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THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE
CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORISED ECONOMY STANDARDS

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Man His Own Master, etc.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIAN ORIGINS: THE DOCUMENTS

THE principles of criticism applied to the Old Testament apply with equal force to the New. An estimate of the historical value of any book must depend in the first instance on the view taken of its date and authorship. Before attempting, therefore, to use the books of the New Testament as historical authorities, it is necessary to review the traditional authorship of those books and to see how far it is supported by external and internal evidence.

The four canonical Gospels are attributed by Christian tradition to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The names of Matthew and John occur in the lists of the twelve apostles of Jesus given in the first three Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles. Mark and Luke are not apostles; but Mark is named in the Acts and in four Epistles as a companion of Peter and Paul; and Luke figures in three Epistles as a companion of Paul. Only two of our Gospels, therefore, are ascribed even by tradition to eye-witnesses of the events which they relate. It should further be noted that our Gospels themselves do not name their authors, and that the only passage in any of them which attributes its authorship to an eye-witness (John xxi, 24) occurs in an appendix added to the Gospel by another hand. The earliest author who names Gospel writers of any sort is Papias (about 140 A.D.), of whose works we possess only a few fragments quoted by Eusebius.

According to him, Mark, who "neither heard the Lord nor followed him," but was an "interpreter of Peter," recorded the sayings and doings of Christ in a work usually identified by critics with our second Gospel; while "Matthew compiled the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each man interpreted them as he was able"—a description irreconcilable with Matthew's authorship of our first Gospel. All our canonical Gospels were written in Greek, and, where they quote the Old Testament, generally use the Greek, not the Hebrew text. The earliest writer who names all four evangelists is Irenæus (about 180). The traditional authorship, therefore, is attested by no evidence earlier than the first half of the second century for Mark, and the second half of the same century for the others; while in the case of Matthew the earliest external evidence militates against, not for, his authorship of the Gospel which bears his name.

Anyone reading the Gospels attentively is soon struck by manifest differences in matter and style between the first three Gospels and the fourth. For this reason it is usual to deal with the first three (commonly called the Synoptic Gospels) together, reserving the fourth for separate treatment. Careful study of the Synoptic Gospels reveals the fact that the three contain a large quantity of matter in common, the similarity often amounting to verbatim agreement in whole phrases and sentences, and suggesting dependence on a common document. The matter common to all three Synoptists is known as "the triple tradition." In addition to this, Matthew and Luke have in common a considerable amount of

matter not found in Mark.[1] Here, again, the similarity often extends to verbatim agreement in whole phrases and sentences. The document from which this matter is taken is called by critics " Q " (German *Quelle*, " source "). Matthew and Mark have in common certain matter not found in Luke; but there is very little common to Mark and Luke which is not found in Matthew. Finally, each Synoptist has matter peculiar to himself, the peculiarities often amounting to irreconcilable discrepancy. From this analysis it is plain that the Synoptic Gospels are composite works, in which the different strata are not necessarily of the same date, value, or importance.

Let us first examine the triple tradition common to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This begins with the appearance of John the Baptist in the desert, preaching repentance and predicting the advent of a mightier than himself. He baptises Jesus; and a voice from heaven proclaims Jesus to be the beloved Son of God. The temptation of Jesus by Satan is briefly referred to. Jesus proceeds to Galilee and begins to teach as one having authority. He works miraculous cures (Peter's mother-in-law, a leper, and a paralytic), and offends the scribes by claiming power, as the " Son of Man," to forgive sins. He converts a tax-collector (called Matthew in the first Gospel, Levi in the second and third) and meets the reproach of the Pharisees with the saying: " They that are strong have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." This is followed by the dispute with the disciples of John and the

[1] To avoid circumlocution, the names " Matthew," " Mark," " Luke," and " John " are used to denote the authors of the Gospels, except in contexts where it is necessary to distinguish the real from the traditional authors.

Pharisees about fasting, the saying about putting new wine into new wine-skins, and the plucking of ears of corn on the sabbath day, leading up to the claim that "the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath," and the miraculous cure of a withered hand, also on the sabbath. The twelve apostles are appointed with authority to cast out devils.[1] The opponents of Jesus accuse him of casting out devils by the aid of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Jesus refuses to see his mother and brothers, saying that his disciples are his true family. The parable of the sower and some other short sayings follow. Next come the miracles of the stilling of the storm on the lake, the bedevilment of the pigs, the healing of an issue of blood, and the raising from the dead of the daughter of a ruler. The twelve are then sent on a healing mission. Herod Antipas hears of Jesus and supposes him to be John the Baptist risen from the dead. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand follows. Jesus asks his disciples whom they think him to be. Peter answers: "The Christ." Jesus foretells his death at the hands of the chief priests and scribes, and his resurrection on the third day, and adds: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." He predicts that some of those who stand there will not die till they see the kingdom of God. Next follows the transfiguration of Jesus; and another voice from heaven declares him to be the Son of God. The miraculous cure of an epileptic follows.

[1] In primitive societies all disease which has no known material cause is attributed to possession by a god, demon, or spirit of the dead. Among the masses of the Græco-Roman world lunacy, epilepsy, and hysteria were still so regarded. See Thomson, *Æschylus and Athens*, pp. 373–377.

Jesus again foretells his death. His disciples wish to know who of them is the greatest, and are answered by the acted parable of the little child, and by the declaration that the kingdom of God consists of such. A rich man asking for guidance is told to sell all that he has, give to the poor, and follow Jesus. A third prediction of death and resurrection follows. A blind man is miraculously cured at Jericho. Jesus enters Jerusalem in triumph, acclaimed as " he that cometh in the name of the Lord." He expels the traders from the temple, and when asked by what authority he does so, turns the question. Next follow the parable of the wicked husbandmen, and disputes on various subjects with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus foretells to his disciples the destruction of the temple and the coming of the Son of Man " with power and great glory " before the present generation has passed away. Then follow the betrayal of Jesus to the chief priests by Judas Iscariot, the last passover with the disciples, the arrest, the denial of Jesus by Peter, the trial before Pilate, the crucifixion of Jesus as " king of the Jews," the three hours' darkness, the rending of the veil of the temple, and the burial of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathæa. The triple tradition ends with the discovery of the empty tomb and an angelic announcement of the resurrection of Jesus. At that point Mark ends abruptly (xvi, 9–20, is a late addition), and Matthew and Luke become completely divergent from one another.

The document on which the triple tradition is based can be dated pretty accurately. It was clearly written after the destruction of the temple by Titus in A.D. 70, since it contains a " prophecy " of that event; and it

was almost certainly written after 75. In that year the spoils of Jerusalem, including the curtain of the temple, were exhibited in public at Rome. A rent in the curtain, made by the Roman soldiers who tore it from the door of the temple, in all probability gave rise in the Roman Church to the legend that it had been rent at the crucifixion.[1] On the other hand the document cannot be much later than this, since it prophesies the return of Jesus in the lifetime of the generation that knew him. Its date therefore is about 75–80, and its place of origin almost certainly Rome.

Let us now turn to the " double traditions " common to two only out of the three Synoptists. The matter, over and above the triple tradition, common to Matthew and Mark includes the calling by Jesus of his first four disciples on the shore of the lake of Galilee; the rejection of Jesus in his native town; the execution of John the Baptist; the miracle of Jesus walking on the water; the dispute with the Pharisees on ceremonial washing; the cure of the daughter of a Phœnician woman; the feeding of the four thousand; the identification by Jesus of John the Baptist with Elijah; the dispute with the Pharisees on divorce; the reply of Jesus to the sons of Zebedee respecting their place in the Messianic kingdom; the curse on the barren fig tree; the anointing of Jesus by a woman in the house of Simon the leper; the prediction that one of the twelve will betray him and the rest forsake him; the nocturnal trial before the high priest; the mockery of Jesus by the soldiers before crucifixion;

[1] Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*, p. 147. In reality the curtain was changed every year; but Christians did not know that.

the mockery of Jesus on the cross by the bystanders and the crucified robbers; the cry, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? " and the announcement by the angel that the disciples will see the risen Jesus in Galilee.

This matter occurs in Matthew and Mark, but is either omitted or greatly altered in Luke. In many cases Luke seems deliberately to deviate from older tradition—e.g., in Matthew and Mark Jesus calls his first four disciples while walking by the lake of Galilee (Matt. iv, 18–22; Mark i, 16–20). In Luke the call of the four takes place afloat after a miraculous catch of fish (v, 1–11). Matthew and Mark relate the rejection of Jesus in his own town briefly and without naming Nazareth (Matt. xiii, 53–58; Mark vi, 1–6). Luke antedates the incident, names Nazareth, and introduces a sermon of Jesus, an attempt on his life, and a miraculous escape (iv, 16–30). It should be mentioned in this connection that no such town as Nazareth is named in the Old Testament, in Josephus, or in the Talmud. As the oldest strata of the Gospels are also ignorant of the name, it is probable that it originated from a misunderstanding of the name of the " Nazarene " sect by writers unacquainted with Palestine. The story of the barren fig tree (Matt. xxi, 18–22; Mark xi, 12–14, 20–24) is omitted by Luke, who inserts, however, a parable on a similar subject (xiii, 6–9). The anointing of Jesus in the house of Simon the leper (Matt. xxvi, 6–13; Mark xiv, 3–9) is antedated by Luke, placed in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and given a different moral (vii, 36–50). The nocturnal trial of Jesus (Matt. xxvi, 57–68; Mark xiv, 53–65) is postponed by Luke till daylight (xxii,

66–71). Matthew and Mark relate that the robbers crucified with Jesus reproached him (Matt. xxvii, 44; Mark xv, 32); Luke makes one of them rebuke the railing of the other (xxiii, 39–43). The cry of despair (Matt. xxvii, 46; Mark xv, 34) is altered by Luke to "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (xxiii, 46). A majority of critics consider that Luke knew of the matter common to Matthew and Mark, but treated it in accordance with his preconceptions. This would account for the miraculous embellishment of the first two stories, the suppression of the curse on the fig tree, and the alteration of the stories of the anointing, the two robbers, and the cry from the cross. The possibility cannot, however, be excluded that some of the matter peculiar to Matthew and Mark was added to the story later than Luke.

The amount of material found in Mark and Luke, but not in Matthew, is very small. It comprises only an exorcism at Capernaum; the retirement of Jesus to a desert place after healing; the rebuke to John the apostle for forbidding exorcism in the name of Jesus by a stranger; and the episode of the widow's mite. As there is no reason why Matthew should have excluded these particulars, the presumption is that he did not know them.

Much more extensive and important is the "double tradition" common to Matthew and Luke (Q). This consists almost entirely of discourse.[1] It opens with an address of John the Baptist on repentance. Then comes an account of the temptation of Jesus by the

[1] In summarizing Q I have followed the order in Matthew. The order in Luke is different, but the phraseology establishes the identity of the source.

devil (the order of the temptations, however, is different in the two Gospels). Included in Q are the beatitudes on the poor, the hungry, and the persecuted; the declaration that no tittle of the law shall pass away; the injunction to be reconciled to adversaries, to love enemies, to give to him that asks, etc.; the Lord's Prayer (with slight variations in Matthew and Luke); the command not to be anxious for food or raiment, with the accompanying saying about the birds and lilies; the command not to judge, with the accompanying saying about the mote and the beam; the saying, "Ask, and it shall be given you," etc.; the "golden rule," "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them";[1] and the parable of the house built on the rock. Matthew collects these sayings into one discourse, the so-called Sermon on the Mount; Luke distributes them in different contexts. The story of the centurion at Capernaum, related with certain variations in Matthew and Luke, is, except the temptation story, the only piece of narrative in Q. Then come a number of short, miscellaneous sayings; and then the message of John the Baptist, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" and the reply of Jesus: "Go your way and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them," with the eulogy on the Baptist which follows. Then a prophecy of woe to

[1] The rule had been given by Hillel and the author of the Book of Tobit in the negative form, "What thou thyself hatest, do to no man." The Gospel rule is often commended as an advance on this. The practical difference, however, has been much exaggerated. The one clearly implies the other.

Galilean towns which have rejected Jesus, and a declaration by Jesus of his unique relationship to God. Then the sayings, " He that is not with me is against me," " The tree is known by its fruit," and " Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," with applications. Then a refusal by Jesus to give any sign " but the sign of Jonah " (i.e., the effect of his preaching); and the saying about the last state of a demoniac being liable to be worse than the first. Then the declaration that many prophets have desired in vain to see and hear what the disciples of Jesus see and hear. A parable likening the kingdom of God to leaven; a denunciation of the man through whom occasion to stumble comes; the parable of the lost sheep; a promise that the apostles shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; the parable of the wedding feast (with some variations in Matthew and Luke); an attack on the scribes and Pharisees for hypocrisy; the saying, " Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted "; a prophecy that all the righteous blood shed on earth from Abel to Zachariah, " whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar," will be required of the existing generation; a lamentation over Jerusalem; a comparison of the advent of the Son of Man to lightning, and to the flood in the days of Noah; the saying, " Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together "; and finally two or three parables on eschatological themes, which, though varying a good deal in Matthew and Luke, have obviously a common origin, complete the " double tradition."

The reference to the murder of Zachariah has long

puzzled commentators. In Matt. xxiii, 35, he is called " son of Barachiah." But the person intended cannot be Zechariah, son of Berechiah, the prophet; for there is no record that he was murdered. He is usually identified with Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, whose murder in the court of the temple is related in 2 Chron. xxiv, 21. But this Zechariah died eight hundred years before the Christian era, whereas the Zachariah of the Gospels is plainly contrasted, as the *last* righteous martyr, with Abel as the *first*. Now we know from Josephus that one Zachariah, son of Baruch, was murdered by Zealots " in the midst of the temple " during the final struggle with Rome (A.D. 68). The passage in the Gospels is probably an anachronistic reference to that event. This allusion, the woe pronounced on the cities of Galilee (subdued by the Romans under Vespasian in 67), the lamentation over Jerusalem and the reference to the Roman eagles enable us with a high degree of probability to date Q round about A.D. 70 and to locate its origin in or near Palestine.

Whatever the authorship of Q, the question of its historical value cannot be separated from that of its relation to other early writings. One of these, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, discovered in 1883, is a Christian amplification of a manual of instruction current among Jews of the dispersion in the first century. The present title is of course Christian: that of the original Jewish work seems to have been *The Two Ways*. Competent scholars date the Jewish groundwork before A.D. 90 and the Christian amplification between that date and 160. In the first six chapters, which contain the groundwork, Jesus is

nowhere mentioned, but there are passages which agree closely, though not word for word, with the Sermon on the Mount, e.g.:—

> " Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for them that persecute you; for what thanks have ye if ye love them that love you? Do not the nations also the same? . . . If anyone give thee a blow on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect; if anyone compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain; if anyone take thy cloak, give him thy tunic also; if anyone take from thee what is thine, ask it not back; for indeed thou canst not. To everyone that asketh thee give, and ask not back; for to all the Father desireth to have given of his own free gifts."

The seventh and following chapters are in strong contrast to the first six and introduce distinctively Christian ritual and doctrine. The question arises whether such passages as that quoted above were interpolated into *The Two Ways* by a Christian acquainted with Q, or whether on the contrary Q borrowed them from *The Two Ways* and fathered them on Jesus. The fact that a Latin version of *The Two Ways*, first published in full in 1900, is without the disputed passages, and that early authorities who use the work ignore them, suggests that they are interpolations by someone who had a variant of Q before him.[1] But though Q does not appear to have borrowed from *The Two Ways*, he undoubtedly borrows from other Jewish sources. A sentence in *The Testa-*

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 13th edition, article *Didache*. For the other view see J. M. Robertson, *The Jesus Problem*, pp. 132–135.

ments of the Twelve Patriarchs (109–106 B.C.): "If any man sin against thee . . . speak to him peaceably . . . and if he confess and repent, forgive him," is plainly the original of Matt. xviii, 15: "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother," and Luke xvii, 3: "If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." The Lord's Prayer is a cento of petitions compiled from different Jewish prayers.

This mass of material common to Matthew and Luke, and consisting of discourses so important that many people, who do not read the Gospels carefully, think that they are the whole of Christ's teaching, is totally absent from Mark. Of all three Synoptists Mark contains the least amount of matter peculiar to himself. So small, indeed, is it that modern scholars almost unanimously consider his Gospel to be the oldest, and the other Synoptists to have used either our Mark, or more probably an earlier edition of Mark, as the nucleus of their Gospels. We have seen reason for holding that the matter common to all three Synoptists was committed to writing at Rome about 75–80. We may regard this matter (together with some, at least, of the matter common to Matthew and Mark, but omitted by Luke) as forming the original Mark, and our second Gospel as having arisen from it by accretion during the next half century or more. This makes it the more strange that no one should have incorporated in Mark the discourses embodied in Q.

The fact becomes explicable only when we realize that Q and Mark represent two different and in some

respects opposed traditions. Q is a more radical, but essentially Jewish development of the old Pharisaism of the synagogue. "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law. . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. . . . Everyone that heareth my words, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock." Miracles occur, but occupy a secondary place. The main thing is that "the poor have good tidings preached to them." The Pharisees are bitterly attacked, but only for not acting up to their principles. It is not suggested that their principles are wrong. On the contrary: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith: but these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone."

Mark is also concerned with "the kingdom of God"; but in his Gospel the phrase connotes first and foremost redemption from death. The Jesus of Mark is the supreme wonder-worker—healer, exorcist, stiller of storms, and raiser of the dead. His ministrations extend not only to Jews, but to Greeks of Decapolis and to Phœnicians. We are told very little of his teaching, except that Jewish sabbatarian and dietary rules are abrogated outright. "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath. . . . There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. . . . This he said, making all meats clean." Except where it is necessary to introduce it in order to attack the Jews, Mark is not

interested in the teaching of Jesus, but in his miracles, death, and resurrection. Six of his sixteen chapters are devoted to the story of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the betrayal, the crucifixion, and the empty tomb. In sharp contrast to Q, the second Gospel is thoroughly anti-Jewish. Not only are Jewish observances attacked, but the family of Jesus are repudiated. "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Jesus, so far as he is human, is in Mark merely the instrument of the Christ-spirit which descends on him at his baptism, invests him with superhuman power, and abandons him on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was the favourite Gospel of the Docetists, who regarded the bodily life of Jesus as unreal: possibly the original Mark was a Docetist. The twelve apostles are represented as stupid and cowardly, seldom understanding what Jesus says, and finally running for their lives, while Peter denies his Lord. If Mark, the "interpreter of Peter," wrote this Gospel or its first edition, he must have had a grudge against his employer!

The two antithetical tendencies represented by Q and Mark, one Jewish, the other anti-Jewish and Gnostic, play a central part in the history of early Christianity. It should by now be obvious that no "life" of Jesus can be based on such sources as these. The Gospel narratives are no more the biography of a man than are the Old Testament narratives of Elijah and Elisha. They are wish-fulfilling myths springing from the twin roots of Jewish Messianism and the Gnostic dream of a conquest of the last enemy, death.

The name Jesus is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew Joshua or Jeshua. It would be entirely natural for some Messianists to expect Joshua, the hero who had once led Israel into the promised land, to reappear as the Messiah who would free his people from oppression. A Sibylline Oracle circulated about A.D. 80 explicitly identifies the Joshua of the Old Testament with the crucified Jesus:—

> " Then shall one come again from heaven, an excellent hero,
> He who stretched his hands on a tree of beautiful fruitage,
> Best of the Hebrews all, who stayed the sun in his course once,
> Bidding him stay with words that were fair and lips that were holy."

Joshua in the Old Testament is the son of Nun, which in Hebrew means " fish "; and it is significant that the fish was an early Christian symbol for Jesus.

The worship of a saviour-god who died and rose from the dead is of immemorial antiquity. It had its origin in the magic ritual by which prehistoric man sought to promote the annual revival of vegetable life. Such were the cults of Osiris in Egypt, Attis in Asia Minor, and Dionysus in Greece. As slavery developed, as urban life advanced, as the peasantry were uprooted from the soil, these cults lost their original significance and became associated with the idea of individual survival after death. The worship of Jesus Christ, the conqueror of death, which arose on the fringes of the Jewish dispersion in the first century A.D., is too like the others not to suggest a common origin.

But when this is fully conceded, there remain embedded in the Gospel myth traces of something more than a myth. The records of the New Testament have reached us after careful editing. From the second century on the Christian Church aspired to convert the Roman Empire. If, therefore, we find in the records matter which, so far from assisting that purpose, was calculated to thwart it, we may assume such matter to be part and parcel of a primitive tradition not fabricated by the Church, but preserved because it could not be suppressed. Such is the saying in Q: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force." We know from Josephus that Antipas executed the Baptist through fear that his preaching would lead to rebellion. Read in the light of this, the Gospel saying can only indicate that the first Christians remembered John as the initiator of a revolutionary movement which still continued. It is significant that, while Matt. xi, 12, gives the saying as above, Luke, who consistently conciliates the Romans, changes "suffereth violence" to "is preached" (xvi, 16). Take, again, Mark's introduction of the Barabbas story. "There was one called Barabbas, lying bound with the insurgents (*ton stasiaston*), men who in the insurrection (*en te stasei*) had committed murder" (xv, 7). What insurrection? Mark has not mentioned one. Yet he uses the definite article twice in referring to it. In Matthew and Luke the definite article disappears. It is in such passages that traces of real history are to be sought.[1]

It remains to consider those parts of the Synoptic

[1] Eisler, *op. cit.*, pp. 264, 472–476.

