his ears, or to know from whence these blasphemies came.

" Pilgrim's Progress."

Perhaps it was in some such way as this that Satan tempted Jesus. Not that the Saviour was, like poor Pilgrim, ignorant of the source of the temptation. Nevertheless, I am inclined to believe that Satan approached him, as it were, unnoticed, deftly raising suggestions which were so natural and accordant with the usual workings of the mind as to seem spontaneous. But let us not speculate too much. Enough that we know most surely this : Satan did really tempt Jesus.

We have seen that Jesus was tempted throughout the forty days. What the particular temptation or temptations were we know not : the only person who could have ever told us long ago ascended. It seems clear, however, that the long-continued temptation was climacteric—the temptation of the forty days culminating in the threefold assault of the wilderness, the pinnacle, and the mountain. To these three special, culminating temptations let us now attend.

The Temptation Climacteric.

The Temptation of the Wilderness.

Matt. iv, 2-4.

Luke iv, 2-4.

And, first, the Temptation of the Wilderness :
“ He did eat nothing in those days ; and when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But Jesus answered unto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Bodily Condition of Jesus.

To understand the force of this temptation we must first take special note of the bodily condition of Jesus at this precise juncture. During the forty days and nights he had eaten nothing. Whether this statement is to be taken in absolute literalness or only in way of general assertion it matters not. Enough that we know that he had fasted forty days. And this fasting does not seem to have been either rubrical or voluntary. Recall as clearly as may be his circumstances. He is at last on the threshold of his mighty mission. His Messiahship—so stupendous in its bearings, so tremendous in its cost—is looming up before him. He has retired into the wilderness that he may find in its still solitude opportunity for equipping meditation and prayer. And so earnest is he in his preparation that his very appetite fails him—in those days he did eat nothing. Alas ! we know too well the power of body over mind. Few situations there are where man has less self-control than when he is famished. In such an awful crisis the very fountains of natural affection are sometimes dried up ; so that even mothers, crazed by their agony, have devoured their own children. We can well un-

derstand then that when a man is reduced to the point of starvation, and sees food within his reach, little will he care what laws of man or of God he breaks in clutching it and devouring it. And Jesus was in this crisis of starvation. Nearly a month and a half he had been fasting. Day by day the fetters of hunger had been closing tighter and tighter around him, paralyzing every energy of body and soul. Could we have seen him as some day he totteringly paced in the desolate wild or leaned against some limestone crag, I doubt not we should have seen a wan, wasted, ghastly figure. But Nature at last asserts her supremacy: when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. And now is the precise time for the terrible assault. The tempter came and said to him, "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves."

What was the manner of this temptation? Did Satan approach Jesus in visible form as manifest Satan? Or did he appear as some holy hermit—some passing wayfarer? Or was he present only spirit-wise, suggesting his temptation, but suggesting it so artfully that it seemed to rise, as it were, spontaneously in the Saviour's own mind? We know not. Nor is it important that we should. The essential point for us to believe is that Satan did really tempt Jesus to turn stones into loaves. My own impression is that Satan came to him in a guise hardly distinguishable from his own mental operations; or, if he appeared in bodily guise at all, it was in the guise of a friendly stranger. Perhaps the temptation was somewhat after the

Manner of this
Temptation.

following manner: Jesus is in the wilderness, exhausted and well-nigh dead with hunger. A stranger, apparently a chance traveler, approaches him, and says, in kindest way: "I am sure I know thee; I was present at thy baptism; I have heard of the descending dove and the applauding voice; I believe that thou art the long-promised Messiah. But I see that thou art weak, and faint, and dying with hunger. Surely thou art fasting needlessly: thou art the Son of God, and all things are in thy power; thou hast a mighty mission to fulfill—how canst thou save others unless thou savest thyself? Yet thou art perishing with starvation! And this although the means of relief are within thy reach. See these stones: thou hast only to speak, to wish, and they shall minister to thee. If thou art the Son of God, why dost thou not command that these stones become loaves?" Perhaps it was in some such way as this that Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Whatever was insidious in suggestion, profound in dissimulation, plausible in reasoning, perplexing in casuistry, capable of casting a shadow, however flitting, on the chaste, white spirit of Jesus—all this was brought with satanic subtlety and might to bear against him; and this, too, at the moment of his extremest weakness—at the very ebb of his human nature.

Sinfulness of
the Suggestion.

