The History of the Origins of Christianity Book I Life of Jesus

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THE HISTORY

OF THE

ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOOK I.

LIFE OF JESUS.

BY

ERNEST RENAN

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

London:

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TO THE PURE SOUL

of

MY SISTER HENRIETTA,

Who died at Byblus, 24th September, 1861.

FROM the bosom of God, in which thou reposest, dost thou recall those

long days at Ghazir, when, alone with thee, I wrote these pages, which

were inspired by the places we had visited together? Sitting silently

by my side, thou didst read each sheet and copy it as soon as

written--the sea, the villages, the ravines, the mountains being

meanwhile spread out at our feet. When the overpowering light had given

place to the innumerable host of stars, thy delicate and subtly

questions, thy discreet doubts, brought me back to the sublime object

of our common thoughts. Thou saidst to me one day that thou wouldst

love this book, because, first, it had been written in thy presence,

and because, also, it was to thine heart. If at times thou didst fear

for it the narrow opinions of frivolous men, thou felt always persuaded

that truly religious souls would, in the end, take delight in it. While

in the midst of these sweet meditations, Death struck us both with his

wing; the sleep of fever overtook us at the same hour, and I awoke

alone! Thou sleepest now in the land of Adonis, near the holy Byblus

and the sacred waters where the women of the ancient mysteries came to

mingle their tears. Reveal to me, O good genius!--to me, whom thou

lovedst--those truths which conquer death, strip it of fear, and make

it almost beloved.

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PREFACE

TO THE

THIRTEENTH EDITION.

THE twelve first editions of this work differ only from one another in

respect of a few trifling changes. The present edition, on the

contrary, has been revised and corrected with the greatest care. During

the four years which have elapsed since the book appeared, I have

laboured incessantly to improve it. The numerous criticisms to which it

has given rise have rendered the task in certain respects an easy one.

I have read all those which contain anything important. I believe I can

conscientiously affirm that not once have the outrage and the calumny,

which have been imported into them, hindered me from deriving profit

from the just observations which those criticisms might contain. I have

weighed everything, tested everything. If, in certain cases, people

should wonder why I have not answered fully the censures which have

been made with such extreme assurance, and as if the errors alleged

have been proved, it is not that I did not know of these censures, but

that it was impossible for me to accept them. In the majority of such

cases I have added in a note the texts or the considerations which have

deterred me from changing my opinion, or better, by making some slight

change of expression, I have endeavoured to show wherein lay the

contempt of my critics. These notes, though very brief and containing

little more than an indication of the sources at first hand, are

sufficient in every case to point out to the intelligent reader the

reasonings which have guided me in the composition of my texts.

To attempt to answer in detail all the accusations which have been

brought against me, it would have been necessary for me to triple or

quadruple this volume: I should have had to repeat things which have

already been well said, even in French; it would have been necessary to

enter into a religious discussion, a thing that I have absolutely

interdicted myself from doing; I should have had to speak of myself, a

thing I shall never do. I write for the purpose of promulgating my

ideas to those who seek the truth. As for those persons who would have,

in the interests of their belief, that I am an ignoramus, an evil

genius, or a man of bad faith, I do not pretend to be able to modify

their opinions. If such opinions are necessary for the peace of mind of

certain pious people, I would make it a veritable scruple to disabuse

them of them.

The controversy, moreover, if I had entered upon it, would have led me

most frequently to points foreign to historical criticism. The

objections which have been directed against me have proceeded from two

opposing parties. One set has been addressed to me by freethinkers, who

do not believe in the supernatural, nor, consequently, in the

inspiration of the sacred books; another set by theologians of the

liberal Protestant school, who hold such broad doctrinal views that the

rationalists and they can readily understand one another. These,

adversaries and I find ourselves on common ground; we start with the

same principles; we can discuss according to the rules followed in all

questions relating to matters of history, philology, and arch�ology. As

to the refutations of my book (and these are much the most numerous)

which have been made by orthodox theologians, both Catholic and

Protestant, who believe in the supernatural and in the sacred character

of the books of the Old and New Testament, they all involve a

fundamental misapprehension. If the miracle has any reality, this book

is but a tissue of errors. If the Gospels are inspired books, and true,

consequently, to the letter, from beginning to end, I have been guilty

of a great wrong in not contenting myself with piecing together the

broken fragments of the four texts, like as the Harmonists have done,

only to construct thus an ensemble at once most redundant and most

contradictory. If, on the contrary, the miracle is an inadmissible

thing, then I am right in regarding the books which contain miraculous

recitals as histories mixed with fiction, as legends full of

inaccuracies, errors, and of systematic expedients. If the Gospels are

like other books I am right in treating them in the same manner as the

Hellenist, the Arabian, the Hindoo treated the legendary documents

which they studied. Criticism does not recognise infallible texts; its

first principle is to admit that in the text which is examined there is

the possibility of error. Far from being accused of scepticism, I ought

to be classed with the moderate critics, since, instead of rejecting en

bloc weak documents as so much trash, I essay to extract something

historical out of them by means of delicate approximation.