Gospels which are peculiar respectively to Matthew and Luke. These are, first, the genealogies and narratives of the nativity and infancy of Jesus. The genealogies appear to have been invented in order to answer those Jews who argued that the Messiah must be descended from David. Mark, who is not interested in the family of Jesus, tries to meet the objection by rebutting the premise. "How say the scribes that the Christ is the son of David? . . . David himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he his son?" (xii, 35–37). The other two Synoptists meet it by providing a pedigree; but each provides a different one, and each pedigree is stultified by a narrative according to which Joseph, through whom the pedigree is traced, is not the father of Jesus at all.[1] In each Gospel the genealogy has been manipulated at the crucial point in order to fit in with the story—imported later under Gentile influence—of the virgin birth. In Matt. i, 16, one MS. (the Sinaitic Palimpsest) reads "Jacob begat Joseph; *Joseph, to whom was espoused Mary the virgin, begat* Jesus, who is called the Christ." But in most MSS. this has been altered to: "Jacob begat Joseph *the husband of Mary, of whom was born* Jesus, who is called Christ"—which makes nonsense of the genealogy. There is similar evidence of tinkering in Luke iii, 23.

The accounts of the nativity and infancy of Jesus in Matthew and Luke are hopelessly contradictory. In Matthew, Joseph and Mary live at Bethlehem, take Jesus to Egypt to escape the murderous intentions of Herod, and after Herod's death (4 B.C.) settle at

[1] The references to the virgin birth are probably interpolations. See Chapter XI.

Nazareth to escape his son Archelaus. In Luke, we hear nothing of Herod's designs, of the flight into Egypt, or of Archelaus. Joseph and Mary normally live at Nazareth, visit Bethlehem only in consequence of the census taken by Quirinius, governor of Syria (A.D. 6–7), and return to Nazareth a few weeks after the nativity. Luke is under the erroneous impression that for the purpose of a Roman census every man had to proceed, family and all, to the home of his ancestors. Such a chaotic procedure no more existed in the Roman Empire than in the British. The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is never mentioned again in the New Testament. In fact the Fourth Gospel (vii, 41–42) makes the Jews reject the Messianic claims of Jesus because he was *not* born at Bethlehem. Probably the Bethlehem story was invented in order to answer such objections. As the Fourth Gospel ignores the story, its origin, and therefore the completion of Matthew and Luke, cannot be placed earlier than the first quarter of the second century.

Other matter peculiar to Matthew includes many quotations of Old Testament prophecy said to be fulfilled in Jesus; large sections of the Sermon on the Mount; a miraculous cure of two blind men; parts of the charge of Jesus to the twelve apostles; the saying which begins, " Come unto me, all ye that labour "; the use of Jonah in the whale's belly as a type of the death and resurrection of Jesus; the parables of the tares, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, and the drag-net; the episode of Peter walking on the water; the endowment of Peter with the power of " the keys "; the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth; directions for dealing with an impenitent

"brother"; the parable of the two debtors; the saying about those who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heaven's sake; the parables of the labourers in the vineyard, and of the two sons; parts of the invective against the scribes and Pharisees; the parables of the ten virgins, and of the sheep and the goats; the suicide of Judas Iscariot; the dream of Pilate's wife; the imprecation of the Jews: "His blood be on us, and on our children"; the earthquake at the death of Jesus, and the resurrection of the "saints"; the guard set at the tomb of Jesus; the descent of the angel at the resurrection; the bribery of the guard; and the appearance of the risen Jesus to the women at the tomb and to the apostles in Galilee.

Many of the discourses and parables preserved by Matthew alone may have been originally in Q and may have been omitted by Luke on account of their Jewish tendency. Other features—e.g., the miracle of the coin, the legends of Judas and Pilate's wife, the various portents accompanying the crucifixion and resurrection, and the story of the guard at the sepulchre—bear the stamp of embroidery added in order to round off the story, to meet an insatiable demand for the miraculous, or to answer Jewish objections.

Some of the peculiarities of Luke have already been mentioned in dealing with Matthew and Mark. In addition, these include the dating of the appearance of the Baptist in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (A.D. 28–29); advice of the Baptist to various classes of men; a statement of Jesus's age when he began his ministry; woes pronounced on the rich; the miracle of Nain; a notice of Mary Magdalene and other women disciples of Jesus; the rebuke to James and

John for proposing to call down fire on a Samaritan village; the mission of the seventy; the parable of the good Samaritan; the incident of Mary and Martha; the parables of the importunate friend, the rich fool, and the servants watching for their lord; a reference to the slaughter of certain Galileans by Pilate; the cures of a crippled woman and a dropsical man on the sabbath; a reply to a warning by Pharisees against Antipas; a rebuke to those who choose the chief seats at a feast; the parables of the builder, the two kings, the silver piece, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, Dives and Lazarus, and the unprofitable servants; the story of the ten lepers; the parables of the unjust judge, and of the Pharisee and the tax-collector; the episode of Zacchaeus; and a number of short, miscellaneous sayings which we need not enumerate. In the account of the last supper, trial, and crucifixion Luke diverges more and more from the other Synoptists. His narrative of the appearances of the risen Jesus is entirely his own.

Luke writes better Greek than Matthew or Mark, is more of a literary artist, and, as we have seen, handles his material with considerable freedom. In spite of his use of Q, he is anti-Jewish and loses no opportunity of portraying Roman centurions, tax-collectors, and Samaritans sympathetically. Whether this Gospel and its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, were actually written by Luke the physician, a companion of Paul, is a disputed question. We have seen reason for dating the Gospel not earlier than the first quarter of the second century. The traditional authorship is chronologically possible only if we assume that Luke knew Paul in early youth (A.D. 50–64) and wrote the

Gospel and Acts at the age of seventy or eighty (100–115). The obviously unfinished state of the Acts fits in with the latter assumption. Some scholars further infer from the use of medical terms in both books that the author was a physician, and use that argument to support the Lucan authorship. But would anyone trained in Hippocratic medicine, which cast aside superstition and recognized disease as governed by natural laws, have shared, as the third evangelist does, the primitive beliefs of the masses on demoniac possession and exorcism?

On turning to the fourth Gospel we enter a totally different atmosphere. At the very outset we are plunged into metaphysics. The word or reason (*logos*) of God, which was from the beginning and by which all things were made (a personification derived through Philo from Greek philosophy), becomes flesh. This is effected not by a supernatural birth, of which the fourth Gospel says nothing, but by a direct descent of the "spirit" or breath of God on Jesus. On the strength of the testimony of John the Baptist that he has seen the spirit descending on him, Jesus gathers a few disciples, and immediately manifests his divinity by the miracle of Cana. There are few features in common between this Gospel and the Synoptists; and even those few exhibit remarkable variations. Q, with his Jewish message of the kingdom of God on earth, is severely left alone. The Marcan idea of the conquest of death is taken up, purged of popular demonology, and provided with a metaphysical background. By far the greater part of the Fourth Gospel consists of arguments and harangues, indistinguishable in style from the reflections of the author himself, in

which Jesus insists that he is the only-begotten Son of God, come to bestow eternal life on all who will believe in him; and of miracles worked expressly to prove his claim, culminating in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. There are no exorcisms. The author evidently does not share the popular belief in possession: the only references to it are by hostile Jews who say that Jesus has a devil. Throughout the work Jesus behaves as a deity free from human limitations, knowing everything, foreseeing everything, and submitting to indignity and death only because he chooses to do so. After crucifixion and burial he rises again by his own power, breathes his spirit into his disciples, and returns to God who sent him.

Alone among our Gospels, the Fourth professes to depend on the authority of an eye-witness—an unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved." Chapter xxi, which is by a later hand than the rest of the Gospel, identifies this eye-witness with the author. Irenæus (180) identifies eye-witness and author with "John, the disciple of the Lord." Subsequent Christian tradition has assumed this John to be the son of Zebedee enumerated among the apostles in the Synoptic Gospels. This flimsy chain of identifications, the sole evidence for the traditional authorship of the Fourth Gospel, has been abandoned by most modern scholars. The author nowhere identifies himself with the beloved disciple or with John the son of Zebedee. The invocation of an unnamed disciple as a witness to the truth of the story, like the chronological and other details which occur from time to time in its course, can only be a literary device intended to give an air of reality to a religious fiction. Had a

real eye-witness been in question, it would have been easy to name him. The author is an educated man, a considerable literary artist, steeped in Alexandrian philosophy and, if a Jew by birth, singularly detached from the traditions and hopes of his people. He is everything, in short, that a Galilean fisherman was not. Moreover it is practically certain that the John intended by Irenæus was not the son of Zebedee, but an " elder " or presbyter of the same name who lived in Asia Minor in the reign of Trajan (98–117) and is mentioned by Papias (140) as one of his authorities. Many critics hold that John the Elder wrote the Fourth Gospel; and the view is at any rate consistent with the evidence and the probable date of the book. The fact that both Papias and Irenæus call this John a " disciple of the Lord " may be due simply to a mistaken identification of him with the beloved disciple on the strength of chapter xxi.[1]

The result of criticisms of the Gospels is, then, to establish beyond cavil that not one of them is the work of an eye-witness of the events which it purports to record. Our present Matthew is the work of an unknown compiler who in the first quarter of the second century put together a Gospel out of materials of which the earliest (Q) dates round about 70 and the next earliest (the original Mark) about 75–80. The original Mark may conceivably, though doubtfully,

[1] For a fuller, but highly speculative treatment of the subject see Eisler, *The Enigma of the Fourth Gospel*. Eusebius, who gives extracts from Papias about Matthew and Mark, gives none about the Fourth Gospel. Some have inferred that Papias did not know it. But if Papias attributed the Gospel to John the Elder, Eusebius, who accepted it as apostolic, had strong reasons for his silence.

have been the work of its traditional author; but if we accept the tradition, we must also accept the statement of Papias, who gives it, that Mark was not a disciple of Jesus. Our present Mark grew out of that original by accretion between 75 and 125 or even later. The third evangelist compiled his Gospel in the first quarter of the second century out of similar materials to those used by the first. Whether he is identical or not with Luke the physician (and there are difficulties in the identification), he does not even pretend to be a first-hand narrator. The fourth evangelist was neither an apostle nor an eye-witness, and belongs, like the first and third, to the early part of the second century.

The other books of the New Testament will be dealt with in their historical context. We must say something here, however, on the authenticity and evidential value of the Pauline Epistles. Of the fourteen traditionally attributed to Paul, one (the Epistle to the Hebrews) does not even profess to be his, and is set aside by the common consent of scholars. The authenticity of the remaining thirteen went unquestioned until about the end of the eighteenth century. Since then criticism has been busy. The Pastoral Epistles (i.e., those to Timothy and Titus) are generally rejected; and to-day there is a school of critics who deny the existence of any genuine writings of Paul.[1] It is argued that the Acts of the Apostles (early second century) nowhere mention any epistles of Paul, and ascribe to him a doctrine and practice at variance with

[1] Van Manen, *Encyclopædia Biblica*, articles *Paul*, *Philemon*, *Philippians*, and *Romans*. Whittaker, *Priests, Philosophers, and Prophets*, pp. 184–190.

those inculcated in the Epistles; that the first known collection of Pauline Epistles was made by the heretic Marcion about A.D. 140; that Justin (150) ignores Paul; and that Tertullian (early third century), though accepting and using Paul, calls him "the apostle of the heretics." As regards internal evidence, it is argued that the Epistles as we have them are not letters, but exhortations in epistolary form intended for reading in church (1 Corinthians, for example, is addressed not only to the Corinthian church, but to "all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place"); that Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians are each a patchwork put together from different sources;[1] that since quotations from the Old Testament are made in the Epistles from the Greek text, even where it differs from the Hebrew, the statement in Phil. iii, 5, that the author was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (i.e. a Palestinian Jew), must be rejected; and that the Epistles could not have been written by anyone with a rabbinical training. These arguments have force; but the conclusion drawn from them is too drastic. Such a passage, for example, as 1 Thess. iv, 15–17, in which Paul includes himself among those who will live till "the coming of the Lord," can hardly have been forged after the apostle's death.

A middle view, based on a painstaking analysis of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians,[2] sees in those Epistles composite works embodying strata of

[1] The patchwork character of Romans is evident from the fact that the Epistle has no less than four conclusions—xi, 33–36; xv, 33; xvi, 20; and xvi, 25–27.

[2] Rylands, *A Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles.*

different authorship, date, and tendency, some going back to the first century, others definitely of the second. According to this view, the oldest Pauline writer, who may very well be Paul himself, is an author with an easy, flowing style, preoccupied with the moral failure of mankind and preaching regeneration through mystic union with Christ. Specimens of his writing are found in Rom. i, 18–ii; most of vi and viii; and most of 1 Cor. ii and xii.

A second writer is represented in Rom. xii–xiii, a third in 2 Cor. iv–vi, 10, and a fourth in 1 Cor. v and vii–viii. These sections are distinguishable from one another by differences of style, but are all earlier than A.D. 70 and originally formed part of genuine epistles by different authors. After 70 another writer, shocked by the recent Jewish catastrophe, added most of Rom. ix–xi. The same hand is responsible for 1 Cor. x, 1–22, and 2 Cor. vi, 11–vii, 1. This writer is fond of rhetorical questions and quotations from the Old Testament, and has other marked mannerisms. He is not Paul, but a junior contemporary who after his death took upon himself to combine fragments of his and other writings, and to amplify them in the light of later developments with a view to congregational reading.

Another writer, in order to magnify the authority of Paul and disparage the Palestinian apostles who preached "another Jesus" and "another gospel," composed 2 Cor. x–xii and most of Gal. i–ii and iv.

Apart from differences of style, the attitude to Judaism adopted in Galatians—viz., that observance of the Jewish law is useless and unavailing—is hard to reconcile with that adopted in Rom. ii—viz. that

" God will render to every man according to his works," and that " circumcision profiteth if thou be a doer of the law: but if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision."

The foregoing sections, though not all by Paul, are at any rate all of the first century. They tell us nothing of a human Jesus. In their indifference to his supposed teaching, in their concentration on his death and resurrection, and in their disparagement of the Palestinian apostles they show affinity with Mark. But they tell no story. The " Christ Jesus " whom they preach is a wholly ideal being—a saviour-god by union with whom men inherit eternal life.

Early in the second century these Epistles were edited and amplified with a view to use in the united Catholic Church. The editor's style—harsh, jerky, full of rhetorical questions and quibbles—may be studied in Rom. iii–v; vii, 7–25; ix, 14–24 and 30–33; xi, 1–12; most of 1 Cor. vi, ix, and xiv; and most of Gal. iii.

It is this writer who introduces the doctrines of predestination, vicarious atonement, and justification by faith (usually regarded as typically Pauline), prohibits resort to the law-courts, asserts the right of Christian preachers to live on their congregations, and enjoins women to be silent in church. Other Catholicizing additions include the stories of the institution of the eucharist in 1 Cor. xi, 23–29, and of the appearances of the risen Christ in xv, 1–11. A writer who could produce such overwhelming ocular evidence of the resurrection as the latter passage purports to offer (" above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now ") would not have found

it necessary to follow it up with the weak *a priori* reasoning (" If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain," and the rest of it) which fills the remainder of the chapter. Consequently xv, 1–11, is by a later hand than 12–58. The fact that none of our Gospels mentions the appearance to five hundred brethren (an astonishing omission in view of its evidential importance!) suggests that the interpolation in 1 Cor. xv was made at the earliest in the first quarter of the second century—the period, as we have seen, when the Gospel legends of the resurrection assumed their present form.

The shorter Pauline Epistles have not yet been subjected to a parallel analysis. The letter to Philemon may be regarded as substantially authentic in view of its brevity and the absence of any apparent motive for forgery. As criticism stands at present, the best authenticated of the others is 1 Thessalonians, usually regarded as the oldest extant Christian document. Even this is almost certainly interpolated—e.g., the attack on the Jews in ii, 15–16, can hardly have been written before A.D. 70. 2 Thessalonians has been questioned on grounds of style and of doctrinal incompatibility with 1 Thessalonians. If not by Paul, it is at least an early work, since it speaks of the temple at Jerusalem as still existing in the future (ii, 4). Philippians, with its bogus claim to be by a " Hebrew of the Hebrews," cannot be genuine as it stands, but may contain genuine fragments. Ephesians and Colossians are peculiar in style and of very doubtful authorship. They are, however, of only secondary importance as historical documents.

Finally, we come to the non-Christian sources for

Christian origins. The paragraph purporting to deal with the subject in Josephus, *Antiquities* xviii, 3, is by the common consent of scholars a Christian forgery of the fourth century. No orthodox Jew, as Josephus prided himself on being, would have described Jesus as " a wise man, if indeed he may be called a man . . . a doer of marvellous acts, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with delight." Still less would Josephus have stated that Jesus " was the Christ," and that after crucifixion " he appeared on the third day alive again, as the divinely inspired prophets had foretold—these and ten thousand wonderful things—concerning him." This passage was unknown to Origen in the third century, and is first quoted by Eusebius in the fourth—a circumstance which indicates its date.

But because this paragraph is a forgery, it does not follow that Josephus had nothing to say on the subject. To draw that conclusion is to leave out of account the censorship applied by Christian rulers to anti-Christian writings from the fourth century on. The truth about Christian origins, if it proceeded from sources hostile to the Church, would certainly then have been suppressed. There is good ground for thinking that there has been deletion as well as forgery in the text of the *Antiquities*. The paragraph immediately preceding the Christian interpolation deals with the suppression of a Jewish riot by Pilate. The paragraph immediately after the interpolation digresses in order to relate how Paulina, a virtuous Roman lady, was tricked into making a nocturnal assignation with an admirer in the temple of Isis at Rome in the belief that he was the Egyptian god Anubis. This story has nothing to do

with the history of the Jews, and as it stands is perfectly pointless.

Why should Josephus interrupt the sequence of his narrative to relate this incident? The digression is explicable only on the supposition that the original context has been suppressed. If Josephus, writing in A.D. 93, gave an account of Jesus containing, among other features, a hostile reference to the legend (no doubt already current in some form) of the virgin birth, the point of the Paulina story becomes obvious. The Jewish historian may have dwelt on the impiety of attributing to the Most High adulterous intercourse with a mortal woman, pointed out the ease with which such stories of gods could be put about by the unscrupulous, and illustrated this by an anecdote. The Christian censor has left the anecdote, but deleted the passage which it was intended to illustrate. This is of course a hypothesis; but some hypothesis is necessary if we are to account for the inconsequence in the present text of the *Antiquities*.

The task of reconstruction would be easier if we could accept the view that genuine material on the subject of Christian origins is preserved in an Old Russian version of Josephus's *Jewish War* dating from the thirteenth century.[1] That version contains passages on the subject of John the Baptist and Jesus which, on the most favourable showing, are much interpolated. An attempt has been made to extricate an original uninterpolated story from the patchwork. In many respects the Old Russian text contradicts the Gospel narratives—e.g., the first appearance of the Baptist is dated 4 B.C., not, as in Luke, A.D. 28–29;

[1] Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*.

his preaching is given a revolutionary character; the account of Jesus refers to a seditious movement and a slaughter of the multitude by Pilate; and there is no mention of a resurrection. It is just possible that we have in the Old Russian version some genuine matter which has been expunged from the Greek MSS. of *The Jewish War*. But the chain of reasoning by which that conclusion is arrived at contains too many links to be foolproof. The reconstruction of the original text of Josephus, whether in *The Jewish War* or in the *Antiquities*, must remain a matter of conjecture.

Except for this circumstantial evidence, the earliest extant statement by a non-Christian on the origin of Christianity is the famous passage in the *Annals* of Tacitus (about A.D. 120):—

> " Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular."

Such are the documentary data. We are now in a position to pick up the thread of our history at the point where we left it.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIAN ORIGINS: MYTH AND HISTORY

WE have seen how the subjection of Judæa to direct Roman rule and to imperial taxation led immediately to armed resistance and to the formation of a Zealot party pledged to the recovery of Jewish independence. We have seen, also, the alarm with which the imperial government viewed the spread of Jewish propaganda among the submerged classes of the Empire, and the repressive measures by which it countered that propaganda. Tension between the Roman government and the Jews was increased when the emperor Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate procurator of Judæa.[1] The character of Pilate as recorded by Philo and Josephus contrasts strangely with that attributed to him in the Gospels. In the Gospels Pilate is depicted as a weak, irresolute creature, anxious to save Jesus, but bullied and frightened by the Jews into ordering his crucifixion. Philo, on the other hand, quoting the Herodian prince Agrippa I, describes Pilate as "inflexible, merciless, and obstinate"; and Josephus represents him as riding roughshod over the Jews from start to

[1] Pilate became procurator in A.D. 26 according to the received text of Josephus. Eisler, *op. cit.*, argues for A.D. 18 on the strength of (1) certain *Acts of Pilate* published in 311 as anti-Christian propaganda by the emperor Maximinus Daia; (2) the apparent synchronism between the procuratorship of Pilate and the expulsion of the Jews from Italy in A.D. 19. The argument is elaborate and impressive, but hardly so conclusive as to warrant such a radical revision of history.

finish. His first act was to affront Jewish sentiment by sending troops to Jerusalem with standards bearing the image of the emperor. The offending images were removed only after a mob of Jewish petitioners, defying Pilate's threats, had besieged his palace at Cæsarea for six days. On another occasion he appropriated part of the temple treasure for the purpose of building an aqueduct. A Jewish demonstration of protest was broken up with loss of life by soldiers in mufti concealed among the crowd and armed with clubs. Further trouble was caused when Pilate hung up certain votive shields, inscribed with the emperor's name, in Herod's palace at Jerusalem. On this occasion Herod's sons, the tetrarchs Antipas and Philip, complained to Tiberius, and Pilate was ordered to remove the shields to Cæsarea. That such a man crucified someone who claimed to be king of the Jews is highly likely. That such a man tried to save the prisoner, but let himself be bullied by the mob and finally shuffled off responsibility by the feeble device of washing his hands, is flatly incredible.