But why would the yielding to this temptation have been a sin? Surely the mere act of miraculously turning stones into loaves, when one has the power to do it, is no wrong in itself. Nevertheless, it would have been wrong for Jesus to have done it. For, consider the circumstances in which

he was placed. He had undertaken to save man by becoming himself a man—to save humanity in, and through, and by his own human nature. Since by man had come death, by man also must come resurrection. Divinity although he was, he was to conquer in the sphere of his own humanity. And Satan tempted him to fall back upon his Godhood. It was as though he had said: “Act as the Son of God; put forth thy divine power; substitute miracle for trust in the Father’s providence: thou art the Son of God, therefore turn these stones into loaves.” But Satan laid siege in vain.

1 Cor. xv, 21.

And so we pass to consider the repulse: Jesus answered unto him, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” The citation is from the book of Deuteronomy, the eighth chapter, the third verse. The forty years’ wanderings are ended, and Israel is about to enter the promised land. In that land of exuberant fertility—that land of brooks and springs, of wheat and vines, and milk and honey, that land whose stones are iron and in whose hills is brass—Israel would be tempted to pride, and forgetfulness of God, and atheistic trust in the resources of Nature. And therefore Moses urges upon his people the remembrance that Jehovah, in feeding them, is not limited to one line of action—to wheat, or corn, or barley; that it is not Nature which nourishes man, but God through Nature: “Thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee and prove thee, suffer-

The Repulse.

Matt. iv, 4.

Luke iv, 4.

Deut. viii.

ing thee to hunger, and feeding thee with manna, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live." And in quoting this ancient passage, Jesus virtually says: "Let me not dictate to my Father how he shall feed me; he can nourish me with other things than bread. I will trust his love rather than my power." Thus Jesus opposed God's fatherhood to man's cleverness. And it was on this principle that he always acted. Even when on the cross, and in face of the bitterest insinuations touching his ability to save himself, he refused to exercise his power of self-rescue. He who turned water into wine to gladden others would not turn stones into loaves to save himself. And so, by simply trusting God's fatherhood, Jesus conquered Satan. And, observe, in thus conquering, he conquered as man. He might have contented himself with the majestic assertion, "I am the Son of God." This, in fact, was the temptation with which Satan sought to seduce him; he sought to persuade him to save his manhood by using his Godhood. But he sought in vain. Jesus still keeps himself in the category of man. Refusing to rise out of the human plane, he contents himself with saying, as becomes every other man similarly placed: "It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceedeth from God's mouth." As it was as man that he was tempted, so it was that as man he conquered.

The Two Adams.

Behold, then, the second Adam in the wilderness. What a contrast his environment to that of

Matt. xxvii, 39-43.

the first Adam! Dwell for a moment on the startling antithesis. On the one hand, a paradisaical garden which the Creator himself had planted, and in which he made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; on the other hand, a dreary wilderness. On the one hand, Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; on the other hand, Jesus alone, with the wild beasts. On the one hand, luxury, with free access to every tree in the garden, except one; on the other hand, starvation. On the one hand, a clear, emphatic, dreadfully unmistakable prohibition; on the other hand, the doubt which casuistry might pardonably raise in the realm of an indefinite liberty. On the one hand, an un-fallen man, fresh and pure as the morning dawn; on the other hand, also an un-fallen Man, but still the Son of a sinful woman and a sinful humanity, laden with the dread entail of fallen, disabled conditions. On the one hand, a single and it may be momentary temptation; on the other hand, temptation on temptation for more than forty days. In brief, on the one hand, a condition of things where everything was helping to continued erectness; on the other hand, a condition of things where everything was helping to fall. Yet, on the one hand, defeat; on the other hand, conquest. On the one hand, through the first man, eternal death; on the other hand, through the second Man, eternal life.

Gen. ii, 8-17.

Gen. iii, 8.

Mark i, 13.

Rom. v, 12-21.

The Temptation of the Pinnacle.

Matt. iv, 5-7.

And now pass to the second temptation: "*Then the devil taketh him into Jerusalem, and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith*

Luke iv, 9-12. *unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence, for it is written—*

Psalm xci, 11,12. *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee;*

*And on their hands shall they bear thee up,
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

And Jesus answering said unto him, Again it is written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Deut. vi, 16.

Satan's Enormous Tether.

"Then the devil taketh him into Jerusalem, and setteth him on the pinnacle of the temple." In thus yielding for the moment to Satan's guidance, did Jesus sin? We must remember then that Satan's control over circumstances is immense. Although he is leashed, his tether is of enormous length. And his preliminaries are often in the region of what is innocent. He is willing to lead us along a thousand right steps for the sake of leading us at last to take a single wrong step. For example: he tempts us to embark in what seems a legitimate enterprise; but only with the view of involving us in disaster, and so finally tempting us into dishonesty. This is what makes life so serious a thing. We know not whither our steps are leading. What seems right to-day may be seen to be wrong to-morrow.