And as no one asserts that to put the question in such a manner implies

a petitio principii, seeing we take for granted � priori that which is

proved in detail, to wit, that the miracles related by the Gospels have

had no reality, that the Gospels are not books written under the

inspiration of Divinity. Those two negations are not with us the result

of exegesis; they are anterior to exegesis. They are the outcome of an

experience which has not been denied. Miracles are things which never

happen; only credulous people believe they have seen them; you cannot

cite a single one which has taken place in presence of witnesses

capable of testing it; no special intervention of the Divinity, whether

in the composition of a book, or in any event whatever, has been

proved. For this reason alone, when a person admits the supernatural,

such a one is without the province of science; he accepts an

explanation which is non-scientific, an explanation which is set aside

by the astronomer, the physician, the chemist, the geologist, the

physiologist, one which ought also to be passed over by the historian.

We reject the supernatural for the same reason that we reject the

existence of centaurs and hippogriffes; and this reason is, that nobody

has ever seen them. It is not because it has been previously

demonstrated to me that the evangelists do not merit absolute credence

that I reject the miracles which they recount. It is because they do

recount miracles that I say, "The Gospels are legends; they may contain

history, but, certainly, all that they set forth is not historical."

It is hence impossible that the orthodox person and the rationalist who

denies the supernatural can be of much assistance in such questions. In

the eyes of theologians, the Gospels and the books of the Bible in

general are books like no others, books more historic than the best

histories, inasmuch as they contain no errors. To the rationalist, on

the contrary, the Gospels are texts to which the ordinary rules of

criticism ought to be applied; we are, in this respect, like the Arabs

in presence of the Koran and the hadith, like the Hindoos in presence

of the Vedas and the Buddhist books. Is it because the Arabs regard the

Koran as infallible? Is it because we accuse them of falsifying history

that they relate the origins of Islamism differently from the Mussulman

theologians? Is it because the Hindoos hold the Lalitavistara to be a

biography?

How are such opinions, in setting out from opposed principles, to be

mutually reconciled? All rules of criticism assume that a document

subjected to examination has but a relative value, that it may be in

error, and that it may be improved by comparing it with a better

document. The profane savant, persuaded that all books which have come

down to us as legacies are the work of man, did not hesitate to do an

injury to texts when the texts contradicted one another, when they set

forth absurd or formal statements which had been refuted by witnesses

of greater authority. Orthodoxy, on the contrary, positive in advancing

that the sacred books do not contain an error or a contradiction,

tolerates the most violent tactics, expedients the most desperate, in

order to get out of difficulties. Orthodox exegesis is, in this way, a

tissue of subtleties. An isolated subtlety may be true; but a thousand

subtleties cannot at once be true. If there were in Tacitus or Polybius

errors so pronounced as those committed by Luke �propos of Quirinius

and of Theudas, we should say that Tacitus and Polybius have been

deceived. Reasonings which we would not admit if the question were one

of Greek or Latin literature, hypotheses which a Boissonade, or even a

Rollin, would never think of, are held to be plausible when the

question is one of exculpating a sacred author.

Hence it is orthodoxy which is guilty of a petitio principii, when it

reproaches rationalism with changing history, because the latter does

not accept word for word the documents which orthodoxy holds to be

sacred. Because a fact is written down, it does not thence follow that

it is true. The miracles of Mahomet have been put into writing as well

as those of Jesus; and certainly the Arab biographies of Mahomet, that

of Ibn-Haschim, for example, has a much more historical character than

the Gospels. Do we on this account admit the miracles of Mahomet? We

follow Ibn-Haschim with more or less confidence when we have no reasons

for doubting him. But when he relates to us things that are perfectly

incredible we make no difficulty about abandoning him. Certainly, if we

had four lives of Buddha, which were partly fabulous, and as

irreconcilable amongst themselves as the four Gospels are to one

another, and if a savant essayed to purge the four Buddhist narratives

of their contradictions, we should not accuse that savant of falsifying

the texts. It might well be that he attempted to unite discordant

passages, that he sought a compromise, a sort of middle course, a

narrative which should embrace nothing that was impossible, in which

opposing testimony was balanced and misrepresented as little as

possible. If, after that, the Buddhists believed in a lie, in the

falsification of history, we would have a right to say to them: "The

question here is not one of history, and if we must at times discard

your texts it is the fault of those texts which contain things

impossible of belief, and, moreover, which are contradictory."