It is apt to be overlooked that the " kingdom of God," the early advent of which is the theme of the oldest Gospel tradition, was a subversive and revolutionary slogan. To proclaim the early coming of the kingdom of God was to threaten the early downfall of the existing order, and was in itself treasonable. Judas of Galilee, as we have seen, held God alone to be ruler and lord. Matthew tells us that John the Baptist preached that the " kingdom of heaven " was at hand; and Josephus tells us that Antipas executed John not, as our Gospels make out, on account of the

Baptist's reflexions on his private life, but because he feared a rebellion.

> "Herod feared that the powerful influence which he (John) exercised over men's minds might lead to some act of revolt; for they seemed ready to do anything upon his advice. Herod therefore considered it far better to forestall him by putting him to death, before any revolution arose through him, than to rue his delay when plunged in the turmoil of an insurrection." [1]

Now the existing text of Josephus tells us nothing previously of John except that he told the Jews to cultivate virtue and be baptized. A man who merely preaches cleanliness and godliness is not a revolutionary. Bearing in mind the severe censorship to which the works of Josephus were subjected after Christianity attained power, we can only conclude that the original text contained particulars of the revolutionary preaching which led to the fears of Antipas and to John's execution; otherwise those fears do not make sense. Further, if we assume that John was executed as a revolutionary agitator, the saying attributed to Jesus in Matt. xi, 12—"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force"—becomes intelligible.

There are indications, to those who can read between the lines, that the movement associated with Jesus was also revolutionary in origin. Jesus, like

[1] *Antiquities* xviii, 5, 2. The authenticity of this section has been questioned. But a Christian forger would have seen to it that his interpolation agreed with the Gospels. This section contradicts the Gospels in assigning a political reason for the execution of the Baptist.

John, proclaims that the kingdom of God is at hand; he pronounces blessings on the poor and woes on the rich; his disciples include one Simon the Zealot; and it is noticeable that, unlike the Sadducees and Pharisees, the Zealots are nowhere attacked or even blamed in the Gospels. It has been pointed out that " Barjona," the name applied to Simon Peter in Matt. xvi, 17, may not be a patronymic. *Barjonim* (" wild men," " outlaws ") is a name given in the Talmud to the Zealot party.[1] Possibly Simon Peter and Simon the Zealot were originally one and the same, and their separation in the lists of the apostles represents an attempt by the compilers of our Gospels and Acts to conceal the fact that the chief of the apostles had revolutionary connections. Jesus declares that he has come not to send peace on the earth, but a sword; promises the twelve that they shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; enters Jerusalem escorted by multitudes who acclaim him as deliverer and king; violently expels the traders from the temple; and is, as we should expect, crucified by Pilate as a pretended " king of the Jews."

These details, whether historical or not, are consistent with the statement of Tacitus quoted at the end of the preceding chapter, with the reference of Celsus (180) to Jesus as a malefactor, and with the fact that Hierocles (about 300) speaks of him as a chief of nine hundred bandits. That, of course, is the light in which a Jewish revolutionary would appear to Roman officials. There is no reason why the Church of the second century, intent on the conversion of the Roman Empire, should have invented such a story as the

[1] Eisler, *op. cit.*, pp. 252–255.

execution of Jesus by Pilate as "king of the Jews." On the contrary, the Church did its best to eliminate or tone down those features which were politically compromising, provided they were not too deeply rooted in Christian tradition for such manipulation. None of the evangelists could suppress the triumphal entry, the affray in the temple, or the condemnation by Pilate. But John antedates the expulsion of the traders to the beginning of the story in order to conceal its connection with the final tragedy. All manipulate the narrative of the trial and crucifixion so as to transfer responsibility from the Romans to the Jews. The mythical character of the existing accounts of the trial is patent.[1] But the original document from which those accounts were elaborated dates, as we have seen, from 75–80. Hundred per cent mythicists have to explain why the original Gospel-maker, Mark or another, should have located the trial and crucifixion of Jesus in Jerusalem under Pilate, barely fifty years from the time of writing, unless there already existed a tradition, too strong to be set aside, that Pilate had crucified such a Messianic claimant. And to trace back the tradition to within fifty years of the crucifixion is to create, not a certainty, but a strong presumption of a historical basis.

That the followers of such a leader should have refused to believe him dead and should have hoped for his return in glory to set up his Messianic kingdom is in accordance with historical analogy. The name

[1] J. M. Robertson, *The Historical Jesus*, pp. 161–172, enumerates the incredibilities in the trial narrative. But his premises do not prove his conclusion that there was no trial or crucifixion.

of Nazoraeans or Nazarenes (Hebrew *nozrim*, from a root meaning to "keep" or "guard") may have been applied to them on account of the strictness of their observances, or on account of their claim to know the secrets of the coming "kingdom of God." The Gospel text, "Except your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," suggests the former interpretation. We may regard the Nazarenes as a sect of poor and fanatical Jews who, like the Zealots, had broken away from the Pharisees, and whose distinguishing marks were their stricter observance of the Jewish law and their belief in the early return of Jesus to set up the kingdom of God on earth.[1]

Concurrently with the spread of Messianism there had arisen, as we have seen, among the Jews of the dispersion and their Gentile neighbours in the Mediterranean cities that form of religious escapism which later came to be known as Gnosticism. This consisted in the cult of a saviour-god conceived as having power to overcome the demon-rulers of this world of darkness and to bestow on his worshippers eternal life in a world of light. This movement found a philosophical justification in the writings of Philo of Alexandria and above all in his doctrine of redemption by the divine *logos*. From the interaction of Messianism and Gnosticism historic Christianity was born.

[1] The relation of the Nazarenes to the Essenes has been much discussed. They were certainly not identical; for the Essenes were pacifists and never came into conflict with the authorities. Probably, as often happens with extremist bodies, there was a considerable interchange of membership between Essenes, Zealots, and Nazarenes. The whole subject is obscured by the falsification of early evidence.

The traditional picture of primitive Christianity is largely based on the Acts of the Apostles. The Acts, as we have seen, were composed by the author of the third Gospel in the first quarter of the second century —i.e., when the fusion of the Messianist and Gnostic movements, which resulted in the emergence of the Catholic Church, was well under way. The intention of the author is to assist that fusion by writing an idealized and imaginary account of primitive Christianity, by representing the unity achieved in the second century as in existence from the beginning, and by eliminating as far as possible any trace of conflict with Rome. The historical value of the resultant narrative may be estimated by summarizing its contents.

The book opens with the ascension of Jesus into heaven and the announcement to the apostles by two angels of his future return. Matthias is chosen by lot to fill the vacancy caused by the defection of Judas Iscariot. A few days later, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples in the form of a "mighty wind" and enables them to speak the language of "every nation under heaven." A crowd gathers; and Peter announces the resurrection of Jesus, with the result that three thousand are baptised. Peter and John miraculously cure a man lame from birth outside the temple. Another crowd gathers; and Peter delivers another sermon. Peter and John are arrested and brought before the high priest, but discharged with a caution. The number of believers increases. They practise community of goods, and are joined by Barnabas. Ananias and Sapphira are miraculously struck dead for keeping back part of

their property. Miracles of healing continue. The apostles are arrested, but released by an angel. They are again arrested; the Pharisee Gamaliel takes their part, and they are discharged with a beating. Seven men are appointed to look after the interests of Greek-speaking converts. One of the seven, Stephen, is arrested for blasphemy against the temple and the Jewish law, and after a long defence is stoned to death. Persecution scatters the Church over Palestine. A Samaritan sorcerer named Simon offers to buy the privileges of an apostle for money, and is sharply rebuked by Peter. Saul, the ringleader in the persecution, is miraculously converted near Damascus by the voice of Jesus speaking from heaven, and immediately begins to preach to the Jews of Damascus. They plot to kill him; and he makes a hasty escape from the city. Barnabas introduces him to the apostles at Jerusalem. He joins them in preaching, but again has to fly for his life to Tarsus. Peter works more miracles, including the raising of Tabitha from death. After being admonished in a vision to consider none of God's creatures " common and unclean," Peter converts a Roman centurion named Cornelius with his family and friends, thus beginning the evangelization of the Gentiles. The Church spreads to Antioch, where Barnabas and Saul take the lead, and where the disciples are first called Christians. In a time of famine the church of Antioch sends relief to the church of Judæa by Barnabas and Saul. A fresh persecution is begun by Herod Agrippa, who beheads James, son of Zebedee, and imprisons Peter. Peter, however, is miraculously freed by an angel; and the persecution ends with the king's death (A.D. 44). This

section of the Acts (chapters i–xii) has been not unfairly described as "so crowded with supernatural and miraculous occurrences that its evidential value would be reckoned as extremely small by any historian recording secular events." [1]

The remainder of the book deals with the missionary activities of Saul, who from xiii, 9, onwards is called Paul. No explanation of the change of name is given. Some of the adventures of Paul in this part of the Acts are duplicates of those of Peter in the earlier chapters. Paul, like Peter, encounters a sorcerer—Barjesus—whom he rebukes and strikes with blindness. Paul, like Peter, cures a man lame from birth. Paul, like Peter, is beaten and thrown into prison, but miraculously delivered. The later chapters of the Acts, however, are less charged with miracle than the earlier, and are further remarkable in embodying parts of a travel diary written in the first person by a companion of Paul. Some critics attribute the whole book, and therefore also the third Gospel, to the writer of this travel diary, traditionally identified with Luke the physician. The case for and against that identification has already been discussed. Even if, in the face of difficulties already stated, we were to accept it, we could not consider Luke a trustworthy historian.

The unreliability of the Acts is shown in cases where we are able to check them from other sources. We have such a check in the Pauline Epistles, large sections of which, whether by Paul or not, are at least earlier than the Acts. For instance, it is plain from 1

[1] Rylands, *Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles*, p. 336.

Cor. xiv that the phenomenon known as "speaking with tongues" consisted, not in the utterance of intelligible language of any sort, but in ecstatic babbling which to "men unlearned or unbelieving" was indistinguishable from lunacy. In fact Paul (whom we may consider part-author of this chapter) tries to discourage it on that account. Such ecstasy is a recognized concomitant of religious excitement and has been known in modern times among the early Quakers, Wesleyans, Irvingites, and other sects. The author of the Acts, however, credulously supposes the ecstatic ejaculations to be in foreign languages, and traces this "gift of tongues" to the descent of the spirit at Pentecost.

Again, the account given in the Acts of the relations between Paul and the Palestinian apostles is hopelessly at variance with that given in the Epistles, and above all in Gal. i–ii. In the Acts Paul joins in the work of the apostles at Jerusalem soon after his conversion. He preaches to Gentiles, but only after Peter and others have set the example. Later, he revisits Jerusalem with Barnabas when bringing relief from Antioch during the famine. After their first missionary journey they again visit Jerusalem as delegates of the church of Antioch in order to submit to the apostles and elders the question whether Gentile converts should be circumcised. On this occasion it is decided by a council of the whole church, on the motion of Peter and James, that Gentile converts need not be circumcised, but must abstain from eating meat sacrificed to idols and from fornication, and observe certain Jewish dietary rules. Paul and his companions carry the decision back to Antioch; and

the matter is never raised again. Paul himself conforms to the whole Jewish law, nowhere denies its validity for Jews, and circumcises Timothy, a convert of mixed Greek and Jewish parentage, in deference to Jewish sentiment.

In Galatians we are told a very different story. Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles from the moment of his conversion: Peter is the apostle "of the circumcision." For the first three years after Paul's conversion he does not go near the other apostles. Then for the first time he visits Peter, but sees no other apostle "save James the Lord's brother," and is "still unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa." After fourteen years' absence Paul revisits Jerusalem with Barnabas, not as a delegate, but "by revelation" (i.e., of his own accord), in order to communicate privately to Peter, James, and John (sarcastically described as "those who were reputed to be somewhat") the gospel which he is preaching to the Gentiles. They recognize his independent mission and leave him a free hand on the sole condition that the Gentile converts contribute to the relief of the poor of Jerusalem. Nothing is said of a formal council or of the promulgation of any decree. Later at Antioch Paul has a sharp difference of opinion (unmentioned in the Acts) with Peter because the latter, instigated by "certain from James," ceases to eat with Gentile converts. Paul resents this as an attempt to impose Jewish dietary rules on Gentiles, and attacks the Jewish law as not only useless, but pernicious. In 1 Cor. viii and x, 23–33, the question of meat sacrificed to idols is treated from the point of view of pure expediency, and the apostolic taboo on its use,

recorded in the Acts, is entirely ignored. In 2 Cor. x–xii Paul's claim to equal authority with "the very chiefest apostles" is asserted with vigour and even acrimony against opponents who preach "another Jesus."

In short, the Paul of the Acts and the Paul of the Epistles are two different men. The Paul of the Acts is the missionary of a united Church, acknowledging the authority of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and preaching the same doctrine as they. The Paul of the Epistles is the hierophant of a mystery revealed to himself alone, acknowledging no authority but that of Jesus Christ, anathematizing all (and there appear to be many) who preach another gospel than his, and heaping scorn and contumely on Peter and James when they disagree with him, as they certainly do on the subject of the validity of the Jewish law, and apparently even on the identity of the "Jesus" whom they preach.

Of the two pictures, that in the Epistles is on any showing earlier than that in the Acts. The latter, therefore, must be unhesitatingly dismissed as unhistorical. The united Church of the Acts is a myth—every bit as much a myth as the physical ascension of Jesus with which the book opens, or the gifts of tongues, supernatural cures and killings, miraculous escapes from prison and resurrections from the dead, voices from heaven and other legendary paraphernalia that punctuate the apostolic adventures. The Pauline Epistles, genuine or not, take us back to a time when there was no united Church, but two rival propagandas of Jewish Messianism and Pauline Gnosticism, each preaching "Christ Jesus," but each

denouncing the other as "another gospel" of "another Jesus."

As long as the authenticity of the Pauline Epistles, or at least of the four great Epistles (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians), went unquestioned, the account of Paul's relations with the Palestinian apostles given in Gal. i–ii had perforce to be accepted as autobiographic, and therefore presumably true in detail. But, as we have seen, the Pauline Epistles have been shown to be composite. We have therefore to consider whether Gal. i–ii is credible as it stands. We are asked to believe that Paul, after becoming convinced "through revelation" that Jesus, whose disciples he had persecuted, was the Son of God, took no steps whatever to get into touch with them, betrayed no interest whatever in anything they could have taught him, and maintained to the end an attitude of touchy independence towards the friends and followers of the Christ whom he preached. That is not the behaviour of a sane convert: it argues a madman or a charlatan. Fortunately we are under no compulsion to believe that Paul was either. Gal. i–ii is not by him, but by a partisan composing, late in the first century, a pseudo-epistle in defence of the dead apostle against assailants who attacked his memory. The writer knows that Peter and James preached "another gospel" than Paul. He cannot deny that they were apostles before Paul. He tries, therefore, to vindicate Paul by representing that he received his doctrine by revelation, that he therefore owed nothing to Peter and James, and that they "stand condemned" for having first given him "the right hand of fellowship" and then hypocritically let

him down. He is concerned to prove Paul divinely inspired and therefore right, not to prove him reasonable by human standards. We are dealing with party polemic, closer to history than the Acts, it is true, but still not history.

Even the story, common to the Acts and Epistles, of Paul's persecution of the infant Church is not above suspicion. The Pauline Epistles contain four references to that persecution. One, 1 Cor. xv, 9, occurs in the list of the appearances of the risen Christ, which we have already seen reason to regard as a second century interpolation. Another, Phil. iii, 6, occurs in a context which describes Paul as a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," and cannot therefore be genuine. A third, 1 Tim. i, 13, occurs in the generally rejected Pastoral Epistles. There remain Gal. i, 13–14 and 23–24. Now the statement there made that Paul "persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it," is hard to reconcile with the statement in verse 22 that a few years later he "was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa which were in Christ." If Paul had been conspicuous at the stoning of Stephen (who is never mentioned in the Epistles) and made a house-to-house search for victims as stated in Acts viii, 3, his face must have been unpleasantly familiar. Gal. i, 13–14 and 23–24, therefore, look like interpolations. It is pointed out that down to Acts xiii, 9, the converted persecutor is consistently called Saul, the name Paul being introduced at that point without any explanation. It has been suggested, not without plausibility, that Saul the persecutor and Paul the apostle were two different men, that the author of the Acts fused them into one, and that the references in

the Epistles to Paul's persecuting past were interpolated in the second century in order to bring the Epistles into greater harmony with the Acts.[1]

In dealing, therefore, with the origins of Christianity the Pauline Epistles must be used critically and with caution, and preconceptions derived from the Acts of the Apostles (especially the early chapters) must be dismissed. We have to deal at the outset with two separate movements—the Messianist movement in Palestine and the Gnostic movement among Jews of the dispersion. It is probable that the names of the seven "deacons" in Acts vi are actually those of early Gnostic teachers among the Greek-speaking Jews. One of them, Philip, and his four daughters are encountered later by the travel diarist in xxi, 8–9; and his historicity would seem to guarantee that of his colleagues. It is likely enough that one of these teachers, Stephen, got himself lynched through preaching against the Jewish law at Jerusalem. But there can have been no connection between these early Gnostics and the followers of Jesus, the Nazarene Messiah. The latter were as zealous for the Jewish law as any Pharisee. The statement in the Acts that Stephen and his colleagues were elected at the instance of the twelve apostles to act as their subordinates in ministering to Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem, like the author's statements about Paul, is fabricated to bolster up the fiction of primitive unity; and the speech put into the mouth of Stephen in chapter vii, like other speeches in the Acts, is composed by the author.

Pilate came to grief in A.D. 36 over a clash with the

[1] Rylands, *op. cit.*, pp. 319–320, 339–353.

Samaritans, who complained to the governor of Syria about his severities and procured his recall to Rome. In 37 Tiberius was succeeded by his grand-nephew Caligula. That insane emperor's assumption of divinity almost precipitated an armed conflict between Rome and the Jews. Pogroms occurred at Alexandria with the sanction of the Roman governor; and breaking point was reached in 40, when Caligula gave orders for the erection of his statue in the temple at Jerusalem. According to Josephus the Jews met this command by passive resistance: according to Tacitus they took up arms. It is highly probable that there was a Zealot rising. The party which under Judas of Galilee had flown to arms to resist taxation can hardly have remained passive under the provocation of Caligula. Josephus refers later on to a "robber chief" (i.e., a Zealot) named Eleazar, who was captured by Felix (procurator of Judæa 52–60) after harassing the country for twenty years, and who must therefore have been active in 40. This Eleazar is mentioned in rabbinical literature as a Messianic agitator and "murderer," and in a medieval Jewish edition of Josephus is bracketed with the followers of Jesus. It has been conjectured that the Greek text of Josephus's *Jewish War* originally referred to the rising which Tacitus records, but that Christian censors deleted the passage in order to conceal the part taken in the affair by the Nazarene Messianists.[1]

The threat to the Jews was averted by the assassination of Caligula in Rome early in 41. For a moment the senate debated the restoration of the Roman republic; but they were overruled by the soldiery,

[1] Eisler, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–68, 96–98, 101–103, 527–528, 579.

who acclaimed Claudius, Caligula's uncle, as emperor. Claudius restored order at Alexandria, at the same time cautioning the Alexandrian Jews against harbouring agitators from Palestine. He further sought to conciliate the Jews by reverting to the system of indirect rule in Judæa. A grandson of Herod, Agrippa I, whom Caligula had made king of northern Palestine, was now given Judæa and Samaria in addition, and so became ruler of all the territories held by his grandfather. Though a Roman by citizenship and education, Agrippa managed by punctilious observance of Jewish customs to ingratiate himself with the Pharisees. He seems even to have entertained notions of making himself independent of Rome, and incurred the suspicions of Claudius by fortifying Jerusalem and by convening a conference of Asiatic client-kings at Tiberias. If Agrippa took sharp measures against the followers of Jesus, it was because he intended to be himself the Messiah of the "new order" in Asia. His plans, however, were terminated by his sudden death in 44. The account of his end in Acts xii, 20–23, agrees roughly with that of Josephus, except that the historian introduces an owl instead of an angel and does not say that he was "eaten of worms."