Prov. xiv, 12.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
But the end thereof are the ways of death.

Knowing then that our Father does sometimes expose us in a special way to Satan's power, even as he exposed his own beloved Son, how needful that we hourly pray: Father, lead us not into temptation! But, although we do not always know

whither our steps are tending, let us not give way to vacillation or despair. Our accountability and blame begin, not when Satan leads us to Jerusalem's pinnacle, but when we awake to the consciousness that it is Satan who is leading us thither.

And now let us note the temptation itself. Jesus has come up from the victory of the wilderness doubtless buoyant, strong, ecstatic. His first impulse is to betake himself to the temple. Having joined in the devotions of his Father's house, he ascends the pinnacle that he may gaze on that spectacle most dear to the pious Jew—the city of God. Standing on the lofty pinnacle, perhaps he is seized with that strange impulse which has often seized some of us when similarly placed, to leap headlong from the dizzying height. Thus Edgar on Dover Cliff:

Manner of the
Temptation.

How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!

"King Lear,"
Act IV, Sc. 6.

I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

No sooner does Jesus feel the impulse than he seems to hear a friendly voice: "Be not afraid to take the leap; for thou art God's Messiah and Son; he will not allow any harm to befall thee; the wings of his angels shall bear thee floating in the air; and what a sublime inauguration this of thy great mission—what a dazzling proof of thy Messiahship in the eyes of yonder surging throng! If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for

he hath promised to give his angels charge concerning thee."

Meaning of the
Temptation.

We see at once the meaning of this temptation: Satan tempted Jesus to presume on God's fatherhood. Having been foiled in his endeavor in the wilderness to tempt him into under-trust, he now endeavors on the pinnacle to tempt him into over-trust. And he has been pursuing the same policy ever since, swinging us between extremes: first, plunging us into the valley, next tossing us on the mountains; first emptying, then inflating. From distrust to presumption—this is his master policy. Let us not be ignorant of his devices.

2 Cor. ii, 11.

Beware of Sa-
tan's Expo-
sitions.

And observe in this connection how piously the devil himself can talk, quoting Scripture, when it suits his purpose, as deftly as any theologian. So Antonio:

"Merchant of
Venice," Act
i, Scene 3.

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul, producing holy witness,
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek;
A goodly apple rotten at the heart:
Oh, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

So King Richard himself:

"Richard III,"
Act 1, Scene 3.

But then I sigh, and, with a piece of Scripture,
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With odd old ends, stol'n forth of holy writ,
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.

See how dexterously Satan quotes from that psalm of trust, the ninety-first:

Psalms xci, 11, 12.

He shall give his angels charge over thee,
To keep thee in all thy ways:
They shall bear thee up in their hands,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Surely, this is something very devout and beautiful. But, after all, the devil is not a trusty expositor. Something more is needed than an exact quotation; it is a right application. There is such a thing as the wresting Scripture unto our own destruction: and this we do, and we have the devil's help in doing it, when we misapply Scriptural texts, no matter how exactly quoted, using the Word of God as an excuse for our sin, or as an indorsement of what seems to us questionable. 2 Peter iii, 16.

And now let us note what effect this temptation of the pinnacle had on the Nazarene. Jesus answering said unto him: "Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." As the adversary had just quoted from Scripture, though falsely, so now his antagonist quotes from Scripture, but rightly. And he cites again from the book of Deuteronomy, the sixth chapter, the sixteenth verse: "Ye shall not tempt Jehovah your God." It was as though the Son of man had said: "I may trust my Father, but I must not experiment with him; I may rely on his goodness, but I must not presume on it. To look to him for help when walking in the ways of his appointment is to trust him, even as he has bidden me; but to look to him for help when walking in ways of my own choosing is to tempt him; and he himself has caused it to be written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." And thus, to cite words of the very psalm from which the tempter has just quoted, Jesus, while yet on the pinnacle, The Repulse.
Matt. iv, 7.
Luke iv, 12.

Deut. vi, 16.

Psalm xci, 13.

Treadeth upon the lion and adder ;
The young lion and the serpent he trampleth under
feet.

And as then in the wilderness, so now on the pinnacle, he conquered in the sphere of humanity. Tempted as man, he still keeps himself in the human plane, putting himself in the same category with ancient Israel, to whom Jehovah, speaking through the mouth of his servant Moses, had said : "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God."

The Temptation of the Mountain.