At the bottom of all discussion on such matters is the question of the

supernatural. If the miracle and the inspiration of certain books are

actual facts, our method is detestable. If the miracle and the

inspiration of some books are beliefs without any reality, our method

is the proper one. Now, the question of the supernatural is determined

to us with absolute certainty, by this simple reason, that there is no

room for belief in a thing of which the world can offer no experimental

trace. We do not believe in a miracle, just as we do not believe in

dreams, in the devil, in sorcery, or in astrology. Have we any need to

refute step by step the long reasonings of astrology in order to deny

that the stars influence human events? No. It is sufficient for this

wholly negative, as well as demonstrable experience, that we give the

best direct proof--such an influence has never been proved.

God forbid that we should be unmindful of the services that the

theologians have rendered to science! The research and the constitution

of the texts which serve as the basis of this history have been the

work in many cases of orthodox theologians. The labour of criticism has

been the work of liberal theologians. But there is one thing that a

theologian can never be--I mean a historian. History is essentially

disinterested. The historian has but one care, art and truth (two

inseparable things; art guards the secret of the laws which are the

most closely related to truth). The theologian has an interest -- his

dogma. Minimise that dogma as much as you will, it is still to the

artist and the critic an insupportable burden. The orthodox theologian

may be compared to a caged bird; every movement natural to it is

intercepted. The liberal theologian is a bird, some of the feathers of

whose wings have been clipped. He believes he is master of himself, and

he in fact is until the moment he seeks to take his flight. Then it is

seen that he is not completely the creature of the air. We proclaim it

boldly; critical inquiries relative to the origin of Christianity will

not have said their last word until they shall have cultivated, in a

purely secular and profane spirit, the method of the Hellenists, the

Arabs, the Hindoos, people strangers to all theology, who think neither

of edifying, nor of scandalising, nor of defending, nor of overthrowing

dogmas.

Day and night, if I might so speak, I have reflected on these

questions, questions which ought to be agitated without any other

prejudices than those which constitute the essence of reason itself.

The most serious of all unquestionably is that of the historic value of

the fourth Gospel. Those who have not disagreed on such problems give

room for the belief that they have not comprehended the whole

difficulty. We may range the opinions on this Gospel into four classes,

of which the following is the abridged expression. First opinion: "The

fourth Gospel was written by the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee. The

statements contained in that Gospel are all true; the discourses which

the author puts into the mouth of Jesus were actually held by Jesus."

This is the orthodox opinion. From the point of view of rational

criticism, this is wholly untenable.

Second opinion: "The fourth Gospel is, in fact, by the Apostle John,

although it may have been revised and retouched by his disciples. The

facts recounted in that Gospel are direct traditions in regard to

Jesus. The discourses are often from compositions expressing only the

manner in which the author had conceived the mind of Jesus." This is

the opinion of Ewald, and in some respects that of L�cke, Weisse, and

Reuss. This is the opinion that I adopted in the first edition of this

work.

Third opinion: "The fourth Gospel is not the work of the Apostle John.

It was attributed to him by some of his disciples about the year 100.

The discourses are almost entirely fictitious; but the narrative parts

contain valuable traditions, ascending in part to the Apostle John."

This is the opinion of Weizsaecker and of Michael Nicolas. It is the

opinion which I now hold.

Fourth opinion: "The fourth Gospel is in no sense the work of the

Apostle John. And whether, as regards the facts or the discourses which

are reported in it, it is not a historic book; it is a work of the

imagination and in part allegorical, concocted about the year 150, in

which the author has proposed to himself, not to recount actually the

life of Jesus, but to make believe in the idea that he himself had

formed of Jesus." Such is, with some variations, the opinion of Baur,

Schwegler, Strauss, Zeller, Volkmar, Helgenfeld, Schenkel, Scholten,

and R�nille.