After Agrippa's death Palestine was again placed under a Roman procurator, Cuspius Fadus. There was an immediate recrudescence of revolutionary agitation. A certain Theudas led a multitude of people to the Jordan, promising to conduct them over dryshod, like Joshua before Jericho. The cavalry of Fadus dispersed them and took and beheaded Theudas. The incident is referred to in Acts v, 36, but

antedated by nearly half a century. It is of interest as showing the prevalence of the belief that Joshua would reappear in the character of the Messiah. Under the successor of Fadus, Tiberius Alexander, a Romanized Jew and nephew of Philo of Alexandria, political unrest was aggravated by famine, and two sons of Judas of Galilee, Jacob and Simon, were crucified for revolutionary activities.

Though its centre was Palestine, the Messianic ferment spread also among the Jews of the dispersion. In every city where Jews had settled, including Rome itself (to which they had drifted back since their expulsion by Tiberius), the word went round among the disinherited that the Messiah, the *Christos*, was about to come; nay, that he *had* come; that the Romans had caught and crucified him, as they had crucified many another champion of the poor and oppressed; but that he had cheated them, and was alive, and would shortly return to execute vengeance on the rich and great. We have seen how Claudius took steps to check such propaganda at Alexandria. In 49 [1] he expelled the Jews from Rome, says Suetonius, for constantly making disturbances "at the instigation of Chrestus." This passage has been much discussed. The Greek name *Chrestos* ("good") was often substituted for *Christos* ("anointed"), being more familiar and intelligible to non-Jewish ears. The simplest explanation, therefore, is that the

[1] Suetonius gives no date. Orosius (fifth century) gives the date as the ninth year of Claudius (A.D. 49) on the authority of Josephus. But Josephus does not mention the matter at all. Is this one more instance in which the text of Josephus has been mutilated in order to conceal the revolutionary origins of Christianity?

" Chrestus " of Suetonius was an agitator who caused disturbances in the Roman ghetto by coming forward as the Messiah. An attempt has even been made to identify this Chrestus with Simon, the Samaritan sorcerer mentioned in Acts viii, 9–24.[1] It is true that Justin (150) states that Simon practised magic in Rome under Claudius, and that Simon's followers, like those of Jesus, were called Christians. But Justin's account of Simon is such a tissue of absurdities that it is very difficult to discover any historical basis. He says that Simon was honoured by the Romans as a god. Now we know that this statement is due to Justin having mistaken a dedicatory inscription to the Italian god Semo Sancus (*Semoni Sanco Deo*) for one to Simon (*Simoni Sancto Deo*). Such a blunder seriously discredits Justin as an authority. All that we can safely infer from Suetonius is that there were Messianic disturbances at Rome under Claudius. The name *Christiani* or *Chrestiani*, applied by the populace to the Messianic propagandists, indicates that they were regarded primarily not as worshippers of a new god or disciples of a new teacher, but as partisans of a political leader called *Christos* or *Chrestos*—that is, of a Jewish Messianic pretender.[2] As such they were, in the eyes of the law, rebels and deserving of death.

All this was most alarming to those Jews, whether in Palestine or elsewhere, whose economic position and education precluded them from sharing the revolutionary hopes of the Messianists. It was even more

[1] Eisler, *op. cit.*, p. 581.

[2] The name *Christiani* or *Chrestiani* is formed on the analogy of *Sullani*, *Pompeiani*, *Cæsariani*, *Herodiani*, and connotes a political faction.

embarrassing to those Gnostics, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin, who looked for the redemption of the world, not by violence, but by individual regeneration through knowledge of the true God. If Rome were involved in a war of extermination against Jewish revolutionaries, she was not likely to discriminate between one Jew and another, or between the more material and the more spiritual exponents of the scriptures. To the educated Jew imbued with Greek culture, to the religious escapist of the school of Philo, it was vital that Messianic propaganda should be countered. But counter-propaganda, if it was to reach the masses, must be couched in their language, not in the jargon of the schools. Messianist slogans must be adopted, but spiritualized and rendered harmless. The Messiah, the new Joshua, *Christos Iesous*, must be proclaimed, not as an earthly deliverer, but as the Son of God and the conqueror of "the last enemy, death." His kingdom must be not of this world. He must be the redeemer, not of the Jews only, nor of the poor and oppressed only, but of all, Jews or Greeks, bond or free, who are mystically united to him in baptism. The Roman Empire, slavery, suffering, death itself must be endured without resistance, not because they are just, but because they are of this world only, and "the fashion of this world passeth away." By such preaching as this the hopes of the disinherited might be diverted into other-worldly channels, and the danger of a revolutionary clash with the forces of the Empire averted.

Such is probably the explanation of the propaganda which in the middle years of the first century was addressed to the poorer classes in various Mediter-

ranean cities by a number of Greek-speaking Jews or half-Jews—Paul, Silvanus, Timothy, Sosthenes, Apollos. Nothing is positively known of their antecedents. It is as impossible to write a life of Paul from the Acts of the Apostles as to write a life of Jesus from the Gospels.

That the message of Paul and his companions was different in origin and content from that of the Messianist followers of Jesus the Nazarene is clear, not only from the polemic of Gal. i–ii, with its fulminations against "a different gospel" and its insistence on Paul's independence of Peter, James, and John, but also from the reluctance with which the mass of Christians in the second century accepted the authority of Paul, in contrast to the reverence paid to him by the Gnostics. Justin, a representative Catholic apologist, passes Paul over in silence: Marcion, the heretic, treats him as the only true apostle. Even after the Catholic Church had accepted Paul, the Nazarenes or Ebionites rejected him as an apostate from the Jewish law, to which they continued to adhere. The most striking evidence of an abiding undercurrent of Christian hostility to Paul is afforded by the Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, two variants of a Jewish-Christian romance dating in its present form from the third or fourth century, but embodying earlier matter, and fictitiously fathered upon Clement of Rome. By the time these writings were put together an open attack on Paul was no longer possible within the bosom of the Church. But the covert attack is unmistakeable. In the *Recognitions* we are given an account of the primitive church of Jerusalem in some respects similar to that in the Acts. We are told how

" a certain enemy " (unnamed, but obviously Paul) raised a tumult against the apostles in the temple, started a persecution of the Church, and went to Damascus with a commission from the high priest to arrest believers there. In the *Homilies* Peter is made to complain that some Gentile converts have rejected his preaching and accepted that of " the enemy " (still unnamed), who, contrary to the teaching of Jesus, attacks the Jewish law. Later in the story " the enemy " is identified, not with Paul, but with the sorcerer Simon, who from the late second century onwards was regarded by the Fathers as the originator of all heresy. Simon is represented as claiming to be an apostle of Jesus, and as maintaining that he knows Jesus better than do Peter and his colleagues, since his knowledge is derived through the supernatural medium of a vision. Peter replies that waking contact is to be preferred to visions, and adds that if Simon has seen Jesus, he should be more polite to his apostles.

> " For indeed thou hast come forward as an adversary against me, who am a firm rock, the foundation of the Church. If thou wert not an adversary, thou wouldst not slander me and revile my preaching, in order that I, when I utter that which I heard from the Lord face to face, may find no credence, as though forsooth I were condemned and reprobate. But if thou sayest that I am condemned, thou inveighest against God, who revealed the Christ to me, and against him who because of this revelation called me blessed."

Anyone who reads this passage in conjunction with Gal. ii will see that the real object of attack here is Paul, and that the name of Simon, the fictitious heresiarch of Catholic tradition, is used merely as a

blind. The claims put forward by Simon are those put forward by Paul (or on Paul's behalf) in the Epistles. Simon, like Paul, claims to be an apostle; Simon, like Paul, claims to have seen Jesus in a vision; Simon, like Paul, attacks the Jewish law. The same term of reproach (*kategnosmenos*, "condemned") is levelled at Peter by Simon and by Paul. Many critics are of opinion that the story preserved in Acts viii, 9–24, of Simon's attempt to buy the office of an apostle for money originated in resentment at Paul's collection of Gentile money for the relief of the poor of Jerusalem, and that in Matt. xiii, 24–30, the "enemy" who sowed tares among the wheat was originally not the devil, but Paul.

The *Homilies* and *Recognitions* are not history. But they illustrate the persistence through many Christian generations of a tradition which, revering the memory of Peter, denied the reality of Paul's conversion and saw in him, not an apostle, but an enemy and falsifier of the faith. Superficially the issue was between Christians who asserted and Christians who denied the validity of the Jewish law. Fundamentally, it was between those who hoped for an earthly millennium and those who did not. It was between the *Christiani* in the original sense of the word, that is the political Messianists, followers of Jesus the Nazarene and Peter the *Barjona* or Zealot, who hoped for the establishment of the kingdom of God on the ruins of the Roman Empire, and the Gnostic followers of Paul, who in the name of a mystical Christ Jesus preached submission to Rome and escape from the prison of the body to a spiritual kingdom beyond the grave.

CHAPTER IX

MESSIANISTS AND GNOSTICS

FROM the middle of the first century onwards Palestine headed for a revolutionary crisis. The procurators Cumanus (48–52) and Felix (52–60) are described by Tacitus as "rivals in the worst wickedness." After Cumanus had been recalled for misgovernment, Felix, one of the imperial freedmen whom Claudius promoted to high office, "exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave." The Zealots increased their following; and Felix, unable to cow them by crucifixions, resorted to the use of *agents provocateurs* who soon made an end of such law and order as was left. One Zealot chief, Eleazar, already mentioned, was captured and sent to Rome. Another, an Egyptian Jew, promised his followers that the walls of Jerusalem would fall to the blast of trumpets. They were dispersed by troops; but the would-be Joshua made his escape. The affair is referred to in Acts xxi, 38, where the Roman commandant mistakes Paul for this man.

To these years of ferment—probably to A.D. 50 or 51 [1]—belongs what we may regard as the earliest extant Christian document, 1 Thessalonians. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy have recently preached their

[1] We know from an inscription that Gallio became proconsul of Achaia in 51–52. According to Acts xviii Paul's arrival at Corinth was not more than eighteen months before this. We thus get 50–51 as the approximate date of 1 Thessalonians. The date is confirmed by the reference in Acts xviii, 2, to Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from Rome, which occurred in 49.

gospel in Macedonia, and above all in the commercial city of Thessalonica (Salonika). The letter written to Thessalonica from Corinth, whither they have proceeded, shows what they preached. They address "the church" (or congregation, *ekklesia*) "of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," who have "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." The writers emphasize their disinterestedness, and declare that their message is from God. Their converts, who evidently belong to the poorer classes, are enjoined to live quietly and laboriously. Soon—*in the lifetime of the writers*—salvation will come. The day will come "as a thief in the night"; they are to watch, therefore, and be sober. The letter is to be read to "all the brethren."

This is clearly a genuine letter; for the prediction italicized cannot have been forged after Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were dead. The only plain interpolation is ii, 14–16. The commendation of the Thessalonian converts as "imitators of the churches of God which are in Judæa" can hardly have been penned in the first century, when Pauline missionaries insisted stiffly on their independence, but seems to have been inserted later in the interests of the fiction of primitive unity. The invective against the Jews which follows, and the statement that "wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," clearly date from a time when the destruction of Jerusalem and the definite separation of the Church from the synagogue are accomplished facts. If we eliminate this passage, the

remainder of the Epistle, though it may have been edited a little for the purpose of reading in church, seems substantially genuine.

The object of the mission of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the Ægean is clear. It is to inoculate the poorer classes in the Ægean cities against political Messianic propaganda by preaching to them in Messianist phraseology a gospel of other-worldly salvationism. The "Lord Jesus Christ" of 1 Thessalonians is nominally a Messiah, but in fact a divine being, the Son of God, and so identified with God that in iii, 11 ("Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you"), the two subjects in Greek govern a singular verb. From the very first, in Pauline theology, the Father and the Son are one. This wholly supernatural Jesus died and rose from the dead; but we are not told when or where. He is of a piece with the saviour-gods, Osiris, Attis, and Dionysus. He is to come from heaven, not to establish a Messianic kingdom on earth, but to transport his worshippers to a happier world above the clouds. Apart from the one manifest interpolation, there is nothing in the letter to show that Paul or his companions even knew of the existence of the Nazarene Messiah crucified in Judæa, still less that they attached any importance to his fate. Their Jesus is simply the Philonian *logos* anthropomorphized into a popular redeemer-deity.

1 Thessalonians, with the exception of ii, 14–16, is to all appearance a genuine letter written by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy in collaboration. The genuinely early parts of Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians cannot be more than a few years later, and develop

with greater elaboration the same ideas. According to the most tenable view, the sections attributable to Paul himself comprise roughly Rom. i, 18–ii; vi, 2–13; vi, 16–vii, 4; viii, 3–6, 9, 12–28, 38–39; xii, 1–2; and 1 Cor. ii, 1, 3–15; xii, 4–28; xiv, 1–9, 23–25. The sections included in Romans form a pamphlet rather than a letter, and were probably not addressed to any one church. Those included in 1 Corinthians read more like a letter, and may really have been addressed by Paul to the church of Corinth after his departure from that city, i.e. after A.D. 52. A characteristic of Paul, when writing without collaboration, is the use of the name "Christ Jesus" to designate the Saviour. Other Pauline writers refer to "Christ," or to "the Lord," or to "the Lord Jesus," or to "Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians, which is a joint letter, uses all these expressions in turn. But "Christ Jesus" may be considered one of the hall-marks of Paul himself.[1]

In the pamphlet later incorporated in the above sections of Romans Paul sums up his doctrine. The wickedness of the world is due to its worship of nature instead of the true God. By its wickedness it has incurred the vengeance of God. The Jews profess to know God, but through failure to fulfil the moral law are as guilty as the Gentiles. But a way of escape is open to all. By mystical union with Christ Jesus in baptism all may die to sin and inherit eternal life. Those united to Christ have no need of the law; they are possessed by the Spirit of God; all things work together for their good; nothing can harm them any more.

[1] Rylands, *op. cit.*

In the letter later incorporated in 1 Corinthians Paul describes his doctrine as a " mystery " (the term applied by the Greeks to cults which, like those of Demeter and Dionysus, purported to ensure to their initiates a happy immortality). The " mystery of God," says Paul, is revealed only to those who have received the Spirit of God: to the natural man it is foolishness. The Spirit manifests itself in various gifts possessed by its recipients—gifts of wisdom, of knowledge, of healing, of " prophecy " (not necessarily prediction, but extempore preaching of any sort), of " tongues," and so forth. These are all divine manifestations. Nevertheless Paul dislikes the " gift of tongues " and tries to discourage it.

He was a better educated man than the social underdogs who formed his congregations; and no doubt he estimated at their true value the ecstatic ejaculations which at these meetings passed for divine inspiration. But he could not stop the nuisance; he could only try to abate it. Chapter xiv has been extensively amplified by later editors who were shocked at such disparagement of one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—e.g., verses 5 (" I would have you all speak with tongues "), 18 (" I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all "), and 22 (" tongues are for a sign to the unbelieving ") contradict the trend of the argument and cannot have been written by Paul.

Other parts of these Epistles, though not by Paul himself, are of early date and may be the genuine work of his collaborators, written in his lifetime or soon after his death. For example, 1 Cor. v, vii, viii, and xi, 2–21, 30–34, taken together, read like a genuine letter. But the style of these sections is very different

from that of Paul: it is lumbering, awkward, and occasionally ungrammatical. The expression used for the Saviour is "Lord Jesus," or else "Christ," but never "Christ Jesus." The writer nowhere claims to be Paul. He deals entirely with points of church discipline—the expulsion of an incestuous member, rules concerning marriage and celibacy, the question of eating meat sacrificed to idols, and seemly behaviour at worship. The attitude to marriage—summed up in the phrase, "it is better to marry than to burn"—is in keeping with the Gnostic view which saw in the material world a kingdom of darkness and in sex, at best, a necessary evil. On the question of sacrificial meat the writer is comparatively rational. An idol, he says, is nothing; but all do not know that. Some people's conscience is offended by eating such meat: it is better to abstain than to cause them to stumble. Obviously the writer has never heard of the apostolic taboo recorded in Acts xv, or if he has, he attaches no importance to it. I Cor. xi, 2–15, directs that women "praying or prophesying" are to veil their heads. Evidently when this was written women were allowed to "prophesy" or preach. The direction in xiv, 34–35, that women are to be silent in the churches is therefore by a later hand.

Chapter xi, 17–34, contains the earliest extant reference to the central Christian rite of the "Lord's supper." The account, however, has been much interpolated. The Lord's supper was originally a common meal or "love-feast" (Greek *agape*) of a kind usual in ancient communities and deeply rooted in primitive tradition. In primitive societies the pro-

blem of food is so pressing and dominating that there is something magical about a good square meal. Hence the institution of the communal meal, when a whole clan assembles, solemnly slaughters its usually sacrosanct totem-animal, and sacramentally feasts on its flesh.[1] As primitive society gives place to civilization and the problem of food, except for the poorer classes, ceases to be urgent, the communal feast loses much of its significance. But to the poorer classes there is still magic in a hearty meal. In the Græco-Roman world trade guilds, burial clubs, and other friendly societies, always associated with some religious cult or other, to some extent filled the void left by the submergence of the primitive clan. These regularly held common suppers for the benefit of their poorer members. Christian congregations, whether Messianist or Gnostic in origin, were, among other things, friendly societies; and the common supper, preceded and followed by a thanksgiving or grace (Greek *eucharistia*), held from the first a central place in their life. Wall-paintings in the catacombs depict persons sitting or reclining at a table on which are loaves of bread, a fish, and flasks of wine or water. Some Christians as late as the fifth century continued to treat the eucharist as part and parcel of the common meal. To many of the poorer converts in the early Church this must have been the one assured square meal of the week, and an earnest of the good time awaiting them in the Messianic kingdom, when, as they believed, vines would yield myriads of grapes, corn-stalks tons of flour, and the land flow with milk

[1] See Harrison, *Themis*, chapter v, for a full discussion of this subject.

and honey.[1] In a very early eucharistic prayer, probably of Jewish origin, preserved in *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (90–120), the bread, once scattered over the hills in the form of wheat, and now gathered into a loaf, is declared to represent the gathering of God's Church from the ends of the earth into his kingdom. Gnostics, who disapproved of millennial aspirations, preferred another interpretation. The sacramental "eating of the god" was a traditional rite of the mystery cults, rooted in the dim totemistic past. Philo had called the *logos* the "heavenly bread," the "cupbearer" and "cup of God." To Gnostic Christians the eucharistic bread and wine were the flesh and blood of Christ Jesus, which conferred eternal life on the partakers. In the end this view prevailed. The mystical significance of the fish has already been noted.

But the mass of first-century Christians, especially the slaves and down-and-outs of a commercial city such as Corinth, went to the Lord's supper for the good time which they seldom had elsewhere. The writer of the disciplinary letter in 1 Cor. xi describes the scandals which sometimes arose. There are unseemly scrambles. Some over-eat and over-drink, others get nothing at all. Let all wait their turn, and if any want more, let them go elsewhere for it. This lesson in good manners, however, did not satisfy later editors. One second-century reviser in particular, who knew the Gospel story, took occasion to insert an account of the institution of the eucharist (23–29)

[1] Such predictions occur in the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (A.D. 50–100). Papias (140) attributes a similar prediction to Jesus. It was evidently "going the rounds" in Messianist congregations of the first century or so.

two verses of which agree very nearly word for word with Luke xxii, 19–20. As no other passage in the Pauline Epistles (except one verse in the Pastorals) betrays any acquaintance with the life of Jesus, this is certainly an interpolation.

Our present 1 Corinthians purports to be an epistle to the church of Corinth from Paul and "Sosthenes the brother." We have seen that it includes two apparently genuine letters, one (contained in ii, xii, and xiv) akin to the earliest sections of Romans and therefore probably by Paul, the other (contained in v, vii, viii, and xi) by someone else. It has been conjectured that Sosthenes was the author of the second letter. The only Sosthenes mentioned in the New Testament, apart from 1 Corinthians, is the "ruler of the synagogue" at Corinth in Acts xviii, 17, who is beaten by the Jews after Gallio's dismissal of their case against Paul. This Sosthenes had evidently infuriated the majority of his congregation by his sympathy with Paul, and may very likely have become leader of the Corinthian Christians and corresponded with them on disciplinary matters during a temporary absence. After Paul and Sosthenes were dead, an editor, on this hypothesis, combined their letters and issued the result under their joint names.[1]

2 Corinthians also bears two names, those of Paul and Timothy. Like 1 Corinthians, it is a composite work. Chapters i–vii are written for the most part in a vague, verbose, repetitive style, saying remarkably little at remarkable length, and in strong contrast with the clear argument of Rom. ii or 1 Cor. xii. They do not read like a genuine letter of Paul or any-

[1] Rylands, *op. cit.*, pp. 151–155.

one else. A few fragments, however—i, 21–22; iii, 2–3; iv, 1–9; iv, 16–v, 5; v, 17–20; vi, 3–10—stand out from the padding in which they are embedded. These fragments are distinguished by a real, but rather strained eloquence; and as they are written in the first person plural, they may form part of a genuine joint letter of Paul and Timothy (perhaps written by Timothy on Paul's instructions) to their converts in Corinth and other Greek cities. They restate the Gnostic doctrine that the world is the domain of the devil and that man's true home is in heaven. The rest of 2 Corinthians is by later hands.