Matt. iv, 8-10.

Luke iv, 5-8.

One more temptation there was, and to that let us now turn our thoughts : "*Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them in a moment of time ; and he said unto him, To thee will I give all these things and all this authority, and the glory of them, if thou wilt fall down and worship me ; for it hath been delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will I give it ; if thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine. Then Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*"

The Majestic Panorama.

"The devil leadeth him up an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a moment of time." Manifestly, this is not to be taken literally ; for there is no mountain on earth high enough to give such a view, nor indeed can there be so long as this earth is round. Evidently the vision was a spiritual one. Who of us has not at times fallen into fits of abstraction or pensiveness, when

imagination, set free from self-consciousness, takes "the prisoned soul and laps it in Elysium"? And when we fall into one of these reveries, what amazing exploits imagination achieves! How she sweeps through the universe as though space and time were annihilated! What visions of splendor and power sweep before her as in an instant of time! Ah, here is one of Satan's strong points. There is no finer test of a man's character than the use he allows himself of this wonderful gift of imagination. No faculty answers more sensitively or completely to the soul's real instincts and tendencies. Whatever the soul loves and wants, this imagination keeps constantly arrayed before her vision. Hence it is that imagination is Satan's favorite agent and organ. Capable of the most angelic ministries, she is also capable of the most diabolic. Thus Satan tempted Jesus to use it on the exceeding high mountain. For Jesus, like each of us, was a veritable man, and as such gifted with imagination. And as he was absolutely sinless, his imagination must have been unrivaled and transcendent. Picture then the scene. He has come from the victory of the pinnacle doubtless in a rapturous state, and feels drawn to some exceeding high mountain. Perhaps it is Nebo, from which Moses had been allowed his only glimpse of the promised land; perhaps it is Hermon, on one of the spurs of which this same Jesus is yet to be transfigured. Many of us know from personal experience the exhilarating effects of mountain air and views. And if ever there was a man who was especially open to Nature's

influences, that man must have been the spotless Son of Mary. Behold him, then, seated on some commanding cliff. As he prolongs his innocent, poetic gaze, he falls, as you and I have often fallen, into reverie. Now is the golden moment for the prince of the powers of the air. Seizing his magic wand, the arch-tempter conjures up his airy creations, and causes to pass in lightning succession before the eyes of the Galilean mechanic all the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. There, for example, is Jerusalem, beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King. And there is Egypt, with her Alexandria and her Memphis and her Thebes. And there is Syria, with her Damascus and her Baalbek and her Palmyra. And there is India, with her spices and her silks and her gems. And there is Greece, with her Athens and all her immortal memories. And there is Rome—Cæsarean Rome—with her scepterdom over a hundred kings. There, also, is all the world's glory—all that it has of power and pomp and witchery, all that can set the senses aglow and make the eyes dilate and the heart beat fast. There are all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—past, present, future—all suddenly circling and dipping before the eye of the Carpenter of Nazareth. And yet in all this glimpsing was no sin.

Eph. ii, 2.

Psalm xlvi, 2.

The Temptation
itself.
Luke iv, 6.

And so we pass to Satan's temptation itself: "To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them, for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it; if thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be

thine." Several things here demand our serious attention.

And, first, Satan's tremendous claim: "Unto me all this hath been delivered, and to whomsoever I will I give it." It is the blending of a tremendous truth and a tremendous lie.

Satan's Tremendous Claim.

"*To me all this hath been delivered.*" Prince of this world, God of this world—these are no mere figures of speech. For what is there worldly—that is, characteristically worldly and belonging to it—on which Satan has not stamped his seal? Is it money? But Satan uses money to tempt men to discontent and avarice and fraud and pride and hardness of heart. Is it ambition? But Satan uses ambition to tempt men to ignoble tricks of political scheming and colossal inundations of innocent blood. Is it the bodily senses? But Satan uses the eye to paint pictures of wanton fascination, the ear to listen to calumnies of scandal, the tongue to speak oily words of deceit, the taste to crave the maddening viands of revelry. Is it science? But Satan uses science to falsify the oracles of the Holy Ghost, to eject the Creator from his own universe, and to send man down to his grave paupered of immortality. Is it literature? But Satan uses literature to enshrine in stately prose or gorgeous verse the falsehoods of tradition, the sneers of infidelity, the triumphs of vice, the whirlwinds of passion. Is it art? But Satan uses art to rear towers of Babel, to paint frescos of Pompeii, to warble dithyrambs of seraglics. Is it the instinct of worship? But Satan uses this instinct to invent

John xii, 31.