I cannot quite ally myself to this radical party. I am convinced that

the fourth Gospel has an actual connection with the Apostle John, and

that it was written about the end of the first century. I avow,

however, that in certain passages of my first edition I inclined too

much in the direction of authenticity. The probative force of some

arguments upon which I insisted appear to me now of less importance. I

no longer believe that Saint Justin may have put the fourth Gospel on

the same footing as the synoptics amongst the "Memoires of the

Apostles." The existence of Presbyteros Joannes, a personage distinct

from the Apostle John, appears to me now as very problematical. The

opinion according to which John, the son of Zebedee, could have written

the work, an hypothesis which I have never altogether admitted, but for

which, at moments, I might have shown a certain weakness, is here

discarded as improbable. Finally, I acknowledge that I was wrong in

repudiating the hypothesis of a false writing, attributed to an apostle

who lived in the apostolic age. The second epistle of Peter, the

authenticity of which no person can reasonably sustain, is an example

of a work, much less important no doubt than the fourth Gospel,

counterfeited under such conditions. Moreover, this is not for the

moment the capital question. The essential question is to know what use

it is proper to make of the fourth Gospel when one essays to write the

life of Jesus. I persist in believing that that Gospel possesses a fund

of valuable information, equal to that of the synoptics, and even

sometimes superior. The development of this point possesses so much

importance that I have made it the basis of an appendix at the end of

this volume. The portion of the introduction relating to the criticism

of the fourth Gospel has been revised and completed.

In the body of the narrative several passages have also been modified

in consequence of what has been just stated. All passages in a sentence

which implied more or less that the fourth Gospel was by the Apostle

John, or by an ocular witness of the evangelical facts, have been cut

out. In order to trace the personal character of John, the son of

Zebedee, I have thought of the rude Boanerge of Mark, of the terrible

visionary of the Apocalypse, and not of the mystic, so full of

tenderness, who has written the Gospel of love. I insist, with less

confidence, on certain little details which are furnished us by the

fourth Gospel. The limited quotations I have made from the discourses

of that Gospel have been still further restricted. I had allowed myself

to follow too far the opinions of the alleged apostle in what concerned

the promise of the Paraclete. In like manner I am not now so sure that

the fourth Gospel is right in respect of its disagreement with the

synoptics as to the day on which Jesus died. As to the time of the

Lord's Supper, on the contrary, I persist in my opinion. The synoptic

account which places the eucharistic institution on the last evening of

Jesus appears to me to contain an improbability, equivalent to a

quasi-miracle. It is hence, in my opinion, an adapted version, and

founded upon a certain confusion of recollections.

The critical examination of the synoptics has not been modified

throughout. It has been completed and determined on some points,

notably in that which concerns Luke. As regards Lysanias, a study of

the inscription of Zenodorus at Baalbeck, which I did for the

Phoenician Mission, has led me to believe that the evangelist could not

have made so grievous a mistake as the ingenious critics think. As

regards Quirinius, on the contrary, the last memoir of M. Mommsen has

settled the question against the third Gospel. Mark seems to me more

and more the primitive type of the synoptic narrative and the most

authoritative text.

The paragraph relative to the Apocrypha has been explained. The

important texts published by M. Ceriani have been employed to

advantage. I have great doubts in regard to the book of Enoch. I reject

the opinion of Weisse, Volkmar, and Graetz, who believe that the whole

book is posterior to Jesus. As to the most important portion of the

book, which extends from chapter xxvii. to chapter lxxi., I dare not

decide between the arguments of Helgenfeld and Colani, who regard this

portion as posterior to Jesus; and the opinion of Hoffmann, Dillmann,

Koestlin, Ewald, L�cke, and Weizsaecker, who hold it to be anterior.

How much is it to be desired that the Greek text of that important

writing could be found! I do not know why I persist in believing that

this is not a vain hope. I have, in any case, stamped with doubt the

inductions drawn from the aforenamed chapters. I have shown, on the

contrary, the singular correspondences between the discourses of Jesus

contained in the last chapters of the synoptic Gospels and the

Apocalypses attributed to Enoch, relations in regard to which the

discovery of the complete Greek text of the epistle attributed to

Barnabas has cast much light, and which has been much enhanced by M.

Weizsaecker. The certain results obtained by M. Volkmar in regard to

the fourth book of Esdras, and which agree, in almost every particular,

with those of M. Ewald, have been equally taken into consideration.

Several new Talmudist citations have been introduced The portion

accorded to Essenism has been enlarged.

The position I have taken in discarding the bibliography has frequently

been wrongly interpreted. I believe I have loudly enough proclaimed

that which I owe to the masters of German science in general, and to

each of them in particular, so that such a silence might not be taxed

with ingratitude. Bibliography is only useful when it is complete. Now

the German genius has displayed such activity in the field of

evangelical criticism that if I had cited all the works relative to the

questions treated in this book I would have tripled the extent of the

notes and changed the character of my narrative. One cannot accomplish

everything at once. I have restricted myself, therefore, to the rule of

only admitting citations at first hand. Their number has been greatly

multiplied. Besides, for the convenience of French readers who are not

conversant with these studies, I have continued the revision of the

summary list of the writings, composed in our language, wherever I

could find details which I may have omitted. Many of these works are

far removed from my ideas; but all are of a nature to make the

enlightened man reflect and to make him understand our discussions.