Another early section in the Pauline Epistles (not, however, by Paul himself) consists of Rom. xii, 3–xiii, 7, and xiv, 1–3, 5–6, 13, 17. This is entirely devoted to practical exhortation, and contains a significant passage warning Christians to submit to the Roman Empire and to pay tribute. To those accustomed to think of early Christians as invariably non-resisters, such a warning must seem redundant. But the name " Christian," as we have seen, had originally a political connotation. Those authentic *Christiani* or Messianists, whose " constant disturbances " had led Claudius to expel the Jews from Rome, must have been a continual embarrassment to Pauline missionaries, while on the other hand such advice as the above must have seemed sheer yellow-livered defeatism to popular Messianists.

The question whether Roman rulers were a " terror to the good work " or " to the evil " was soon to be put to practical proof. In 54 Claudius had been poisoned by his wife, Agrippina, and succeeded by her son, Nero. The accession of that unbalanced artist

to the imperial dignity did not immediately affect the government of the Empire. To the majority of its inhabitants the personal character of the emperor made little or no difference. Given the fact of a society resting on mass slavery and exploitation, the Roman world in the early years of Nero's reign was as well administered as it had ever been. But the nemesis of any society so based is degeneration of the heart and head. Three-fourths of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves—people without freedom, without country, and without hope. The object of the Roman, Italian, and provincial plutocracy was to live securely and with a minimum of boredom on the labour of those three-fourths. Gang labour on the great slave-worked estates of Italy and Sicily led to the ruin of land by inefficient cultivation and to the dependence of Rome on the provinces (chiefly Egypt) for her food supply. The Roman *plebs* were kept quiet by cheap bread and costly gladiatorial shows. In the absence of a real common interest, the Empire could be held together only by force and by investing the emperor with a halo of divinity which to the weak brain of a Caligula or a Nero proved completely demoralizing. The exploiters of the Mediterranean world, finding a man-god necessary in order to impress the masses, had to put up as best they could with the Frankenstein monster they had created. In slavery at the bottom, in sycophancy at the top, in deliberate brutalization of the people, and in all-round cultural decay, Roman imperialism and modern Fascism present an impressive parallel.

About the year 58 Paul and a number of his fellow-

missionaries left Greece for Jerusalem. Our earliest authority, the travel diarist of Acts xx–xxi, who accompanied them, assigns no reason for the journey. But in the speech put into the mouth of Paul in Acts xxiv (which is not part of the travel diary) he is made to say, "I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings"; and this agrees with the statements in Rom. xv, 25–28, and 1 Cor. xvi, 1–4 (both in second century additions to the Epistles) that the purpose of the visit was to carry a contribution from the Gentile churches to the "poor saints" of Jerusalem. It is curious that the author of the Acts, though he records an earlier contribution of the same kind (xi, 27–30), alludes only indirectly to this one, while the Epistles, which mention this contribution, know nothing of the earlier one and by implication exclude it (Gal. i–ii). In all probability Paul only once took Gentile money to Jerusalem. His object in so doing was to fight political Messianism at the source by using funds raised in Greece and Macedonia to relieve the economic distress which gave rise to it. The upshot, however, was so disastrous that the author of the Acts has deleted from xx–xxi all reference to the object of the journey and has antedated the relief visit to xi, 27–30. The failure to delete the reference to "alms" in xxiv, 17, is probably due to the fact that the author left his work uncompleted and unrevised.

The travel diarist gives an account of the journey up to the arrival of the mission at Jerusalem and its reception by James. From that point on (Acts xxi, 18) the narrative has evidently been manipulated. We are told nothing of the handing over of the money, which in the Epistles is the principal object of the

visit. Instead, James draws Paul's attention to the painful impression made on Jewish believers by his reported attacks on the Jewish law. In order to give the lie to such reports, he advises Paul to undergo a Jewish ceremonial purification in the temple. He also reminds Paul of the rules imposed on Gentile converts in regard to meat offered to idols and the like. Paul agrees to the temple ceremony. While performing it, he is recognized by some Jews from Asia Minor, accused of profaning the temple, and nearly lynched, but is rescued by the Roman commandant and taken into protective custody. He delivers several speeches in his own defence: one to the Jewish mob, to whom he relates his miraculous conversion at Dasmascus; one to the Sanhedrin, to whom he represents himself as a Pharisee called in question for his belief in the resurrection of the dead; and one to Felix, the Roman procurator, who detains him for two years at Cæsarea in the hope that he will buy his release with a bribe. Festus, who succeeds Felix (about A.D. 60), offers to try Paul; but he appeals to the emperor. While waiting embarkation for Rome, Paul is examined by the Herodian prince Agrippa II, to whom he again relates the miracle of his conversion. An excerpt from the travel diary tells us of his voyage, shipwreck, and arrival at Rome. The Acts end abruptly with Paul still awaiting his trial.

That Paul was arrested at Jerusalem and eventually sent to Rome there is no reason to doubt. But the details of the narrative are highly questionable. Why, for instance, is the author of the Acts silent on Paul's presentation of the money he had collected and on its reception by James? Can it be that the gift was not

welcomed? If so, the narrator's silence is intelligible. Did Paul, who had publicly treated the Jewish law as superseded by union with God in Christ, really agree to go through a mumming performance in the temple in order to appear to the onlookers what he certainly was not—a scrupulous Jew? It is hardly credible. Did this Greek-speaking Gnostic of the dispersion really represent himself to the Jewish mob, to the Sanhedrin, and to Agrippa as a Pharisee, educated at Jerusalem under Gamaliel and now called in question only for his belief in the resurrection? It is again incredible.

Paul had for years been preaching and writing against the Jewish law, against political Messianism, and in favour of a new mystery religion opposed to both. He had earned the hostility of orthodox Jews and of Nazarene Messianists alike. His mere appearance at Jerusalem was likely to provoke disturbance: his offer of money to the fanatical Messianists was likely to throw oil on the flames. The probable truth, therefore, is that Paul's contribution to the relief of the poor of Jerusalem was refused, and that the rumour of such an offer by such a man helped to provoke the riot which led to his arrest. The speeches attributed to Paul, like other speeches in the Acts, are compositions of the author and in themselves of no historical value.

What befell Paul at Rome can only be conjectured. The later Epistles attributed to him do not contain enough genuine matter on which to base any certain conclusions. The short Epistle to Philemon is probably genuine (apart from one or two touches put in to adapt it for church reading), but is historically

unimportant. We do not even know the result of Paul's appeal to the emperor. 2 Tim. iv (early second century) implies that he was liberated, but subsequently rearrested and put to death. Rom. xv (probably later) points to a tradition that he went from Rome to Spain. History loses sight of him.

In 64 a great part of Rome was destroyed by fire. Tacitus leaves it in doubt whether the fire was due to accident or to the deliberate act of Nero: Suetonius declares the emperor guilty and attributes his action to displeasure at the ugliness of the old buildings and streets. His responsibility seems to have been generally assumed at the time. "Consequently," says Tacitus, "to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace [1]. . . . An arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty (*primum correpti, qui fatebantur*); then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for

[1] Here follows the passage on the origin of Christianity quoted at the end of Chapter VII.

it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed." [1] Suetonius does not connect the executions with the fire, but merely records among the salutary measures of Nero's reign that "punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition."

These are the earliest references to Christianity by Roman historians. It is probable that Suetonius connected the Christians executed by Nero with the "Chrestus" whom he mentions as having instigated riots under Claudius fifteen years before: i.e., he intended to denote political Messianists—*Christiani* in the original sense of the word—who had been expelled from Rome by Claudius, but had drifted back after his death. Such people, who looked for the early overthrow of the Roman Empire to make room for the kingdom of God, could more plausibly be accused of "hatred against mankind" and of actual incendiarism than the non-resisting disciples of Paul.

A further point worthy of notice is the statement of Tacitus that "an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty," or, more literally, "all who were avowing it." This implies that the avowals preceded the arrests and were not, therefore, extorted by torture. We are not told whether the persons arrested were

[1] *Annals* xv, 44, translated by Church and Brodribb. The authenticity of this passage and of the *Annals* as a whole has been challenged. But the authenticity of the *Annals* is proved by their agreement in minute detail with coins and inscriptions of the period which have been discovered in modern times. As to the particular passage, no Christian would have forged so hostile a description of Christianity.

those who avowed Christianity or those who avowed setting fire to Rome. True, Suetonius asserts, and Tacitus allows the possibility that Nero caused the fire. Events of our own day unfortunately show us how these things are managed. Nero's secret police no doubt incited some Messianist fanatics to start the conflagration, just as the Nazis incited the degenerate Van der Lubbe to fire the Reichstag in order that they might accuse the Communists. The fire once under way, they arrested their dupes and compelled them by torture to implicate others. Thus Nero was able to gratify his taste for town planning and at the same time to deal with subversive agitation in Rome more thoroughly than any of his predecessors had done.

The "immense multitude," according to Tacitus, of those convicted increases the probability that most of the victims were Messianists rounded up in the ghetto rather than Christians in the later sense of the word. The Jewish colony in Rome numbered many thousands; and among the poorer Jews Messianism was rife. No doubt some Pauline Christians, and probably Paul himself, were among the sufferers. That which the Gnostic missionaries had feared and tried to prevent had come to pass. The Messianists of the ghetto had come into direct conflict with the Roman government; and the latter were not disposed to make fine distinctions. Gnostics who preached salvation through Christ Jesus were inevitably confounded with revolutionaries who looked for deliverance by the Messiah Joshua, and were involved in the same condemnation.

CHAPTER X

THE JEWISH TRAGEDY

In 66 the revolutionary ferment in Palestine came to a head. The procurator, Florus, seized part of the temple treasure in lieu of unpaid taxes, and, when the Jews demonstrated against him, marched on Jerusalem, sacked the upper city, and massacred or crucified some hundreds of the inhabitants. The people, under Zealot leadership, fought back and occupied the temple; and Florus had to retire to Cæsarea. Agrippa II, the Romanized client-king of northern Palestine, appeared at Jerusalem and counselled submission, but was compelled by popular anger to leave the city. The revolutionaries forced the priests to discontinue the daily sacrifice for the emperor, destroyed all records of debt, and massacred the Roman garrison. A surviving son of Judas of Galilee, Menahem by name, put himself at the head of the movement and entered the temple as a Messianic king, but was overpowered and slain by the priests and their partisans. The governor of Syria, Cestius Gallus, marched to the help of Florus, but had to retreat, leaving a large amount of war material in the hands of the Jews. The priestly aristocracy, though they had got rid of Menahem, were forced willy-nilly to throw in their lot with the national rising, and made the best of a bad job by trying to control it. They despatched commanders (among them the young priest Josephus, the future historian) to different parts

of Palestine, nominally to head the resistance to the Romans, but really to double-cross the revolutionaries and pave the way for capitulation.

The Roman general Vespasian was entrusted by Nero with the conduct of the war against the Jews. In 67 he reduced Galilee, city by city. Josephus relates smugly how he himself after the fall of Jotapata contrived to save his skin and to worm himself by gross flattery into the good graces of Vespasian. The Galilean Zealots and their leader, John of Gischala, betook themselves to Jerusalem. Their arrival sealed the doom of the treacherous priestly nobility. Numbers of the latter were arrested and put to death without trial, the high priest, Ananus, slain, and the high priesthood thrown open to election by lot. Meanwhile Vespasian continued the reduction of the country, and in 68 was preparing to besiege Jerusalem, when news arrived of the downfall and death of Nero.

The real masters of the Roman world, the armies, had at length wearied of the imperial æsthete. The legions of Gaul, Spain, and the Rhineland revolted; and Nero, deserted by his guards, fled from Rome and committed suicide. So few were the witnesses of his death that for years afterwards some people refused to credit it, and believed that Nero had escaped to Parthia and would return to wreak vengeance on his enemies. The death of the last descendant of Augustus led to a year of instability and civil war. Galba, the elderly successor of Nero, was overthrown in 69 by Otho, who in three months went down before Vitellius, the commander of the army of the Rhine. Finally the armies of the East and the Danube acclaimed Vespasian emperor, marched into Italy,

entered Rome after furious fighting (in which the Capitol was destroyed by fire), and made an end of Vitellius. Vespasian left his son, Titus, to finish the war with the Jews, and hastened to Rome to assume the reins of empire.

The Jewish patriots, unluckily for themselves, wasted the time thus gained in bloody internecine feuds. The leadership of John of Gischala, the Galilean Zealot, was disputed by two rivals, Simon of Gerasa, surnamed Bargiora (" son of a proselyte "), and a third leader named Eleazar. To the Nazarenes, who believed that the true Messiah had appeared and been crucified forty years before under Pontius Pilate, but would soon return in glory, these men were all impostors and their dissensions a proof of divine anger. Before the legions of Titus closed round Jerusalem, many, perhaps most, of the Nazarenes abandoned the city and migrated to Pella east of the Jordan. There are indications, however, that some of them remained at Jerusalem to the end.

To this time belongs what is probably the earliest of those " oracles " later incorporated in the Gospel narrative—the so-called " little apocalypse " preserved in Matt. xxiv, Mark xiii, and Luke xxi.

The phrase, " let him that readeth understand," shows that this prophecy was originally written and not spoken; and the topical allusions show that it was written during the war of 66–70. The term " abomination of desolation," applied by the author of the Book of Daniel to the altar of Olympian Zeus erected in the temple by Antiochus, is here transferred to the Roman eagles. The Messianic title, " Son of Man," is derived from the Book of Enoch. The pro-

phecy purports to have been spoken nearly a " generation " before the events to which it refers, and was probably therefore from the first attributed to Jesus. The fact that it could be so attributed illustrates the difficulty of accepting Gospel discourses as genuine.

The nature of the Messianic kingdom to which the ordinary Pharisee or Zealot looked forward may be gathered from the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, a composite work of which the earlier sections date from A.D. 50–70. After the Roman Emperor and his armies have been slaughtered by the Messiah, a kingdom is established of which the principal feature is abundance of food and drink. The elect will feast on the mythical monsters Behemoth and Leviathan; every vine will bear a thousand branches, every branch a thousand clusters, every cluster a thousand grapes, and every grape yield a *cor* (eighty gallons) of wine; and manna will drop from heaven. There will be no sorrow, anguish, or premature death. The Messianic kingdom will be followed by a general resurrection of the dead and a last judgment. Since Papias in the second century attributes to Jesus a similar prophecy of a millennium of plenty, there is no reason to suppose that the expectations of the mass of primitive Christians differed essentially from the above. The exploited classes of the Roman Empire naturally envisaged their Utopia in such terms, just as the exploited negro of modern America naturally envisages heaven as an everlasting fish-fry with ten-cent cigars.

In the spring of 70 Titus and his army advanced on Jerusalem. The Zealots fought on with desperate fury. The events of the past year had led them to

hope for the break-up of the Roman Empire from within and for Parthian intervention; they had already sent emissaries to stir up revolt among the many Jewish colonies on the Euphrates; and they were buoyed up to the last by expectations of divine aid. Even after the Romans had invested Jerusalem; even while famine and pestilence raged in the overcrowded city, and the hills around were lined with crosses on which Titus executed his Jewish prisoners; even after the enemy had breached the fortifications and driven the defenders into the temple, prophecies of deliverance continued to circulate among the besieged and in Messianist circles elsewhere.

Echoes of these prophecies are preserved in the Apocalypse of John, though the book as a whole was written over twenty years later. Rev. vii, 1–8, and xi, 1–13, breathe the atmosphere of those days of crisis. In vii, 1–8, an angel seals in the forehead 144,000 of the twelve tribes of Israel to protect them from extermination. In xi the enemy are already within the walls. The prophet measures the temple with a rod, but not the outer court, indicating that the temple will be spared, but that everything outside it will be taken by the Romans; "and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months"—a reminiscence of the three years and a half during which Jerusalem had been profaned by Antiochus IV. During that time two prophets, like Moses and Elijah of old, will preach and work miracles in the captured city. The Romans (typified, on the analogy of the four empires in Dan. vii, by "the beast that cometh up out of the abyss") will kill them; but they will rise again and ascend to heaven in the sight of the

enemy. It is useless to try to interpret this passage. There were more than enough prophets in sackcloth, violent deaths, and unburied bodies in the streets during the siege of Jerusalem to suggest such details to the sombre imagination of the writer.[1] The reference in verse 8 to the crucifixion of Jesus indicates that the author was a Nazarene, unless it is an interpolation by a Christian adapter. It is the only verse of the Apocalypse which explicitly mentions the crucifixion.

Tacitus, after the manner of ancient historians, relates that before the fall of Jerusalem " armies were seen in heaven rushing against each other, weapons glittering, and of a sudden, amidst clouds, a temple shining in fire "—prodigies perhaps founded on an actual atmospheric effect at sunset.[2] In Rev. xi, 19, and xii, 7–9, 12, we seem to have a more imaginative treatment of the same theme:—

"And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven;
And there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant;
And there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders,
And an earthquake, and great hail . . .
And there was war in heaven:
Michael and his angels
Going forth to war with the dragon;
And the dragon warred and his angels;

[1] Any attempt to identify the " two witnesses " with historical figures (as by Eisler, *The Enigma of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 86–91, 94–101) is idle. The death and resurrection of the " witnesses " is placed by the writer of Rev. xi, 1–13, *after* the capture of Jerusalem, i.e. in the future, not in the past.

[2] Eisler, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

And they prevailed not,
Neither was their place found any more in heaven.
And the great dragon was cast down,
The old serpent,
He that is called the devil and Satan,
The deceiver of the whole inhabited earth;
He was cast down to the earth,
And his angels were cast down with him . . .
Therefore rejoice, O heavens,
And ye that dwell in them.
Woe for the earth and for the sea:
Because the devil is gone down unto you,
Having great wrath,
Knowing that he hath but a short time."

The same phenomenon which to the Roman portended the destruction of the Jewish temple and nation, to the Jew suggested the victory of Michael, the patron of Israel, over Satan, the patron of the pagan world-order, and the impending downfall of that world-order.

In xiv, 14–20, the Son of Man turns the tables on the enemies of Jerusalem. Seated on a cloud, he reaps the human harvest of the earth, and casts its grapes into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.[1]

In xvii we are shown the fate of Rome herself. The imperial city, with her Mediterranean empire and her client-kings, is personified, in language borrowed from the Old Testament prophets, as

" The great harlot
That sitteth upon many waters;

[1] In our text a copyist's error has led to the interpolation of a redundant verse (17). As a result, the casting of the grapes into the winepress is credited to an angel instead of to the Messiah, to whom it properly belongs. See Couchoud, *The Book of Revelation: A Key to Christian Origins*, p. 145.

With whom the kings of the earth committed fornication,
And they that dwell in the earth were made drunken
With the wine of her fornication."

The description of the woman " sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns," and with a golden cup in her hand, may have been suggested by a picture or statue of Cybele, the mother of the gods in pagan mythology, driving a pair of lions and bearing a drinking bowl.[1] Here, however, the woman is not Cybele, but Rome. Her doom is to be sacked and burnt by her own insurgent armies, led by Nero when he returns to deal destruction to his enemies.

" And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints,
And with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.
And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder.
And the angel said unto me,
Wherefore didst thou wonder?
I will tell thee the mystery of the woman,
And of the beast that carrieth her,
Which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. . . .
The seven heads are seven mountains,
On which the woman sitteth:
And they are seven kings;
The five are fallen,
The one is,
The other is not yet come;
And when he cometh, he must continue a little while . . .
The waters which thou sawest,

[1] Couchoud, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–74.

Where the harlot sitteth,
Are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast,
These shall hate the harlot,
And shall make her desolate and naked,
And shall eat her flesh,
And shall burn her utterly with fire . . .
And the woman whom thou sawest
Is the great city
Which hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth."

This chapter as it stands in our Bibles has been considerably amplified. The reference in verse 6 to " the martyrs of Jesus " has been thought to be an interpolation by the Christian adapter of an originally Jewish prophecy. It is quite possible, however, that the original writer was a Nazarene, and that the reference is to the Messianists executed by Nero in 64. " The prophet replies to the executions for arson and hate of the human race with a cry of hate against Rome and a ferocious picture of its future destruction." [1] In verse 10 the five kings who are " fallen " are the emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero; the one who " is " is Vespasian, under whom the prophecy is written; and the one " not yet come " is the returning Nero, supposed to be a fugitive in Parthia. Verses 8 and 11–14 (here omitted) were inserted to accord with the later belief that Nero would return, not from Parthia, but from hell, and that after a last great persecution of the Christians he would be

[1] Couchoud, *op. cit.*, p. 152. Couchoud assigns almost the whole Apocalypse to 64–70. This conclusion, however, is incompatible with internal evidence and with the opinion of most critics.

finally conquered by Jesus himself at his second coming.

The Gnostic followers of Paul viewed the last struggle of Jerusalem in a very different light from the Nazarene Messianists. They were concerned to prevent the fanaticism of the Zealots from infecting their converts in Greece and Asia Minor and involving them in new trouble with Rome. With this object they circulated an epistle modelled on that addressed by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the Thessalonians nearly twenty years before, and designed in some respects to correct it.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul and his colleagues had told their converts to wait patiently for the day when the Lord Jesus would transport them to a happier world above the clouds—a day which might come at any moment "as a thief in the night." That letter, though intended to counteract Messianist excitement by turning it into an other-worldly channel, had perhaps not unnaturally failed to do so. The widespread expectations of an end of the existing order induced by the war in Judæa and by the imperial crisis of 69 no doubt affected the Pauline congregations of the Aegean as well as the Messianists of Palestine.