2 Cor. iv, 4.

“Paradise
Lost.”

Gay religions, full of pomp and gold,
And devils to adore for deities.

And thus everything that is worldly, however innocent in itself, whether riches or honors or pleasures or talents or sensibilities or imagination,

“Lalla Rookh.”

The trail of the serpent is over them all.

“Unto me hath all this been delivered.” And so it comes to pass that, Diabolus being the prince of this world, worldliness is diabolism.

“*And to whomsoever I will I give it.*” For infernal gifts there are as well as celestial. Those were not altogether superstitious fancies when in mediæval times legends were told of men who had sold themselves to the devil. Faust is not the only wretch who has made a pact with Mephistopheles. Such pacts and sales are taking place everywhere and every day. “Unto me all this hath been delivered, and to whomsoever I will I give it.”

But while the devil thus uttered a tremendous truth, he at the same time uttered a tremendous lie. After all, what the devil owns of this world is only the surface; and even his ownership of this is only transient.

Psalm xxiv, 1.

The earth is Jehovah's, and the fullness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.

All of earth's genuine and abiding properties, all its essential gems and wealths and ranks and fames and powers and wisdoms and joys, have been bequeathed in the eternal councils to the Divine Man; and even the prince and god of this world can not alienate the glorious entail.

Thou art the First, and thou the Last ;
 Time centers all in thee,
 The Almighty God, who was and is
 And evermore shall be.

Isaac Watts.

If ever the father of lies uttered a falsehood, it was when he said to Jesus: "Unto me all this hath been delivered, and to whomsoever I will I give it."

And now let us note the condition on which Satan proffers his gift: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship before me." But how could Satan imagine that a proposition so blunt and hideous as this could be entertained for an instant by a spirit so spotless as that of Jesus? Remember, then, that Satan has not yet appeared to Jesus in his true character. In the wilderness he had appeared to him as a sympathetic friend, taking kindly concern in his bodily welfare. On the pinnacle he had appeared to him as a saintly companion, urging such an exhibition of his divine Sonhood as would inaugurate his Messiahship with dazzling credential. And now on the mountain he appears to him as an angel of light, radiant in all the pomp of a universal, absolute sovereignty. Again picture the scene. It was as though Satan had said: "I know that thou art Jehovah's Messiah. Sublime is the enterprise that lies before thee; thou shalt be successful. But ages must first roll away; thy kingdom is to be set up in tears and shame and pangs; before thou canst sit on thy throne thou must hang on a cross. Yet this earth and the fullness thereof is thine by promise of thy eternal Father.

The Satanic
 Condition.

Matt. iv, 9.
 Luke iv, 7.

Why, then, postpone the hour of thy triumph? Behold here all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Already they are thine by right of irreversible promise. Compel the world to confess they are thine; seize the sword. Or, if thy gentle heart shrink, use the softer weapons of intellectual resources; see among the kingdoms of the world yonder resplendent Athens, radiant with the trophies of genius; take a lesson from her; choose for thy champions illustrious rabbis, orators whom the people most delight to honor, sages whose words are oracles. Behold imperial Rome, whose heathen eagles even now are insolently fluttering in sacrilegious triumph over thy own holy hill of Zion; uplift among the nations that ensign which Jehovah thy God hath given thee; assert thy rightful supremacy; summon thy angelic legions; ascend the throne of thy father David; and Rome herself, proud mistress of a hundred empires, shall bow in homage before thee, and a loyal world shall kiss Messiah's scepter. Defer not, then, thy holy triumph. All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—all shall be thine to-day, this moment, if thou wilt but acknowledge them as my gift by using my methods; for all this hath been delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." Such, it seems to me, was the real meaning of the temptation of the mountain. The devil tempted Jesus to establish his kingdom as an outward kingdom, and through the use of worldly means. And the establishment of such a kingdom in such a way involved the worship of Satan; for, as we have

seen, Satan is the prince and god of this world, having stamped his seal royal on all its secularities. To set up and carry on Messiah's kingdom on the foundations of worldliness is to fall down and worship in the synagogue of Satan.

Rev. ii, 9.

The Repulse.

Matt. iv, 10.