The thread of the narrative has been much changed. Certain expressions,

too strong for communistic minds, which were of the essence of nascent

Christianity, have been softened down. Among those holding personal

relations with Jesus I have admitted some whose names do not figure in

the Gospels, but who are known to us through evidence worthy of

credence. That which relates to the name of Peter has been modified. I

have also adopted another hypothesis in regard to Levi, son of Alpheus,

and his relations with the Apostle Matthew. As to Lazarus, I

unhesitatingly adopt now the ingenious hypothesis of Strauss, Baur,

Zeller, and Scholten, according to which the pious pauper of the

parable of Luke and the person restored to life by Jesus are one and

the same individual. It will nevertheless be seen how I retain some

reality in associating him with Simon the Leper. I adopt likewise the

hypothesis of M. Strauss in respect of divers discourses attributed to

Jesus during his last days, which appear to be quotations from writings

spread over the first century. The discussion of the texts as to the

duration of the life of Jesus has been reduced to greater precision.

The topography of Bethphage and Dalmanutha has been altered. The

account of Golgotha has been reproduced from the works of M. Vog��. A

person well-versed in the history of botany has taught me to

distinguish, in the orchards of Galilee, between trees which have grown

there for eighteen hundred years and those which have only been

transplanted there since then. Some facts have also been communicated

to me in regard to the potion administered to the crucified, to which I

have given a place. In general, in the account of the last hours of

Jesus, I have toned down some phraseology which might have too

historical an appearance. It is in such cases where the favourite

explanations of M. Strauss find their best application, where symbolic

and dogmatic designs let themselves be seen at each step.

I have said, and I repeat it, that if in writing the life of Jesus one

confines oneself to advancing only details which are certain, it would

be necessary to limit oneself to a few lines. He existed. He was from

Nazareth in Galilee. There was a charm in his preaching, and he

implanted in the minds of his disciples aphorisms which left a deep

impression there. His two principal disciples were Peter and John, sons

of Zebedee. He excited the hatred of the orthodox Jews, who brought him

before Pontius Pilate, then procurator of Jud�a, to have him put to

death. He was crucified without the gates of the city. It was believed

that a short time after he was restored to life. This is what is known

to us for certain, even though the Gospels had not existed or were

falsehoods, through authentic texts and incontestable data, such as the

evidently authentic epistles of St. Paul, the epistle to the Hebrews,

the Apocalypse, and other texts believed in by all. Beyond that, it is

permissible to doubt. What was his family? What in particular was his

affinity to that James, "brother of the Lord," who after his death

plays an important part? Was he actually related to John the Baptist?

and did the most celebrated of his disciples belong to the school of

baptism before they belonged to his? What were his Messianic ideas? Did

he regard himself as the Messiah? What were his apocalyptic ideas? Did

he believe that he would appear as the Son of Man in the clouds? Did he

imagine he could work miracles? Were the latter attributed to him

during his life? Did his legend grow up round himself, and had he

cognisance of it? What was his moral character? What were his ideas in

regard to the admission of Gentiles into the Kingdom of God? Was he a

pure Jew like James, or did he break with Judaism, as did the most

enthusiastic party of the Church subsequently? What was the order of

his mental development? Those who seek only the indubitable in history

must keep silent upon these points. The Gospels, in respect of these

questions, are not much to be relied on, seeing that they frequently

furnish arguments for two opposing theses, and seeing that the

character of Jesus is therein modified to suit the views of the

authors. For my part I think that on such occasions it is allowable to

make conjectures, provided that they are presented as such. The texts,

not being historic, give no certitude, but they give something. It is

not necessary to follow them with a blind confidence, it is not

necessary to reject their testimony with unjust disdain. We must strive

to divine what they conceal, without being absolutely certain of having

found it.

It is singular that, in regard to almost all these points, it is the

liberal school of theology which proposes the most sceptical solutions.