2 Thessalonians is intended to allay the ferment. Like 1 Thessalonians this Epistle bears the names of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy; but its style and contents belie the superscription. It tells its readers that the "day of the Lord" is *not* at hand, and that before it comes there will be a "falling away." A "man of sin," a "son of perdition," at present subject to restraint, will be freed from it and will appear in the

temple at Jerusalem, setting himself up as God and deceiving by " lying wonders " those who " believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." When the Lord Jesus comes, he will destroy this " lawless one " and his followers. The readers of the Epistle are urged to stand fast by what they were taught, stick to their daily work, and avoid disorderly people and busybodies.

If Paul had really written this Epistle, we should surely have found in the writings attributed to him some other mention of the " man of sin " and his doings. But we do not; and that fact, added to peculiarities of vocabulary, discredits the Epistle. In 2 Thess. ii, 5, Paul is alleged to have told the Thessalonians about the " man of sin " during his visit. Yet 1 Thessalonians, written soon after the visit, ignores the topic. It is more likely that someone writing after Paul's death, and wishing to combat Messianic fanaticism among Pauline converts, used Paul's name to give authority to his polemic, than that Paul himself in a second letter to Thessalonica should have made statements so at variance with his first letter and then never have referred to the matter again.

The identity of " the man of sin " and the force which restrains him have been much discussed. The coupling of this passage with a warning against workshies and busybodies suggests that the Epistle is aimed at Zealot agitators and that the writer has in view contemporary events in Judæa. Probably no one individual is intended. John of Gischala and his Galilean followers, who exterminated the priestly aristocracy, turned the temple into a fortress, and incited the people through the mouths of prophets to

resist the Romans to the death, may have suggested the idea of the " man of sin " sitting in the temple of God and deceiving the people with " lying wonders." But John of Gischala did not set up to be God and can hardly have sat alone for this portrait. The terms in which the " man of sin " is described (" he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God ") are borrowed from those applied in Dan. xi to Antiochus IV. Suetonius throws some light on the subject. He relates that Nero was informed by astrologers that, when he lost Rome, he would still be ruler of the East, and that some expressly promised him the kingdom of Jerusalem. This prophecy must have been made at a time when the Jewish war was already raging. We know that after Nero's death the belief persisted that he was alive among the Parthians, waiting his chance to return. The Jewish Zealots naturally hoped for Parthian support against Rome. The author of 2 Thessalonians may have meant maliciously to turn the language of Jewish apocalyptic against the Jews themselves by insinuating that they would welcome the returning Nero in their temple as the true Messiah if only the restraining force of the Roman legions were out of the way.

In August, A.D. 70, the temple was stormed and burnt to the ground by the soldiers of Titus, thousands of Jews perishing in the flames. A month later the last resistance at Jerusalem was extinguished in fire and blood. Of the Jewish prisoners some were crucified out of hand, some reserved for Titus's triumph, and the rest sent to labour in the mines or to perish in the arena. The city was demolished except

for a few buildings which served as quarters for the Roman garrison. The last remaining stronghold in Judæa, Masada on the Dead Sea, was reduced in 73, the Zealot garrison killing their wives and children and themselves rather than fall into Roman hands. In the same year disturbances among the Jews of Egypt, fomented by fugitives from Palestine, led to the closing by the Romans of the Jewish temple at Leontopolis, which had been in use since the Maccabean era. The Jews of the Empire were henceforth required to pay their temple tax into the treasury of Jupiter Capitolinus at Rome. At Cyrene a number of the poorer Jews, led by a weaver named Jonathan, tried to escape from Roman rule by trekking into the desert. The wealthier Jews informed against them; they were cut down by cavalry, and Jonathan was taken to Rome and burnt alive.

Though active revolt was crushed, hatred of Rome and expectation of a visible Messianic kingdom remained, not only in Palestine, but in every centre of the Jewish dispersion. With it went bitter resentment against those who inculcated abandonment of national hopes, and a bitter feud, therefore, between Messianists and Gnostics. Fugitives from Palestine filtered into the ghettos of the Roman world, breathing hatred for the conquerors and scorn for the preachers of reconciliation.

It was about this time that there began to be circulated, first in Palestine in Aramaic and then elsewhere in Greek, those "oracles of the Lord" (perhaps, as Papias says, from the hand of Matthew) which purported to relate the sayings and doings of Jesus the Nazarene, crucified by Pilate a generation before.

This primitive Gospel admits only of conjectural reconstruction; but its contents can to some extent be gathered by a critical analysis of the Synoptists, particularly the sections derived from the source Q.[1] It began with an account of John the Baptist, the revolutionary preacher of the kingdom of God, and went on to describe the teaching of Jesus. It depicted Jesus as the Jewish Messiah of popular expectation. He comes " not to destroy, but to fulfil " the law and the prophets. He promises blessings to the poor and hungry and woes to the rich. He attacks the scribes and Pharisees, not for insisting on the law, but for evading it and neglecting " judgment, and mercy, and faith." He tells his followers that they cannot serve two masters, God and riches. They are to seek first the kingdom of God; and then " all these things " (food, drink, and clothes, as the context shows) " shall be added unto you." His message is not for the prosperous, but for the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame, the people of the highways and hedges. He himself has not " where to lay his head." He comes " not to send peace, but a sword." He who loves father or mother, son or daughter, or his own life too much to risk a Roman cross is not worthy of him. " From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven is being stormed, and stormers take it by force." What we have of this document consists almost wholly of discourse. The narrative part has been overlaid and almost obliterated by later matter. But we may infer that it recorded the insurrection which led to the death of Jesus, the entry into Jerusalem, the acclamations and shouts of " Deliver

[1] See Chapter VII.

us!" (in Aramaic, *oshana*), the invasion of the temple, and the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus as "king of the Jews." We know that it represented the Jewish tragedy as a punishment, foretold by Jesus himself, for the shedding of so much righteous blood. And it predicted that in the lifetime of some who had known him he would return to destroy the wicked and inaugurate the kingdom of God. Then the great would be humbled, the humble would be exalted, his twelve apostles would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and everyone who had left all and followed him would be rewarded a hundredfold.

This primitive Gospel, committed to writing about the time of the fall of Jerusalem, may or may not tell us what Jesus had said and done forty years before; but it does tell us what his followers by that time believed or wished to believe that he had said and done. A Nazarene Messiah had been executed by Pontius Pilate: the Nazarenes of the next generation put into his mouth their favourite notions (some of them commonplaces of popular Judaism) on right and wrong, the wickedness of the world, the sufferings of the present, and the glories of the future. In so far as the story and teaching of Jesus still appeal to the common man, it is because common men to a very large extent created that story and teaching.

These subversive "oracles" of Jesus the Nazarene, when circulated in Greek, made an appeal in the underworld of the Mediterranean with which the Gnostics found it hard to compete. They had to defend themselves against the charge of indifference to the calamities which had befallen the Jews, and to meet the propaganda of ardent Messianists whose

actual Jesus of flesh and blood was more real to ordinary men and women than the mystical Christ Jesus of Pauline theology. In order to achieve the first object, a Gnostic writer issued an enlarged edition of certain of the Pauline letters, breathing a more conciliatory spirit towards Judaism than had been characteristic of Paul himself. This writer is a Jew by birth, steeped in the Old Testament and quoting it at every turn, fond of allegorical interpretation in the manner of Philo, and with a polished, rhetorical style. It has been conjectured that he was none other than Apollos, the learned Jew of Alexandria, "mighty in the scriptures," who is mentioned in Acts xviii, 24–28, and in various passages of the Pauline Epistles.[1] Whoever he was, this editor combined the genuine Pauline matter of Rom. i–ii and vi–viii with the other early matter of xii–xiv, and inserted a homily of his own composition (ix, 1–10, 12, 27–29; x, 1–10, 13–21; xi, 13–27, 30–36) in which he makes Paul comment in suitably general terms on the Jewish disasters which he did not live to see. Apart from this anachronism, the abrupt break between the mystical exaltation of viii and the almost tearful opening of ix prove that they were not originally connected. Paul is made to say that he is very sorry for the Jews, but that their troubles are not new. All through their history, as the Old Testament shows, they have been "a disobedient and gainsaying people." They have now suffered again for their ignorant zealotry and their refusal to accept the mystical Christ of the Pauline gospel. They have been lopped away, like branches from an olive tree, to make room for others from a

[1] Rylands, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

different stock (Paul's Gentile converts); but if they repent and believe, "God is able to graft them in again."

The same writer combined the genuine letters of Paul and Sosthenes in 1 Corinthians, and inserted a piece of his own (x, 1–21) in which he takes a stricter line than Sosthenes had done on the subject of meat offered to idols. The tone in which the matter is treated here is very different from the tolerant opportunism of viii in dealing with the same topic.

The same editor is responsible for a short interpolation in 2 Corinthians (vi, 11–vii, 1) exhorting the readers of that Epistle against association with idolaters. The tendency of these passages is to stress the social cleavage between Christians and pagans, and thus to provide an answer to those Jewish Messianists who regarded the disciples of Paul as mere rats from the sinking ship of Judaism.

In order to counter the "oracles of the Lord" circulated by the Messianists, the Gnostics had to put forward a Gospel of their own. Such a work, as we have seen, was actually issued at Rome soon after A.D. 75 and forms the basis of our second Gospel. The author may well have been named Mark, and may have been identical with the "John whose surname was Mark" mentioned in the Acts as a companion of Paul and Barnabas. But the statement of Papias that he recorded accurately the reminiscences of Peter concerning the sayings and doings of Jesus does not fit the contents of the Gospel. If Mark was ever Peter's "interpreter," the association can hardly have been long or happy. Mark is definitely a disciple of Paul. By the time he wrote, the story of the execution of

Jesus the Nazarene by Pontius Pilate had been too widely disseminated to be ignored, as Paul had ignored it. Mark therefore adopts the Palestinian framework of the preaching of the kingdom of God, the triumphal entry, and the crucifixion. But he assimilates the Nazarene Messiah as much as possible to the Christ of Pauline theology. The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism; and from that moment he is the Son of God, whom the demons of disease and death fear and obey. He commands the wind, walks on water, and converses on a mountain top with Moses and Elijah. He abrogates the Jewish sabbatical and dietary rules and declares all meats clean. He repudiates his mother and brethren, and declares that his followers are his family. He ministers to Gentiles as well as Jews. Mark suppresses almost entirely the discourses attributed to Jesus in the Nazarene Gospel, and gives us the impression that the teaching of Jesus was usually wasted on such poor creatures as Peter, James, and John. Mark also suppresses the clash with the Romans which led to the crucifixion of Jesus, but carelessly leaves a reference to " the insurrection " in xv, 7, to prove that an armed clash figured in the earlier narrative. Mark represents Jesus as enjoining the payment of tribute to Rome, and in flat contradiction to probability and to everything which history relates of the character of Pilate, depicts that procurator as anxious to save a prisoner who openly claimed to be king of the Jews, and as crucifying him only to please the multitude. The Spirit which descended on Jesus at his baptism, and by virtue of which he is the Son of God, abandons him on the cross: hence the despairing cry in xv, 34.

The oldest MSS. of Mark's Gospel end at xvi, 8. We do not know how he treated the resurrection. But it is impossible that his work should have ended with the bald statement, " they were afraid." The original ending appears to have been so offensive to the Christian orthodoxy of later years that copyists omitted it altogether. The Gnostic doctrine of the resurrection is given in 1 Cor. xv, 12–58. That section was probably added to 1 Corinthians about the time when Mark wrote. Its style differs from that of Paul: its swift, abrupt, elliptic sentences are quite unlike the ample flow of, say, 1 Cor. ii. But it is fairly early. Now the writer of this section insists that the risen body is not composed of flesh and blood, but is something " heavenly " and " spiritual "—comparable, in his opinion, to the sun, moon, and stars.[1] If Mark attributed a body of this sort to the risen Jesus, we can understand why Christians of the second century, who wanted a tangible Christ of flesh and blood, deleted his conclusion.[2]

As Roman rule bore harder on the Jews, the cleavage between Jews and Gentiles, and therefore between those Christians who shared Jewish national customs and aspirations and those Christians who did

[1] In the ancient world the heavenly bodies were gods. To the Jews and Gnostics they were angels or demons, the " principalities and powers " of the Pauline Epistles. Only a minority of philosophers regarded them as physical objects.

[2] The theory favoured by mythicists, that Mark's Gospel is pure symbolism from beginning to end, pays too high a compliment to his ability. Couchoud justly describes Mark as " a commonplace writer with a limited vision, no style, but clear, emotional, communicative, and interesting " (*Enigma of Jesus*, p. 54). His lack of style earned him the nickname of " Stump-fingers " from early commentators. He was quite unequal to concocting an elaborate allegory.

not, became more acute. Vespasian was succeeded in 79 by his son Titus, and he in 81 by his brother Domitian. That emperor tightened up the collection of the Jewish temple tax and punished Jews who tried to evade it by concealing their origin. Conversion to Judaism was forbidden on pain of death or confiscation of property. It thus became a grimly practical question how far, if at all, Christians were obliged to observe the Jewish law. Gentile converts who accepted circumcision, or who, without going so far as that, made themselves socially conspicuous by observing the sabbath, or by refusing meat that had been sacrificed to idols or that had not been bled, risked their lives. Those, on the other hand, who ignored the Jewish law might with good fortune go unmolested. There was thus a strong inducement to Gentile converts to adopt a Pauline rather than a Judaic view of their obligations. But that very fact served to embitter the conflict between the Messianists of the ghetto and their Gnostic opponents. To the former, writhing under Domitian's inquisition, the Jewish way of life was a bond of fellowship in adversity, and the followers of Paul seemed to them false Jews seeking to save their skins by base compliance in the hour of Israel's tribulation. Paul's memory fell under a cloud. To some Christians Apollos of Alexandria seemed a worthier teacher. But to most the Palestinian apostles, with Peter at their head and with the prestige of personal followers of Jesus, seemed to be the veritable " pillars " of the Church and the only channels of true tradition.

The followers of Paul defended their master by circulating new Epistles, or new editions of old Epistles,

in his name. 1 Cor. i and iii–iv contain interpolations by different hands made about this time. iii, 1–15, and iv, 6–21, deal with those who decried Paul in favour of Apollos. The tone taken is moderate, for Paul and Apollos were both Gnostics: "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." i, 10–15, anticipates the Catholicism of the next century in an appeal for unity. iii, 16–iv, 5, strikes a sterner note and charges the detractors of Paul with "destroying the temple of God," i.e. the Christian congregations which Paul had founded.

But the greatest piece of Pauline polemic dating from this period is 2 Cor. x–xii. The vigorous, impassioned style and controversial tone of these chapters are in strong contrast to the rambling verbosity of most of the earlier part of this Epistle, and at a first glance convey the impression that they are from the pen of Paul himself, fighting with his back to the wall against personal attacks. It is noticeable, however, that although in these chapters Paul ostensibly defends himself against opponents, no opponent is specified. The writer denotes his antagonists by such terms as "some," "any man," "such a one," "certain of them that commend themselves," "them which desire an occasion," but never by name. This is odd if the polemic is directed by Paul himself against contemporaries of his own, but natural if it is directed by a personator of Paul after his death against detractors who cannot be named without anachronism, since they are contemporaries of the writer, not of the apostle. The three chapters are a masterpiece of sustained irony, defending Paul from the charge of being a weakling, bold only on paper; asserting his

equality with "the very chiefest apostles"; and appealing to his record as a missionary, his disinterestedness, his sufferings, his supernatural experiences, and his bodily infirmities. It is noteworthy that the detractors of Paul in 2 Cor. x–xii, among their charges against him, do not refer to his having persecuted the Church, and that in the reply put into his mouth he does not mention the vision on the road to Damascus. Apparently the story of the miraculous conversion was not yet current when these chapters were written.

The author of 2 Cor. x–xii probably also wrote, in its original form, the Epistle to the Galatians. Freed from interpolations, this includes Gal. i, 6, 9, 11–12a, 15–22; ii, 1a, 2, 4–6, 9–16a, 18–20; iii, 23–28; iv, 1–6, 8–16, 19–20; v, 1. Its purpose is to vindicate Paul's title to equal authority with the Palestinian apostles, and to resist the demand that Gentile Christians should conform to the Jewish law, especially in regard to circumcision and dietary rules. The historical value of Galatians and its utility as a check on the narrative of the Acts have already been discussed. Whether the interview between Paul and the "pillar" apostles, and the subsequent clash with Peter, related in Gal. ii ever occurred, whether indeed Paul and Peter ever met, is uncertain; but the fact that a follower of Paul in the first century could write in such terms of the chief apostles provides an eloquent comment on the myth of a united Church. The Epistle has been much amplified by second century editors.[1] The four verses i, 13–14, 23–24, referring to Paul's persecution of the Church, are interpolations.

[1] See Rylands, *op. cit.*, pp. 301–316.

It is further noteworthy that in describing his conversion (i, 15–16) Paul is made to say: "It was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal his Son *in* me" (*en emoi*), not "*to* me" (*emoi*), plainly indicating an inner experience, not a miraculous vision.

When all was said and done, the fact remained that in the circumstances of Domitian's reign the Gnostics were playing for safety. The most impassioned Pauline apologist could not hope to compete in mass appeal with such a literary thunderbolt as was hurled from the opposite camp between the years 93 and 96. A Jewish Messianist in Asia Minor collected some of the anti-Roman prophecies circulated during the siege of Jerusalem, amplified them considerably with matter of his own, and so produced the work known from early times as the Apocalypse or Revelation of John. The author no doubt intended it to pass as the work of John, son of Zebedee, one of the "pillar" apostles. It was so regarded by Justin half a century later. Apocalypses were invariably pseudonymous; besides which we know from a statement of Papias (preserved by two Byzantine chroniclers) that John was "slain by Jews"—either in one of the tumults preceding the fall of Jerusalem in 70, or at some earlier date—and therefore could not have written a book twenty years later. Certain Christians of the second and third centuries who rejected the Apocalypse maintained that the real author was Cerinthus, a worthy who flourished at the end of the first century and was execrated by the Fathers of the Church for his heretical blend of Messianism and Gnosticism. The ascription has been revived in recent years and is by no means impossible. The name "Cerinthus" ("honeycomb")

was one given to slaves; and the heretic was probably of servile origin. This accords with the ungrammatical ghetto Greek—the worst in the New Testament—in which the book is written. Cerinthus, though a Jew by descent, is said to have studied in Egypt; and Egyptian mythology and astrology and even Egyptian idioms have been traced in the Apocalypse.[1]

The author, whether Cerinthus or another, seems to have circulated his work in two successive editions. The first edition began with Rev. i, 1–3, and proceeded at once to iv–xxi, 8. The second edition, issued not long after the first, began with i, 4–iii, incorporated iv–xvi from the older edition, and added xxi, 9–xxii. A later editor wove the two editions into one, with the result that the present book has two starts (i, 1–3, and i, 4–8) and two finishes (xvii–xxi, 8, and xxi, 9–xxii), and that certain passages occur twice (John worshipping the angel, xix, 10, and xxii, 8–9; descent of new Jerusalem from heaven, xxi, 2, and xxi, 10–11).[2]

In the first edition the author declares his book to be a revelation by Jesus Christ to John of "things which must shortly come to pass." Rapt up into heaven, the prophet sees Jahveh as Ezekiel saw him—a dazzling crystalline form seated on a throne, encircled by a rainbow, and worshipped by four cherubim and four and twenty elders. God holds a sealed book which none can open but the Messiah, "the lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David." The Messiah is introduced as "a Lamb standing, as

[1] Eisler, *Enigma of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 107–109, 128.
[2] Couchoud, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 20–22. There are many rival analyses. This seems the most plausible.

though it had been slain," by whose death " men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation " are redeemed from bondage and will reign on earth as kings and priests. He opens the seals one by one: four horsemen, typifying conquest, war, famine, and pestilence, ride over the earth; and eclipses and earthquakes prepare us for the end. Here the author inserts the siege prophecy of the sealing of 144,000 Israelites who are to be saved from extermination, and a supplementary vision of a white-robed multitude " out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues," who are to be redeemed by martyrdom in the " great tribulation " now imminent. Then the last seal is opened; and to the blast of angelic trumpets, plagues are rained on the earth—hail, fire, blood, wormwood, darkness, demon-locusts, and demon-horsemen, who kill one third of the human race.

At this point the author pauses, as it were, to take breath. The prophet, like Ezekiel of old, is made to swallow a little book and told that he must prophesy again. Here follows the fragment already mentioned relating to the siege of Jerusalem and the two witnesses. Then a new vision opens. " A woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars," gives birth to a man child, the Messiah. She and her child are threatened by a dragon with seven heads and ten horns; but the child is caught up to the throne of God, and the woman escapes on an eagle's wings into the desert. The imagery here seems to have been suggested by the Egyptian myth of Isis giving birth to Horus and escaping from the demon Seth. But in the Apocalypse the woman stands for Israel and the

dragon for Satan, the infernal patron of the enemies of Israel, particularly the Roman Empire. The vision of the woman and the dragon is interwoven by the author with the poem on Michael's victory written, as we have seen, during the siege of Jerusalem.