But the very proposition reveals to Jesus the character of his companion. Hitherto, in the wilderness and on the pinnacle, Satan has seemed an ardent and saintly friend; now on the mountain he unwittingly shows himself in the very character of his own suggestion to be what he really is—a supreme and deadly foe: in fact, the very meaning of the word “Satan” is “Adversary.” And so we pass to note the repulse. Rising in the grand sovereignty of an unconquerable virtue, the Galilean Carpenter strips the mask off the tempter's face, and hurling him from off himself, exclaims, “Begone, adversary! for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” The passage which he substantially cites is still from the book of Deuteronomy, the sixth chapter, the thirteenth verse: “Thou shalt fear Jehovah thy God; and him shalt thou serve.” And, observe, Jesus again conquers in the sphere of humanity. He still keeps himself in the plane of human nature by accepting for himself the command given to ancient Israel, as being himself an Israelite, and so a man. Yes, even the Divine Man himself, not less than any other of the sons of men, must worship the Lord his God, and none other shall he serve. Thus did the devil cast his last desperate die; and thus did the devil lose.

Deut. vi, 13.

Satan's. Tem-
porary Re-
treat.

Luke iv, 13.

“And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season.” And well he might. For he has tried his utmost, and he has lost. Arraying against Jesus all possible enginery of artifice and force, which his own measureless hate and subtlety could conceive, he has been foiled at every step; his elaborate, prolonged, tremendous campaign issuing in utter rout and dismay. No wonder he stoops his crest and flees. But his retreat is only temporary, departing from him for a season. Ere long he will return and re-offer battle, as in Gethsemane and on the cross. But the victor of wilderness, and pinnacle, and mountain, shall then also say: “The prince of the world cometh; and he hath nothing in me.” Meantime Satan has tried his tremendous campaign of the forty days, and the triple temptation; and, having lost the field, flies.

John xiv, 30.

The Angelic
Ministry.

Matt. iv, 11.

“And, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” Verily, Satan uttered a truth, although he meant a lie, when he said to Jesus:

He shall give his angels charge over thee to guard thee:

And on their hands shall they bear thee up,
Lest, haply, thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Heb. i, 14.

Heb. ii, 10.

Well might angels descend to minister unto him who is more than salvation's heir, even salvation's author.

Such is the story of the temptation of Jesus Christ. Reviewing this majestic duel as a whole, observe:

First, the threefold temptation as addressed to man's threefold nature. In the wilderness, Satan appealed to Christ's body or somatic nature, tempting him to substitute loaves for stones; on the pinnacle, Satan appealed to Christ's soul or psychical nature, tempting him to substitute pagantry for obscurity; on the mountain, Satan appealed to Christ's spirit or pneumatic nature, tempting him to substitute force for grace. And so the threefold temptation answers to St. John's threefold characterization of worldliness or sin, to wit: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. And these three are the epitome of all temptations. Thus, did Satan tempt, and thus did Jesus conquer throughout the whole sphere of all possible probation.

Secondly, the typical character of the threefold temptation. Observe how the story of the wilderness, the pinnacle, and the mountain forecasts the story of humanity's great trial.

Take the temptation of the wilderness. Christ's hunger was Satan's vantage-ground. And so it has been ever since. Satan has ever been ready to take advantage of our necessities. Bread is still the question of life. How countless the tragical cases in which men have felt themselves forced to choose between dying of hunger and sinfully turning stones into loaves, between starving and stealing, alike in direct way of literal pilfering, and in indirect way of fraud and legal technicality. This is the thought which has given such tragic power to Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. Now is the very time for Satan to whisper: "The end

The Triple Temptation addressed to Man's Triple Nature.

1 John ii, 16.

Typical Character of the Threefold Temptation.

The Wilderness.

justifies the means." And so our necessities are, in an eminent sense, the occasions of our peril. When, then, we are brought into such frightful stress, what are we to do? Precisely as Jesus did. Say to the tempter: "I will trust my Father; he is faithful, and will not suffer me to be tempted above that I am able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that I may be able to endure it; sooner than let me starve he will rain down manna from heaven; for man doth not live by bread alone; in all events, I will let his stones remain stones." This, then, is the great lesson of the wilderness: Trust God. Presume not to take his scepter into your hands. For stones which you have turned into loaves, God will most surely turn into stones again; and then you will starve indeed. Yea, there is something better than even bread—it is every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. Trust is the vanquisher of Satan.

1 Cor. x, 13.

The Pinnacle.