The more sensible defenders of Christianity have come to consider it as

advantageous to leave a gap in the historical circumstances bearing

upon the birth of Christianity. Miracles, Messianic prophecies,

formerly the bases of the Christian apology, have become an

embarrassment to it; people seek to discard them. If we would believe

the partisans of this theology, amongst whom I could cite so many

eminent critics and noble thinkers, Jesus never pretended to perform a

miracle; he did not believe himself to be the Messiah; he had no idea

of the apocalyptic discourses which have been imputed to him as

touching the final catastrophe. That Papias, so excellent a

traditionist, and so zealous a collector of the words of Jesus, was an

enthusiastic millenarian; that Mark, the oldest and the most

authoritative of the evangelical narrators, was almost exclusively

preoccupied with miracles, matters little. The career of Jesus is in

this way so belittled that we are many times at a loss to tell what he

was. His being condemned to death has no more right to be embraced in

such a hypothesis than the accident which has made of him the chief of

an apocalyptic and a Messianic movement. Was it on account of his moral

precepts or his discourses on the Mount that Jesus was crucified?

Certainly not. These maxims had for a long time been the current coin

of the synagogue. No one has ever been put to death for repeating them.

When Jesus was put to death, it was for saying something more than

that. A learned man, who has taken an active part in these discussions,

wrote me lately: "As in former times it was necessary to prove at all

hazards that Jesus was God, so in our own times the question that the

Protestant theological school has to prove is that he was not only a

mere man, but also that he always regarded himself as such. People

persist in representing him as a man of good sense, as a practical man

par excellance, and transform him into the image and according to the

spirit of modem theology. I believe with you that this is not doing

justice to historical truth, but is neglecting an essential side of

it."

This tendency has already been more than once logically produced in the

bosom of Christianity. What did Marcion aim at? What did the Gnostics

of the second century try to do? Simply to discard the material

circumstances of a biography, the human details of which shocked them.

Baur and Strauss yielded to analogous philosophical necessities. The

divine �on which was developed by humanity has nothing to do with

anecdotic incidents, with the particular life of an individual.

Scholten and Schenkel held certainly to a historic and actual Jesus,

but their historic Jesus is neither a Messiah, nor a prophet, nor a

Jew. People do not know what he aimed at, nor comprehend either his

life or his death. Their Jesus is an �on after his own manner, a being

impalpable, intangible. Genuine history is not acquainted with any such

beings. Genuine history must construct its edifice out of two kinds of

materials, and, if I may so speak, out of two factors: the first, the

general state of the human soul in a given age and in a given country;

the second, the particular incidents which, uniting with general

causes, determined the course of events. To explain history by

accidental facts is as false as to explain it by principles which are

purely philosophic. The two explanations ought mutually to sustain and

complete each other. The history of Jesus and of the apostles must,

above all histories, be constructed out of a vast mixture of ideas and

sentiments; nor would that even be sufficient. A thousand conjectures,

a thousand whims, a thousand trifles, are mixed up with ideas and

sentiments. To trace at this time of day the exact details of these

conjectures, whims, and trifles is impossible; what legend has taught

us in regard to this may be true, but it may also not be true. In my

opinion, the best course to hold is to follow as closely as possible

the original narratives, to discard impossibilities, to sow everywhere

the seeds of doubt, and to put forth as conjectural the diverse manners

in which the event might have taken place. I am not quite sure that the

conversion of St. Paul came about as we have it related in the Acts;

but it took place in a manner not widely different from that, for St.

Paul himself has informed us that he had a vision of the resurrected

Jesus, which gave an entirely new direction to his life. I am not sure

whether the narrative of the Acts as to the descent of the Holy Spirit

on the day of Pentecost is quite historic; but the ideas which were

spread abroad as to the baptism of fire leads me to believe that a

scene took place in the apostolic circle in which thunder played a

part, as at Sinai. The visions of the resurrected Jesus were likewise

occasionally the cause of the fortuitous circumstances interpreted by

vivid and already preoccupied imaginations.

If liberal theologians repudiate explanations of this kind, it is

because they do not wish to subject Christianity to the laws common to

other religious movements; because also, perhaps, they are not

sufficiently acquainted with the theory of spiritual life. There are no

religious movements in which such deceptions do not play a great part.

It may even be affirmed that they hold a permanent position in certain

communities, such as the pietist Protestants, the Mormons, and the

convent Catholics. In those little excited worlds it is not rare that

conversions are the result of some accident, in which the anxious soul

sees the finger of God. These accidents, which always contain something

puerile, are concealed by the believers; it is a secret between heaven

and them. A fortuitous event is nothing to a cold or indifferent soul;

it is a divine symbol to a susceptible soul. To say that it was an

accident which changed St. Paul and St. Ignatius Loyola through and

through, or rather which gave a new turn to their activity, is

certainly inexact. It was the interior movement of those strong natures

which had prepared the clap of thunder; yet the thunderclap had been

determined by an exterior cause. All these phenomena, moreover, had

reference to a moral state which no longer belongs to us. In the

majority of their actions they were governed by dreams which they had

seen the preceding night, by inductions drawn from a fortuitous object

which struck their first waking view, or by sounds which they believed

they heard. It has happened that the wings of a bird, currents of air,

or headaches, have determined the fate of the world. In order to be

sincere and exhaustive it is necessary to say this; and when certain

commonplace documents tell us of incidents of this kind we must take

care to pass them over in silence. In history there are but few details

which are certain; details, nevertheless, possess always some

significance. The historian's talent consists in making a true

narrative out of details which are of themselves but half true.