Balked of his prey, the dragon summons from the sea a sort of replica of himself, a seven-headed and ten-horned beast—modelled on the four monsters in Dan. vii and representing the Roman Empire. One of the seven heads is wounded to death, but healed. Here the author adopts the popular belief in the survival and impending return of Nero. The legend had been kept alive by the successive appearance of three impostors, each pretending to be Nero, in 69, 80, and 88. To the Christians Nero returning from Parthia, or as they came later to believe, from the other world, seemed a Satanic caricature of Jesus—the Antichrist, whose tyranny would immediately precede and herald the return of the Son of Man. In the Apocalypse, accordingly, the Beast with the wounded head is the infernal counterpart of the slain Lamb. Another beast (elsewhere called " the false prophet ") causes an image of Antichrist to be made and orders all to worship it on pain of death. Here, though the details are rather obscure, the author undoubtedly refers to the worship of the reigning emperor officially sanctioned by Domitian. Persons brought before a Roman governor under Domitian's edict forbidding conversion to Judaism would be invited to clear themselves by burning incense before a statue of the emperor. Refusal was tantamount to an act of treason and entailed the death penalty. It was probably in the course of such prosecutions

that the Roman authorities first became aware of the existence of Christians in any considerable numbers apart from Judaism. The author proceeds to identify Antichrist by a cryptogram. The " number of the Beast " is stated to be 666, or according to an early variant, 616. 666 is the sum of the numerical values of the letters of *Neron Cæsar* when written in Hebrew. If the final *n* of *Neron* is omitted, as it is in Latin and English, the Hebrew letters add up to 616.

The prophet next sees the Lamb (the Messiah) standing on Mount Zion with 144,000 adherents. The author has forgotten that the 144,000 represent the twelve tribes of Israel, and following an ascetic notion of his own, identifies them with " them which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." Angels flying in mid heaven call on mankind to repent while there is time, proclaim the downfall of Rome (" Babylon the great "), and threaten emperor-worshippers with eternal torment. Here the author inserts the prophecy of the harvest and the vintage, dating probably from the time of the siege. Then angels rain down new plagues on the unrepentant Empire—boils, waters turned to blood, scorching heat, darkness, and invasion by the Parthians (" the kings from the sunrising "). Demons assemble the kings of the earth to war at Har-Magedon (Megiddo in northern Palestine). Thunder, lightning, and earthquakes announce the doom of Rome. A picture of the mistress of the world as a drunken harlot riding on the seven-headed Beast (quoted earlier in the present chapter) is followed by a paean of vengeance couched in language reminiscent of the ancient prophets.

The Messiah on a white horse, his garments sprinkled with blood from the winepress of the wrath of God, leads the armies of heaven into battle; the Beast and the false prophet are taken and thrown into a lake of fire and brimstone; and the birds of the air fatten on the kings of the earth and their armies. Satan is cast into hell for a thousand years, during which time the Messiah and the martyrs and saints reign on earth. Then Satan is loosed; and hordes from the ends of the earth ("Gog and Magog"—names applied by Ezekiel to the Scythian invaders of Asia in the seventh century B.C.[1]) besiege Jerusalem for the last time. They are devoured by fire from heaven; and Satan joins the Beast and the false prophet in eternal torment. The general resurrection and the last judgment follow. The prophet sees a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem, where God dwells with men, and death and pain are no more.

"He that overcometh shall inherit these things;
And I will be his God,
And he shall be my son.
But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable,
And murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers,
And idolaters, and all liars,
Their part shall be in the lake
That burneth with fire and brimstone;
Which is the second death."

So, on a note of menace, the original Apocalypse ended. It was so popular that the author soon issued a second edition, in which he shortened the invective against Rome in order to make room for an

[1] See Chapter II.

attack on Gnostic Christians. This is prefixed to the work in the form of seven short epistles said to have been written by John from the Greek island of Patmos to Messianist congregations in Asia Minor. Whether John was ever in Patmos, or if so in what circumstances, is uncertain. Christian tradition dating back to the third century says that he was banished there; the Apocalypse, however, does not say this, but merely that he was there " for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." The visit to Patmos may have been invented by the author to provide a likely occasion for the letters to the seven churches. In these epistles John is made to fulminate against " them which call themselves apostles, and they are not "; " them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan "; " some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication "; and " the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." The personal reference here is obscure; but the general meaning is clear. The author reviles those whom he regards as false Jews, followers of false apostles, and whose main offence is that they ignore taboos which are incumbent on all who claim the name of Jew. The charge of fornication, if it is not mere vulgar abuse, may refer to marriages between Jews and Gentiles, prohibited by the Pentateuchal law. To discover the teaching which provoked these attacks, we need only turn to the Pauline Epistles. 1 Cor. vii, 12–15, allows mixed

marriages; and 1 Cor. viii allows the use of meat sacrificed to idols, provided no scandal is caused to weaker brethren. The author of the Apocalypse calls his opponents "Nicolaitans." Now Nicolas of Antioch is one of the seven "deacons" in Acts vi; and these, as we saw, were probably early Gnostic teachers who anticipated Paul's attacks on the Jewish law. The name "Nicolaitan," therefore, would be a natural designation for the whole party. The term, "the deep things of Satan," applied to their teaching in Rev. ii, 24, looks like a malicious parody of the term, "the deep things of God," applied by Paul to his own teaching in 1 Cor. ii, 10.

In this second edition of the Apocalypse the author seems to have omitted the prophecies of the fall of Rome, the millennium, and the last judgment, and to have substituted a more detailed account of the new Jerusalem. The city is seen descending from heaven to earth ready for immediate habitation, with its walls of jasper, foundations of precious stones, gates of pearl, and streets of pure gold. There is no temple, for God himself dwells there; no sun or moon, for God supplies its light. As in Ezekiel's vision, the new Jerusalem is watered by a river, on whose banks grow trees which bear fruit every month and whose leaves have healing properties. The prophet reiterates that the time of fulfilment is at hand, and pronounces a curse on any who interpolate or mutilate his book. The words, "Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus"—perhaps part of a primitive Christian liturgy—bring the Apocalypse to an end.

This, the most Jewish book in the New Testament,

tells us more of the inside of early Christianity than any of the rest. Far more than any Epistle, far more even than any Gospel, it reveals the mentality of the Mediterranean slave class and their dreams of revenge on the Roman Empire. Its author, who had perhaps been a slave himself, was one of the authentic *Christiani* who were thorns in the side of Paul and his like. The Pauline writers wish to keep their converts out of trouble: the author of the Apocalypse looks for it. They seek to conciliate and in the end to convert the Empire: he gloats over its coming destruction. His Messiah has little in common with the Christ of the Epistles or the Jesus of the Gospels. In one place (Rev. xix, 13) he is called " the Word of God "; but this proves only that the author could lift a Gnostic phrase when it suited him. Nothing could be less like the Philonian *logos*. On the other hand, the Messiah of the Apocalypse bears little resemblance to a human being. He is introduced as a supernatural personage in language borrowed from Ezekiel and Daniel. He is " the first and the last," " the Amen," " the Alpha and the Omega," " the beginning and the end." If we had only the Apocalypse to go by, we should not infer that Jesus had ever lived. The Lamb that was slain, the warrior with blood-stained garments, is no more Jesus the Nazarene than he is Jonathan the weaver, Simon Bargiora, Menahem, Judas of Galilee, Athronges, Simon of Peraea, or for that matter Spartacus of Thrace or Cleomenes of Sparta. He is a composite portrait of every rebel who writhed on a Roman cross, a representative and avenger of every slave who suffered and died in the great slave-prison of ancient civilization, a wish-fulfilling

myth coined by the agony and hatred of an oppressed class.

Except a few of the Gospel discourses, no book of the New Testament has seized men's imagination like the Apocalypse. Alpha and Omega, the four horsemen, the day of wrath, the demon Apollyon, Michael and his angels, the mark of the Beast, the harpers harping with their harps, Babylon the great, the scarlet woman, the great white throne, the book of life, Jerusalem the golden, have passed at first or at second hand into common speech. In spite of his ungrammatical Greek, the author is an artist in language—one of those whose power of word-painting exceeds their power of abstract thought. He is the legitimate successor of the Hebrew prophets, and the legitimate forerunner of Langland, Bunyan, and William Blake. To treat his book as "scripture" and to remove it from its historical setting is to do him the worst possible injustice. Read out of their historical context, the recurring visions of terror, destruction, blood, fire, brimstone, and eternal torment horrify and revolt us. Then we remember Nero's living torches, the crosses of Titus round Jerusalem, Domitian's inquisition, and the whole Jewish tragedy—and understand.

CHAPTER XI

CHURCH AND EMPIRE

THE repressive edicts of Domitian, though primarily aimed at Jews and converts to Judaism, soon affected Gentile Christians. Anyone, as we have seen, who wholly or partially observed Jewish customs—for example, an educated Pauline Christian who in deference to the scruples of weaker brethren refused meat that had been offered to idols—might be denounced as a convert to Judaism and required to clear himself by publicly worshipping a statue of the emperor. Though to him the statue was nothing, to thousands of poorer Christians it was the image of the Beast. He could not pass the test without appearing in their eyes a pagan and an apostate. In this way Pauline Christians were forced to take up common ground with the Messianists whom they had combated.

To this time (not later than A.D. 95) belongs the anonymous tract perversely called in our Bibles the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews. Its Pauline authorship was always disputed and never had any basis but conjecture; the rival theories which assign it to Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Apollos, Luke, or Aquila and Priscilla are no better founded; and it was certainly not addressed exclusively to Hebrews. It is the work of a Pauline Gnostic, and appears to have been originally circulated at Rome to confirm the faith of its readers in face of persecution.

They belong to the well-to-do class: the author speaks of them as " ministering to the saints " (vi, 10) and addresses them in a sophisticated, rhetorical style suitable to people of some education. He is afraid of their apostatizing under pressure: indeed, some have already done so. Such lapsed Christians, the author writes, are lost irrevocably. " They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame " (vi, 6). He warns the rest of the dreadful consequences of apostasy, reminds them of their record in the Neronian persecution (" the former days," x, 32), and perorates with a rather long-winded panegyric on the heroes of the Old Testament. He is the first epistolary writer to show any acquaintance with the Gospel story: he knows of the temptation (ii, 18; iv, 15) and of the agony in Gethsemane (v, 7) presumably from Mark, the original edition of whose Gospel had been published at Rome a few years before. The personal touches at the end (xiii, 18–25) may have been added to give the work the look of an epistle, which otherwise it certainly does not possess.

Common persecution tended to bring Gnostics and Messianists together. A further factor tending to organizational unity was the relative affluence of the Pauline minority, who appealed to educated Jews of the dispersion and Gentile sympathizers, and the poverty of the Messianists, who appealed to the disinherited masses. The poor " saints " needed the help of the Pauline converts; and the latter were ready to give it and to use it as a means of counteracting subversive agitation. It was perhaps at this time, when unity was in the air, that chapter xiii was

inserted in 1 Corinthians. That lyrical panegyric of love or charity (*agape*) is irrelevant to what precedes and what follows, and was probably interpolated by someone who, finding contemporary prophesyings not conspicuous for their charity, desired to bespeak apostolic sanction for the missing quality. xii, 31, and xiv, 1a, were inserted as bridges between the interpolation and its context.

When the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, the Pauline Christians of Rome, to whom it was addressed, had " not yet resisted unto blood " (xii, 4). Early in 96, however, Flavius Clemens, Domitian's own cousin, who had just held the Roman consulship, was put to death on a charge of " atheism and Jewish practices," and his wife Domitilla banished to an island on the same charge. There is no doubt that both were converts to Christianity. One of the earliest Christian burying-places in Rome is known from its epitaphs to have been situated on the property of Domitilla. The Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions* (third or fourth century) identify Clemens with Clement of Rome; and though the identification is not generally accepted, it is questionable whether that Father of the Church had any existence apart from the martyred ex-consul. We know from Dio Cassius that many others were condemned on similar charges.

The so-called *Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, which some Christian churches down to the fourth century included in the New Testament, does not bear the name of any individual, but is addressed by " the church of God which is at Rome to the church of God which is at Corinth." It seems to have been attributed to Clement for no other reason than that he was known

to have been prominent in the Roman church about the time when it was written. Internal evidence shows clearly that it is the work of a Jew by race. It is traditionally dated at the end of the reign of Domitian; and its opening reference to " the sudden and unexpected dangers and calamities that have fallen upon us " suits that date. Its occasion is a split in the Christian congregation at Corinth; and it is interesting for more reasons than one. It is the first Christian document which deliberately puts forward the fiction of primitive unity and which portrays Peter and Paul, not as rival apostles preaching two different and incompatible gospels, but as twin pillars of a united church. The Catholic myth is in process of formation. Further, the Epistle is important for the light it throws on the organization of the Church at the end of the first century. In the primitive Christian congregations there had been little or no organization. Travelling propagandists (" apostles "), preachers (" prophets "), and teachers held forth as the spirit moved them. But this could not go on. Accordingly at the end of the first century we find that each Christian church, like each Jewish synagogue, is governed and its funds administered by certain of its senior members, who are nominally subject to election by the whole congregation, but who have gradually (after the manner of officials) come to be regarded as having a right to continuity of office. They are called elders (*presbyteroi*) or bishops (*episkopoi*, " overseers "): there is as yet no distinction between the two titles. The elders are assisted by deacons (*diakonoi*, " servants " or " ministers "), who include both men and women, and whose function is to visit

the poorer members, disburse benefits, and arrange for the communal meal. According to the author of the *Epistle of Clement* the first bishops (i.e., elders) and deacons in each church were appointed by the apostles—the germ of the theory of "apostolic succession." That this is fiction is proved by the absence of any reference to it in the genuine letters of Paul or in any writing which can be considered to belong to the apostolic age. It was plainly an invention designed to magnify the office of the clergy and to tighten their hold on subversive and possibly revolutionary elements among the rank and file.

It is remarkable that *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, though probably in the main later than the *Epistle of Clement*, depicts a much more primitive organization. In it the chief Christian functionaries are travelling "apostles," "prophets," "teachers"; and they are kept very strictly in order. Detailed directions are given how to distinguish true from false leaders. Any "apostle" who stays three days in one place, or asks for money, or for more food than will see him through a day's journey, is a fraud. So is any "prophet" who in the course of his inspired utterances asks for money or anything else for himself. So is any Christian who refuses to work for his keep. Bishops and deacons fill only a minor rôle: they are elected by the local church, and their functions are dismissed in a couple of sentences. *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (if we may judge from its incorporation of the old Jewish *Two Ways*) originated in a poor Jewish Messianist community, probably in Syria, unaffected by Paulinism. Hence its democratic and primitive atmosphere. *The Epistle of Clement*,

on the other hand, originated at Rome, where the relations between the well-to-do Pauline minority and the poorer Jewish Messianist majority forced the question of Church government to the fore.

Eight months after the execution of Clemens, Domitian was assassinated by freedmen of the imperial family. The reaction which ensued against his memory and measures brought a respite to both Jews and Christians. Nerva, his successor, quashed proceedings still pending and issued a general amnesty. Nerva's successor, Trajan (98–117), was a Spaniard—one of those provincials who by military promotion had won their way into the ruling class of the Empire. The Romanization of the wealthier provincials was now almost complete. Though the whole fabric of the Empire rested on slavery and therefore on force, exploitation was no longer in the exclusive interest of a Roman or even Italian plutocracy, but of the Romanized or Hellenized upper class of the entire Mediterranean world. The Empire now extended from Britain to Mesopotamia and from the Danube to the Sahara, and to all appearance had achieved an assured stability. In reality it was dying at the heart. The ruin of the Italian peasantry by centuries of organized slave-labour had exhausted the source from which the conquerors of the Empire were drawn. Recruiting had almost ceased in Italy; and armies raised in the provinces, Roman only in name and framework, could be kept loyal only by pampering them at the expense of the civil population.

The Jews, beaten to their knees, neither forgot nor forgave. While Rabbis of the old Pharisaic tradition, settled with Roman permission at Jamnia in the

coastal plain of Palestine, preached submission to the will of God and the yoke of Rome, the rank and file of the nation still dreamt of turning the tables on their oppressors, and seem to have hoped that the downfall of Domitian would mean the break-up of the Empire. Their mood is reflected in the *Apocalypse of Ezra* (entitled 2 Esdras in our Apocrypha), written by an unknown Jew about A.D. 100. Chapters i–ii and xv–xvi of our text are late additions, so that the original work consists only of iii–xiv. It was written in Hebrew and translated into Greek; but the Hebrew and Greek texts have perished, and the work survives only in Latin and in various Oriental versions. Masking his identity under the name of Ezra, whom he supposes to have lived during the Babylonian exile, the author broods on the ways of God and impugns their justice. The angel Uriel tells him that the world is nearing its end, and that soon evil will be blotted out, faith and truth prevail, the holy city appear as a bride, and the Messiah Joshua reign on earth for four hundred years. After that the Messiah and all then living will die, and the world will be lifeless for seven days. Then will come the resurrection and the judgment: the wicked will go to the furnace of Gehenna and the good to the paradise of delight. In reply to questions, Ezra is told that few will be saved and many damned, and that one of the seven joys of the blessed will consist in seeing the punishment of the damned. He is shown the Roman Empire in the form of an eagle with three heads, twelve wings, and eight smaller wings—representing the various emperors and would-be emperors from Julius Cæsar to Trajan. A lion (the Messiah) upbraids the eagle for violence and oppres-

sion, and she is destroyed. A further vision shows the Messiah on Mount Zion annihilating the nations with the breath of his mouth and gathering the lost tribes of Israel into his kingdom.

In Palestine the *Apocalypse of Ezra* missed fire: the rabbis would have none of it. But among Messianists of the dispersion this and similar books, translated into Greek, had a wide circulation. The Pauline party were anxious to wean Christian congregations from such perilous stuff, which could only invite the hostile attention of the authorities. Organizational unity had been forced on the churches by persecution and economic necessity; but doctrinal unity was still far off. Certain additions were now made to the Pauline Epistles with the object of underlining the opposition between Christianity and Judaism—e.g., the allegorical passage Gal. iv, 21–31, with its contrast between "Jerusalem that now is," who "is in bondage with her children," and "Jerusalem that is above," the homeland of Pauline Christians. Mere polemic against Judaism, however, was not enough, especially when circulated under the name of Paul. For Paul's own reputation needed building up. In the long controversy between Gnostics and Messianists mud had been flung on both sides and had stuck. The Gnostics had accused Peter, chief of the Palestinian apostles, of denying his Lord. The Messianists had accused Paul, the Gnostic apostle, of persecuting the Palestinian church. Probably neither legend was true. But to thousands of rank and file Christians Paul was the persecutor, the false apostle, the false Jew, the enemy who sowed tares in the wheatfield of the Son of Man.

Moreover Gnosticism had not stood still where Paul left it. By no means all Gnostics wished for union with the Messianists. Preoccupied with individual escapism, many preferred to leave the devotees of a material millennium to whatever fate their anti-Roman attitude might invite, while they themselves, in superior detachment, concentrated on self-redemption by asceticism. In this quest many Gnostics evolved a complicated theology and demonology unknown to Paul and quite beyond the understanding of the common man or woman.

Thus faced with a war on two fronts, certain of the Pauline party towards the end of the first century, or early in the second, circulated a new set of Epistles—those purporting to be addressed to the Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians. The common purpose of these three tracts is to exalt the prestige of Paul as a sufferer for the faith and thereby to gain a hearing for his message. They may incorporate a few genuine Pauline fragments; but it is hardly possible to disentangle these. Philippians defends Paul against Messianist aspersions by depicting him as a blameless Jew who once, it is true, persecuted the church, but who for the sake of Christ counted his gains as loss, and who at the time of writing is a prisoner expecting sentence of death. With the authority of a prospective martyr he is made to urge on his readers the virtue of unity, to deprecate concern with earthly things, and to tell them that their commonwealth is in heaven. Colossians is probably by a different hand, and attacks a different set of opponents—the ultra-Gnostics who deal in mystical philosophy and extreme asceticism. Paul is conceived as despatching this Epistle to Colos-

sae at the same time as his letter to Philemon. Accordingly the companions of Paul who send greetings to Philemon (Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke) also send greetings to the Colossians. In the letter to Philemon, however, Paul calls Epaphras his " fellow-prisoner." The writer of Colossians forgets this and represents Epaphras, not as a prisoner, but as an active worker who has just brought Paul news from Colossae. This piece of carelessness, together with peculiarities of vocabulary and theology, stamps the Epistle as a fabrication. Ephesians is by a different author again, but by one who knows and to a great extent imitates Colossians. With hardly a pretence to be a letter—without any concrete details or personal messages—Ephesians is not so much an Epistle as a rhapsody on Christian unity composed by someone to whom the " holy apostles and prophets " (iii, 5) are not contemporaries, but saintly figures seen through the mist of time. Both Colossians and Ephesians dwell on Paul's sufferings as a prisoner, and use his authority to enjoin the subjection of wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters.