Again, take the temptation of the pinnacle. Christ's trustfulness was Satan's vantage-ground: "Since thou art God's Son, cast thyself down, for his angels shall bear thee up." And this temptation to temerity has been Satan's policy ever since. To the virtuous man he says: "Be not afraid of exposing thyself to temptation; for thee it is safe to dally with the wine-cup, the immoral book, the skeptical suggestion, for thou art unconquerable in the fortress of thy natural virtues." To the business man he says: "Be not afraid to plunge into venturesome speculation; for thou hast a clear eye, a steady nerve, a rugged will." To the healthy

man he says: "Be not afraid of presuming on the laws of physiology: thou mayest keep unseasonable hours, regale thyself with unwholesome dainties, put to tension thy powers of business, pleasure, study, endeavor; for thou hast a splendid constitution." To the Christian he says: "Be not afraid of launching out on the goodness of God: his grace is sufficient for all things; thou canst safely neglect Sunday-school, prayer-meeting, church, closet; for thou art the heavenly Father's child." And so our very privileges are the occasions of our peril. Grace itself is the pinnacle from which it is most easy to fall into the bottomless abyss. And when Satan thus tempts us, what are we to do? Precisely as Jesus did. Say to the tempter: "I will not presume on my Father's goodness; I will not experiment with his promises; I will not tempt the Lord my God." This, then, is the great lesson of the pinnacle: Our ways are safe only as they are God's ways. Obedience is the vanquisher of Satan.

Once more, take the temptation of the mountain. Christ's Messiahship was Satan's vantage-ground. Accordingly, the devil's suggestion, that the Messiah, in setting up his kingdom, should use worldly appliances and methods, was in some respects the subtlest and stoutest of the temptations. And it is a temptation which ever since has appealed powerfully to Christ's followers. That the Church should be enthroned as the confessed mistress of the world; that she should wield visibly its civic powers, dictating its rulers, and legislations, and policies; that both miter and crown

The Mountain.

should encircle her own brow, so that, where the crozier had failed, the scimiter should not; that emperors should be her chosen patrons and defenders, and her throne be borne in resplendent state on the shoulders of princes—this has always been a favorite dream of many of God's chosen ones. But such a dream has ever led into peril. Would God that the Church had always profited by the story of the mountain. In the secularizing of Christianity by the allying of Church and State; in the smothering of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom by the patronage and championship of political sovereignties; in the soiling of her purity and the fettering of her energies by the selfish and slippery policies of statecraft; in the invoking of the arm of the civil power to maintain and propagate her faith; in the decreeing that nonconformity to her ritual shall be heresy, and liberty of conscience shall be treason; in the opening of parliament chambers to her mitered dignitaries; in the filling of earth's cabinets with her cardinals, and legates, and nuncios; in the enriching her coffers with the levies of her fiefs and the tolls of her imperial lieges; in her cross and keys emblazoned on senate-house and post-office; in the cannonading of her St. Angelo on Easter morning; in brief, in the demanding of legislation in behalf of the Church—in all this we see the devil's victory over the Church at precisely the point where the devil was vanquished by the Church's Master. And as the devil promised to Jesus that he would give him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if he

would but make his own kingdom a worldly kingdom, so the devil has often fulfilled that promise in the case of those who have yielded to his temptation. But his gifts have proved to be satanic gifts indeed. As long as the Church insisted on the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, while as yet her ministers went forth without purse or sword, preaching that kingdom which is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, so long was the Church comparatively pure in doctrine and in practice. But when her success began to arrest the attention of the rulers of this world, and they saw that her influence was to be courted, and when she yielded to their seductive proffers of aid, then a tide of impurity began to set in which, ere long, submerged her in all manner of filth and abomination. The most ominous day the Church ever saw was the day when Constantine the Great, having renounced heathenism, at least in part, proclaimed himself the imperial patron of Christianity and defender of the faith. That alliance of Church and State set back the Church for centuries, and to this day she is reeling beneath the satanic stab she then received. Alas! the devil is still plying the Church with this same temptation of the mountain, turning our opportunities into our perils. And when he thus tempts us, what are we to do? Precisely as Jesus did. Say to the tempter: "I will not go down to Egypt for help, or stay on horses; I will not trust in chariots because they are many, or in horsemen because they are very strong. O Jehovah, my God, it is nothing with

Rom. xiv, 17.

Isaiah xxxi, 1.

2 Chron. xiv, 11.

Psalm lx, 12.

thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no strength; help me, O Lord my God, for I rely on thee, and in thy name I go against this multitude. Through God I shall do valiantly, for he it is who shall tread down my adversaries. I will worship the Lord my God, and him alone will I serve." This, then, is the great lesson of the mountain: It is better to trust in Jehovah than to put confidence in princes. Spirituality is the vanquisher of Satan.

Psalm cxviii, 9.

The Victorious
Jesus our
Inspiration.
Heb. iv, 15.