We can hence accord a place in history to particular incidents, without

being on that account a rationalist of the old school or a disciple of

Paulus. Paulus was a theologian who, wishing to have as little as

possible to do with miracles, and not daring at the same time to treat

the Bible narratives as legends, twisted them about so as to explain

them in a wholly natural fashion. In this way Paulus desired to retain

for the Bible all its authority and to enter into the real thoughts of

the sacred authors. But I am a profane critic; I believe that no

supernatural writing is true to the letter; I think that out of a

hundred narratives of the supernatural there are eighty which have been

pieced together by popular imagination. I admit, nevertheless, that in

certain very rare cases legend has been derived from an actual fact and

trans-formed in the imagination. As to the mass of supernatural data

recounted by the Gospels and by the Acts, I shall attempt to show in

five or six instances how the illusion may have been created. The

theologian who is invariably methodical would have that a single

explanation should hold good from one end of the Bible to the other.

Criticism believes that every explanation should be attempted, or

rather, that the possibility of each explanation should be successively

demonstrated. That an explanation is repugnant to one's ideas is no

reason for rejecting it. The world is at once an infernal and a divine

comedy, a strange "round," led by a choragus of genius, now good, now

evil, now stupid; the good defile into the ranks which have been

assigned to them, in view of the accomplishment of a mysterious end.

History is not history if in reading it one is not by turns charmed and

disgusted, grieved and consoled.

The first task of the historian is to make a careful sketch of the

manner in which the events he recounts took place. Now, the history of

religious beginnings transports us into a world of women and children,

of brains ardent or foolish. These facts, placed before minds of a

positive order, are absurd and unintelligible, and this is why

countries such as England, of ponderous intellects, find it impossible

to comprehend anything about it. That which is a drawback to the

arguments, formerly so celebrated, of Sherlock or of Gilbert West upon

the resurrection, of Lyttelton upon the conversion of Saint Paul, is

not the reasoning; that is a triumph of solidity; it is the just

appreciation of the diversity of means. Every tentative religion with

which we are acquainted exhibits unmistakably an enormous mixture of

the sublime and the ridiculous. Read these narratives of primitive

Saint Simonism, written with admirable candour by the surviving adepts.

By the side of repulsive r�les, insipid declamations, what charm! what

sincerity, when the man or the woman of the people enters upon the

scene, hearing the artless confession of a soul which is open to the

first gentle ray which has struck it! There is more than one example of

beautiful durable things which have been founded upon singular

puerilities. It were useless to seek for any proportion between the

conflagration and the spark which lighted it. The devotion of Salette

is one of the grandest religious events of our age. These basilicas, so

respectable, of Chartres and of Laon, were reared upon illusions of the

same sort. The F�te-Dieu originated in the visions of a female

religionist of Li�ge who believed that in her prayers she always saw

the full moon through a small hole. We could instance movements,

absolutely sincere, which have been brought about by impostors. The

discovery of the holy lance at Athens, in which the fraud was so

patent, decided the fortune of the Crusades. Mormonism, the beginnings

of which are so shameful, has inspired courage and devotion. The

religion of the Druzes rests upon a tissue of absurdities which stagger

the imagination, but it has its devotees. Islamism, which is the second

great event in the history of the world, would not have existed if the

son of Amina had not been an epileptic. The gentle and immaculate

Francis d'Assisi would not have succeeded without Brother Elia.

Humanity is so feeble of mind that the purest thing has need of the

co-operation of some impure agent.

Let us guard against applying our conscientious distinctions, our

reasonings of cool and clear heads, to the appreciation of these

extraordinary events, which are at once so much beyond and beneath us.