A more effective literary contribution to Christian unity was the rewriting of the Gospel story. At the beginning of the second century there existed two main streams of Gospel tradition: the Messianic " oracles " attributed to Matthew, current in various divergent Greek translations as well as in the original Aramaic; and the Gnostic work of Mark, which itself was being steadily improved upon by successive editors. The task of compiling from these sources a version of Christian origins suitable for use in a united Church was undertaken by many writers, of whom two stand

out. One, our third evangelist, traditionally but doubtfully identified with Luke, seems to have written about 100–110, probably in Asia Minor. The main characteristics of his two books, the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, have already been noticed.[1] They are dedicated to a patron, Theophilus, of whom nothing is known. Luke writes in good literary style, but manipulates his sources without scruple in order (1) to stress the conflict between Christianity and the Jews, (2) to minimise the conflict between Christianity and the Roman Empire, and (3), in the Acts, to propagate the myth of primitive Christian unity. He preserves the blessings on the poor and the woes on the rich contained in the original Nazarene Gospel, but draws their sting by making Jesus say that " the kingdom of God is within you," and that the Son of Man will not come " until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." His most notable innovation is the inclusion of stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus. These are marked off from the rest of the Gospel by their Hebraic style and Jewish outlook, and seem to be based on a Nazarene source. That source did not contain the virgin birth; for in Luke ii Joseph is repeatedly called the father of Jesus. There is manuscript evidence that in ii, 5, Mary was originally described not as the betrothed, but as the wife of Joseph. It follows that i, 34–35, the only verses in Luke which affirm the virgin birth, are an interpolation. The inclusion of infancy narratives and of

[1] See Chapters VII–VIII. The fact that Eusebius records no notice of Luke by Papias (140) does not prove that Papias did not know of him. He may have disparaged his work as recent and unauthoritative. Eusebius would not have recorded such an adverse notice.

stories of the physical resurrection and ascension marks the repudiation, in the interest of unity, of the earlier Pauline view of Christ as a wholly spiritual being, and the adoption of the flesh-and-blood Messiah of Nazarene tradition.

The compiler of our Matthew probably wrote a few years later, since he seems to have used a more interpolated version of Mark than that used by Luke. He shows no acquaintance, however, with Luke's work. He writes with a special eye to controversy with Jews, as is evident from his many quotations from the Old Testament. Since Ignatius of Antioch (115–117) seems to know this Gospel, which had not then long been extant, there is some ground for thinking that it was written in Syria.[1] The general purpose of the writer is the same as Luke's—to provide a Gospel suitable for use in churches which included both Messianist and Pauline elements. He preserves a rich store of discourses from the original Nazarene Gospel, but whittles away the blessings on the poor and hungry by interpreting them in a spiritual sense, and suppresses the woes on the rich altogether. The Jewish character often found in the first Gospel is confined to these discourses. The compiler's own bias is strongly anti-Jewish. We need only compare his account of the arrest and trial of Jesus with that of Mark (already anti-Jewish enough) to see how the

[1] Ignatius does not quote Matthew by name. But he refers to Matt. iii, 15 (baptism of Jesus by John to " fulfil all righteousness "); x, 16 (" wise as serpents, and harmless as doves "); xviii, 19 (efficacy of prayer of two); and xix, 12 (" He that is able to receive it, let him receive it "). The Ignatian Epistles are a subject of controversy; but a majority of scholars accept seven as genuine.

first Gospel underlines the indictment of the Jews. Multitudes take part in the arrest; they raise a tumult at Pilate's hesitation; *all* the people answer and say, "His blood be on us, and on our children"—a sentence only to be found in this Gospel, but since used to justify many a brutal persecution and pogrom. As in the case of Luke, it is probable that Matthew at first contained no account of a virgin birth. The story is inconsistent with the genealogy which precedes it, and like the story of the Magian astrologers which follows, shows the influence of pagan ideas.

With the editing of the Gospel story to suit the new Catholic standpoint went a similar editing of the chief Pauline Epistles. Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians were rehandled by a writer with a highly individual style which has already been discussed, and which is seen to perfection in Rom. iii–v and 1 Cor. vi and ix.[1] This writer's distinctive contribution to Christianity is the doctrine of justification by faith; but he is also responsible, among other things, for the assertion of the right of Christian ministers to maintenance, and for the prohibition of women speaking in church. Another writer about the same time fabricated the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, in which the authority of Paul is invoked (1) against those Gnostics who refused the Catholic compromise, and who were consequently now expelled from the Church as heretics, and (2) on behalf of the author's ideas on Church discipline and organization. Like other Epistles, they may include genuine Pauline fragments, though this is uncertain; and like other Epistles, they have been interpolated. 1 Tim. vi, 17–21, for example,

[1] See Chapter VII and Rylands, *op. cit.*

warns Timothy against "oppositions of the knowledge (*gnosis*) which is falsely so called." This is an insertion made later in the second century and aimed at Marcion, whose book, *Antitheses*, or *Oppositions*, in which he contrasted the good God of the Gnostics with the vengeful God of the Jews, is here attacked by name.

The efforts of Church leaders to detach Christianity from Jewish Messianism and to convert it into a law-abiding religion within the Roman Empire were long in gaining recognition from the imperial authorities. The Roman Empire rested on force; and no one knew it better than the soldier-emperor Trajan. The Empire was honeycombed with trade guilds, burial clubs, and other associations (*collegia*) which might become centres of subversive activity, and which the authorities accordingly kept under rigid control. In 111 Trajan appointed the younger Pliny to be governor of Bithynia and Pontus. It was part of a governor's duty to use every means to bring disturbers of the peace to justice; and Christians, as presumed partisans of a Jewish Messianic pretender, came under that head. On arrival in Bithynia Pliny found an astonishing state of affairs. Public religious festivals were almost entirely neglected; animals for sacrifice could hardly find purchasers; in fact this Asiatic province seemed dangerously disaffected. He immediately published an edict of the emperor suppressing unauthorized associations. As a result many Christians were denounced to the police and arrested. Pliny invited them to prove their innocence by worshipping images of the gods and of the emperor and by reviling Christ. Those who did so were dis-

charged; the obstinate were ordered to execution or, if Roman citizens, sent to Rome for trial. In the course of the proceedings, however, Pliny became uneasy. He gathered from some of those who recanted, and from two deaconesses whom he put to the torture, that their association had no subversive objects, but merely met periodically to sing hymns " to Christ as to a god " and to partake of a modest meal. He therefore wrote to Trajan for instructions. Trajan was in two minds on the matter: he disliked religious persecution; but the Christians had a bad name, and he could see no reason why loyal subjects, whatever their persuasion, should refuse to show respect to the official cult of the Empire. He told Pliny that Christians were not to be hunted out, and that anonymous denunciations were to be ignored, but that any arrested, unless they cleared themselves by worshipping the gods of Rome, were to be punished. Thus, while Christianity remained a capital offence, the onus of denouncing it was placed on the private informer. This rescript was shortly afterwards published and became the law of the Empire.

Further light is thrown on these events by the so-called First Epistle of Peter, circulated in Asia Minor during this persecution. It was highly important to the leaders of the Asiatic churches that their followers should abstain from any action which might justify the view that Christianity was essentially treasonable. To that end they issued an Epistle under the name, not of Paul, whose standing with the rank and file was not yet good enough to carry the necessary weight, but of Peter, whom the mass of Christians revered as one of the " pillars " (if not the " rock ") on whom the

Church was built. Peter, writing ostensibly from Rome in the time of Nero, is made to address "the elect who are sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" in language which might have been used by Paul and which sometimes shows verbal dependence on the Pauline Epistles. Slaves are to submit to their masters, wives to their husbands. It is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. We shall probably never know how far the non-resistance of the Asiatic Christians to Pliny's measures was due to this pious fraud.

In 113, after fifty years of peace, war broke out between the Roman and Parthian Empires over the affairs of the buffer state of Armenia. Trajan left Italy for the East, in 114 conquered Armenia, and in 115 invaded Mesopotamia. The Jews of Egypt and Cyrene saw their opportunity in Rome's difficulty and, led by a certain Andrew of Lycia, rose in wild revolt. Alexandria ran with blood; and 220,000 Greeks and Romans were massacred at Cyrene alone.

From the point of view of the Church a clean cut with Judaism was now more than ever necessary. It was probably at this juncture and with this object that a distinguished elder of the Church in Asia Minor circulated a Gospel more uncompromisingly anti-Jewish than any previously written. The general character of the Fourth Gospel has been discussed in another connection.[1] Irenæus (180) claims to have met in his youth Polycarp and others who had known the evangelist, whom he calls "John, the disciple of the Lord." His name may well have been John; but

[1] See Chapter VII.

the statement that he was a disciple of Jesus is probably due to his erroneous identification with the "beloved disciple" mentioned in his Gospel. The work is a religious romance with only a formal pretence to a historical basis. The primitive Nazarene Gospel (Q) and its subversive social propaganda are dropped. The Jesus of the Fourth Gospel, the divine *logos* made flesh, eludes the people who would make him king, tells the Jews—not the Pharisees only, as in the Synoptic Gospels, but the whole nation—that they are children of the devil, and tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world. v, 43 ("I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive") is probably a reference to Andrew of Lycia, the revolutionary leader of 115.[1] The final chapter, xxi, which identifies the author of the Gospel with the "beloved disciple," is by a later hand. vii, 53–viii, 11 (the story of the woman taken in adultery) is absent from the best MSS, and was probably inserted from some apocryphal source by a late editor who thought it too good to lose.

Closely connected with the Fourth Gospel are the three Epistles, 1, 2, and 3 John. The language and ideas of these Epistles are so like those of the Gospel that it is difficult not to attribute them to the same author. The identities of phraseology are many: the few differences can be explained by the supposition that the author employed different secretaries. The first Epistle, like the Gospel, bears no mark of origin. The two last are by an unnamed "elder," who may be considered as the writer of all three and,

[1] Eisler, *Enigma of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 166–167.

if common authorship is admitted, of the Gospel as well. It has been suggested that 1 and 2 John were written as covering letters in transmitting copies of the Gospel to different churches—2 John being sent to churches where the "elder" was personally known ("the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth") and 1 John to those places where a more formal introduction to the Gospel was called for. 3 John is a note complaining that the leader of a local church refuses to receive letters or emissaries from the "elder." Evidently the Fourth Gospel had a bad reception in some quarters. In fact we know that late in the second century, and even early in the third, there were Christians in Asia Minor and at Rome who rejected this Gospel and attributed it (like the Apocalypse, but with less plausibility) to the heretic Cerinthus.[1]

In 116, while Trajan overran Babylonia and carried the Roman eagles to the Persian Gulf, the Jews of Cyprus and Mesopotamia, emulating their brethren in Egypt and Cyrene, rose in his rear. The Cypriot Jews under Artemion destroyed the city of Salamis and massacred 240,000 Gentiles. Trajan had to abandon the Parthian campaign to deal with the new threat. By degrees his generals, Turbo and Quietus, suppressed the revolts, avenging massacre by massacre. At Alexandria and in Mesopotamia the Jewish colonies were virtually exterminated. In 117, before the process was complete, Trajan died. His kinsman

[1] Cerinthus combined zeal for the Jewish law and hopes of a Jewish millennium with Docetic views on the person of Christ. He might have written the Apocalypse: he could not possibly have written the Johannine Gospel or Epistles, and indeed was probably one of those against whom they were aimed.

and successor, Hadrian, abandoned Trajan's eastern conquests and devoted himself to the internal consolidation of the Empire.

Effectively dosed with anti-Jewish propaganda by their leaders, the Christian churches had kept clear of this second *debâcle* of Judaism. From the fusion of a well-to-do Pauline minority with a needy Messianist majority the Catholic Church was beginning to evolve. The minority held office in the Church, had the power of excommunication, and—not least important—controlled the money-bags. Such a document as the Epistle of James, written probably at Rome about 120 under the name of the most honoured, after Peter, of the early Palestinian apostles, voices the disgruntlement of the poorer Christians with the snobbery and hypocrisy which infested the upper ranks of the Church. It is significant that this Epistle was not admitted to the Canon until the fifth century.

In Palestine the Aramaic-speaking Nazarenes or "poor men" (*ebionim*) were left outside the Church in a backwater, waiting for the Messianic kingdom, adhering steadily to the Jewish law, abominating Paul as an apostate, and using a variant of the primitive Gospel (the *Gospel of the Hebrews*) which they interpolated perhaps as freely as, but assuredly not more freely than the Greek-speaking Christians did their Gospels. The last great rebellion of the Jews against the Roman Empire broke out in 132. It was provoked by Hadrian's prohibition of circumcision and his foundation of a Roman colony, Aelia Capitolina, on the site of Jerusalem, and of a temple of Jupiter on the site of the temple of Jahveh. The rebel leader, Simon Barcocheba, was recognized as Messiah by the

venerable rabbi Aqiba, but not by the majority of the rabbis nor by the Christians, whom he accordingly persecuted. With 200,000 men he captured Jerusalem and other fortresses and held his own for three years. In 135 the Roman general Severus retook Jerusalem and reduced the country with enormous loss of life on both sides. Simon was killed; Aqiba was flayed alive; and the Jews were forbidden to appear within sight of Jerusalem on pain of death. These events must have considerably reduced the numbers and importance of the Nazarene community.

Outside the Church at the other extreme stood those Gnostics who regarded the Catholic compromise as tainted with Judaism and Jewish Messianism. These men held steadily to the opinion of Philo and Paul that the material world is essentially evil, a prison from which man must seek salvation and escape. Logically thought out, this meant that Judaism, since its interests centred on the material world, was an evil religion and its God, Jahveh, an evil God. The ablest of these Gnostics, Marcion, a rich shipowner of Sinope (about 140), anticipated modern critics by trying to free the Pauline Epistles from second-century interpolations and so to get back to the original Pauline Gnosticism.[1] The other second-century Gnostics were less able and less interesting. They formed innumerable sects, all characterised by the same

[1] A tradition dating at least from the fourth century, and possibly from the second, states that Marcion in his youth was associated in a secretarial capacity with the author of the Fourth Gospel, with whom he parted company on doctrinal grounds. This would explain some inconsistencies of doctrine in that Gospel, which otherwise can only be accounted for by a theory of interpolation. See Eisler, *Enigma of the Fourth Gospel*, especially pp. 178–186.

general tendency. Our knowledge of these sects is almost wholly derived from the Fathers of the Church, who accuse them of using a parade of asceticism to cover unbridled sensuality. Similar charges were levelled by pagan gossip at Christians in general, and have been made by the orthodox against the heretics of any and every age. Two early Catholic polemics of this sort are included in the New Testament, the Epistle of Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter. No scholar now defends the traditional authorship of these specimens of ecclesiastical invective. "Clouds without water," "autumn trees without fruit," "wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame," "wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever," "mere animals to be taken and destroyed," "spots and blemishes," "children of cursing" are among the delightful epithets they hurl at opponents. Most critics date Jude somewhat before 150, and 2 Peter, which repeats most of Jude, somewhat later. The authenticity of both was a subject of dispute down to the fourth century.

Standing between Jewish Messianism and anti-Jewish Gnosticism, anathematizing both, yet dexterously appropriating writings of each, and combining the popular appeal of the one with the political quietism of the other, the Catholic Church from the second century on offered itself to the Roman Empire as a new opium for the people.

CHAPTER XII

EPILOGUE

In the second century the Roman Empire ceased to expand. In the third it went to pieces. The indiscipline of the armies, the cost of defence, and the burden of taxation increased; usurpations and disruptive movements became frequent; and in the middle of the century the barbarians of the north broke through the weakened defences and plundered the Empire. Trade and industry decayed; and the economic basis of society shifted from slavery to serfdom.

Some strong ideal motive was required if the masses were to work and at need fight for an Empire which could not pretend to make life tolerable and had ceased even to fulfil its promise of peace. As the Empire went downhill, the Church prepared for an alliance with authority. Bishops, apologists, and doctors of the Church laboured to convince the emperors that Christians were harmless people with nothing revolutionary about them. They would probably have succeeded much sooner if it had not been for the Messianist hopes which still animated the slaves, freedmen, and outcasts who made up the mass of believers. These for some time caused the emperors to regard Christianity as a political danger and to turn instead to Mithraism for the spiritual cement they required. Then, early in the fourth century, when Roman civilization was in the last stages of de-

cline and no less than six imperial ruffians were fighting for the mastery, one of these, Constantine, discovered that Christians, for all their professed pacifism, would fight for an emperor who favoured them against one who did not. He struck a bargain with the bishops, reaped his reward in victory over all his rivals, and made Christianity the religion of the Empire.

A few decades more, and the northern peoples swept in and became lords of the western world. Ancient civilization was dead: the Middle Ages had begun. The position of Christianity was transformed. First the Roman emperors, and then the new barbarian rulers, finding that the Church was a useful political ally, endowed it lavishly with land, until one third of the soil of western Europe passed into clerical or monastic hands. The Catholic hierarchy, like other ruling classes, looked after themselves and used the arm of the State to suppress movements which threatened their position and privileges. Such conditions were unfavourable to free examination of the documents on which the Catholic Church based its claims. For a thousand years such education as existed was in the hands of the Church, and heresy, where it lifted its head, was exterminated by fire and sword.

But from the fourteenth century onward the privileges of the Church and other feudal lords were challenged by a new class, the merchant capitalists of the towns and the many smaller people who supported them. Their first great battle was won in the Reformation. The attack on the Church could not yet take a Rationalist form; for the scientific develop-

ment which is the basis of modern Rationalism had not yet begun. Those who wished to attack the Church had to use such theoretical weapons as they possessed. As the chief controversial armoury of that age was the Bible, the revolt against the Church took for the time being the form of an appeal to Scripture. This led to the translation of the Bible into the vernacular languages, and to the first beginnings of inquiry into the canonicity and authority of the sacred books. In general, however, the Reformers found the Bible far too useful as a weapon against Rome to tolerate queries as to its infallibility.

The seventeenth century marked the real beginning of modern scientific development. That development fostered the way of thinking which we call Materialism. Under this name we may for practical purposes include Deism; for the God of the Deists, like a constitutional monarch, reigned but did not govern. When man, instead of being at the mercy of nature, begins to control her, he ceases to believe in miraculous interventions and becomes a Determinist, for the simple reason that Determinism works. With the growth of the scientific approach to the world and the perception of the uniformity of nature, the miracles of the Old and New Testaments, which had once served as evidences attesting divine revelation, became stumblingblocks in the way of belief. The revolutionary and anti-clerical movement of the eighteenth century found in Deism and Materialism intellectual weapons ready to its hand; and the Deistic attacks of that century paved the way for modern scientific criticism of the Bible.

That criticism has of necessity been carried on, in

the main, by men holding professorships in universities endowed for the purpose of conserving the established order in Church and State. It is not to be expected that those discharging such functions should willingly accept subversive conclusions; and the nature of the conclusions actually reached is all the more remarkable. Except among Catholics tied to the principle of authority, and Fundamentalists who wilfully avert their eyes from modern scholarship, the fourfold stratification of the Pentateuch, the composite authorship of most of the other books of the Old Testament, the Babylonian origin of the creation and flood legends, and the post-apostolic origin and contradictory nature of the Gospels are to-day common ground. And that ground has been cleared, not by enemies of the faith, but by its professional defenders. When so much is surrendered by the pledged apologists of the established religion, unofficial critics who have no stake in its perpetuation naturally conclude that the residue is defended on pragmatic rather than scientific grounds, and invoke solar myth, vegetation myth, symbolism, or plain fraud as a sole and sufficient explanation of the documentary data.

Such explanations, however, do not explain. They leave out of account the fact that the problem to be solved, though partly documentary and literary, is in the last resort historical. Granted that this document has a mythical basis, that that admits of a symbolic interpretation, and that fraud played a part in the production of the other, what impelled men at a certain date in history to resort to such expedients? In answering such a question the critic who attends

solely to documentary analysis is at a disadvantage. He is apt to forget that ancient Jews and early Christians were neither characters in a divine fairy tale nor connoisseurs in fraud who went about forging books for fun, but for the most part ordinary men and women who were engaged in the struggle for existence, and whose reactions are to be explained by the conditions of that struggle. The results of documentary criticism are indispensable raw material for the student of Jewish and Christian origins. But in making use of those results a knowledge of secular history and of the economic and social forces which motivate it is equally indispensable. The prophetical books of the Old Testament are poetry, and in parts great poetry. But unless we see them as the literature of a class struggle, we shall not understand the poetry. The Gospels are a wish-fulfilling myth of God made man —perhaps with a kernel of revolutionary history at its centre, rewritten and reshaped "three times, four times, and many times," as Celsus said, in order to make it acceptable to the Roman world. But unless we see the Gospels against the background of the struggle of the Jewish people and the submerged masses with Roman imperialism, we shall not understand the need which gave rise to the myth, and the changing situation which dictated the changes in its presentment.

INDEX

PROGRESS?

IS human progress a reality or an optimistic dream? This question is still a subject of controversy, but amid all the differences of opinion there is unquestionably one direction in which humanity has progressed. Knowledge has grown—knowledge of the universe, of the evolution of life and intelligence, of the history and nature of man. And the advance in understanding has been accompanied by progress in the systematization of knowledge and in the rational testing of facts and theories and speculations to discover truth and expose error.

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