Thirdly, the victorious Jesus is our exemplar and cheer. In all points tempted like as we are, in all points he also conquered, even as by his strength we also may conquer. For, be it remembered (and the point is of so supreme moment in our study of the temptation of the Divine Man that I must give it the emphasis of iteration), Jesus conquered as a man, winning his victory in the sphere of his human nature. To say that he was tempted as man, but that he conquered as God, is to rob the story of the temptation of its meaning and inspiration. Divine, indeed, he most certainly was, but it was not the Divinity which conquered; what the Divinity did was to give infinite worth to the victory which the humanity had won. Tempted as man, and as man triumphant—this it is which gives to the story of the temptation its moral and its immortal power; this is the inspiring cheer of victory which the Church for eighteen centuries has been echoing back to wilderness and pinnacle and mountain. And observe, also, the simple weapon with which the Son of man conquered; it was the Excalibur of a threefold scriptural citation, drawn from the

armory of the Church's oldest book, the arsenal of the Pentateuch. A simple citation from the Word of Truth vanquishes the father of lies. Enough to say, "It is written," and he will fly. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Deut. vi, 13, 16 ;
viii, 3.

Eph. vi, 17.

Lastly, make peace with the victorious Jesus. He it is, and he only, who is stronger than the strong man fully armed, and can come upon him, and bind him, and take from him his whole armor wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils. Come, then, within the glorious circle of the Divine Man. Fall down and worship him who vanquished Satan. Then shall thy Father also spread a table for thee in the wilderness, and give his angels charge over thee, and from an exceeding high mountain, even a heavenly, thou shalt survey a kingdom and a glory which shall indeed be thine when all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them shall have melted into eternal space. Listen then to the Divine Man: "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne."

A Personal
Appeal.

Luke xi, 21, 22.

Rev. iii, 21.

O God, merciful Father, who despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as are sorrowful; Mercifully assist our prayers which we make before thee in all our troubles and adversities, whensoever they oppress us; and graciously hear us, that those evils which the craft and subtilty of the devil or man worketh against us, may, by thy good providence, be brought to nought; that we thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto thee in thy holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect.

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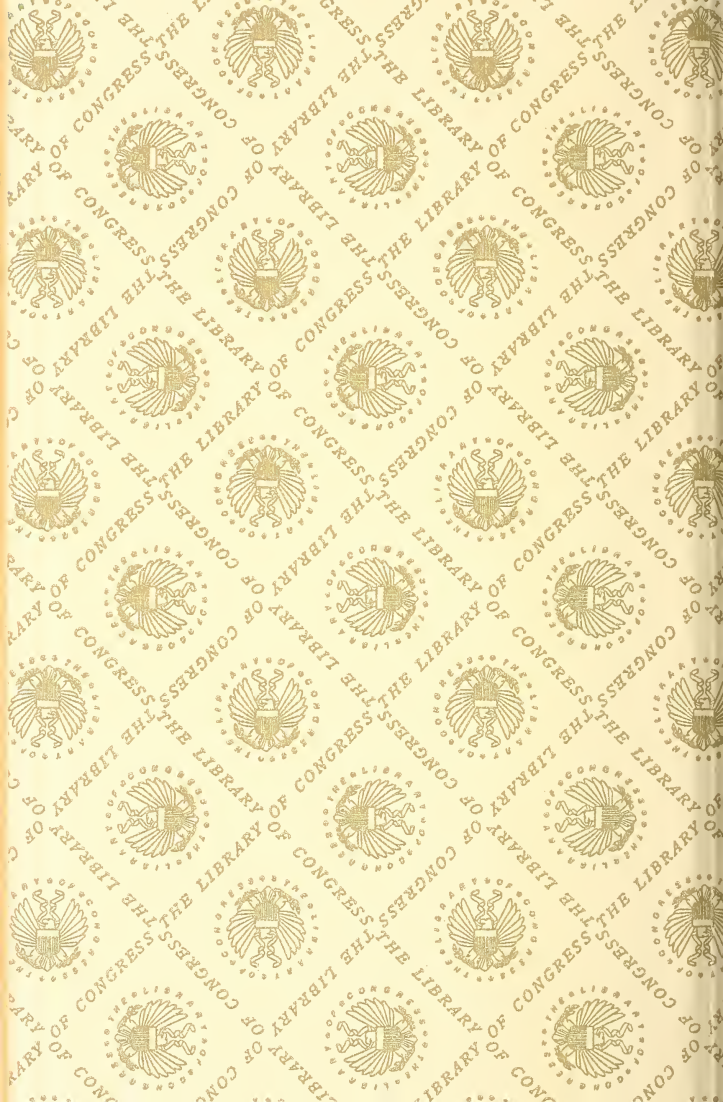
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