There are those who would make Jesus a sage, a philosopher, a patriot,

a good man, a moralist, or a saint. He was neither or any of these. He

was a charmer. Let us not make the past our idol. Let us not believe

that Asia is Europe. With us, for example, the fool is a creature

outside the rules of society; we torture him so as to make him re-enter

it; the horrible treatment of fools by ancient houses was the result of

scholastic and Cartesian logic. In the East, the fool is a privileged

being; he enters the highest councils without any one daring to stop

him; people listen to him, he is consulted. He is a being believed to

be in close proximity to God, inasmuch as, his individual reason being

extinguished, he is believed to be a partaker in the divine reason. The

wit which, through delicate raillery, rises above all defects of

reason, exists only in Asia. A person educated in Islamism told me

that, repairs having become necessary at the tomb of Mahomet, people at

Medina for several years made an appeal to the masons, and announced

that he who should descend into that dreadful place should have his

head cut off on reascending. "It was necessary," said my interlocutor

to me, "to picture those places to oneself in a certain manner, and it

was not for any person to say that they were otherwise."

Troubled consciences cannot have the clearness of good sense. Now, it

is only troubled consciences which can lay powerful foundations. I have

tried to draw a picture in which the colours should be disposed as they

are in nature, that is to say, at once grand and puerile, in which one

sees the divine instinct threading its way with safety through a

thousand peculiarities. If the picture had been without shade, this

would have been the proof that it was false. The condition of the

written proofs does not permit of us telling in what instances the

illusion was consistent with itself. All that we can say is, that

sometimes it has happened thus. One cannot lead for years the life of a

thaumaturgist without being often cornered--without having one's hand

forced by the public. The man who has a legend attaching to his life is

led tyrannically by his legend. One begins by artlessness, credulity,

absolute innocence; one ends in all sorts of embarrassments, and, in

order to sustain the divine power which is at fault, one gets out of

these embarrassments through the most desperate expedients. When one is

put to the wall must one leave the work of God to perish, because God

is slow of coming to the relief? Did not Joan of Arc more than once

make her voice heard in response to the necessities of the moment? If

the account of the secret revelation which she made to King Charles

VII. has any reality, a supposition which it is difficult to deny, it

must have been that that innocent girl had represented that she had

received through supernatural intuition that which she had heard in

confidence. An expos� of religious history which does not some day

disclose indirectly suppositions of this sort is for the same reason

argued to be incomplete.

Every true, or probable, or possible circumstance most then have its

proper place in my narration, together with its shade of probability.

In such a history it will be necessary to speak not only of that which

has taken place, but also of that which had a likelihood of taking

place. The impartiality with which I have treated my subject has

interdicted me from not accepting a conjecture, even one that shocks;

for undoubtedly there were many shocking ones in the fashion of the

things which are past and gone. I have applied from beginning to end

the same process in an inflexible manner. I have given the good

impressions which the texts have suggested to me; I could not,

therefore, be silent as to the bad. I intend that my book shall retain

its value even in the day when people shall have reached the point of

regarding a certain amount of fraud as an element inseparable from

religious history. It will be necessary to make my hero beautiful and

charming (for undoubtedly he was so), and that, too, in spite of

actions which, in our days, might be characterised in an unfavourable

manner. People have praised me for having tried to construct a

narrative lovely, human, and possible. Would my work have received

these eulogiums if it had represented the origin of Christianity as

absolutely immaculate? That would have been to admit the greatest of

miracles. The result thence would have been a picture lifeless to the

last degree. I do not say that this is for want of faults I may have

made in the composition. Nevertheless, I must leave each text to

produce its melodious or discordant note. If Goethe had been alive he

would, with this reserve, have commended me. That great man would not

have forgiven me for producing a portrait wholly celestial: he would

have desired to find repellent details; for, assuredly, in actual life

things happen which would wound us, if only it were given to us to see

them.

The same difficulty presents itself, moreover, in the history of the

apostles. This history is admirable in its way. But what can be more

shocking than the glossolaly, which is attested by the unexceptionable

texts of St. Paul? Liberal theologians admit that the disappearance of

the body of Jesus was one of the grounds for the belief in the

resurrection. What does that signify, unless the Christian conscience

at that moment was two-sided, that a moiety of that conscience gave

birth to the illusion of the other moiety? If the disciples themselves

had taken away the body and spread themselves over the city crying, "He

is risen!" the imposture would have been discovered. But there can be

no doubt that it was not they themselves who did the two things. For

belief in a miracle to be accepted it is indeed necessary that someone

be responsible for the first rumour which is spread abroad; but,

ordinarily, this is not the principal author. The r�le of the latter is

limited to not exclaiming against the reputation which people have

given him. Moreover, even if he did exclaim, it would be useless;

popular opinion would prove stronger than he. In the miracle of

Salette, people possessed a clear idea of the artifice; but the

conviction that it would do good to religion carried all before it. The

fraud was divided between several unconscionable persons, or rather it

had ceased to be a fraud and became a misapprehension. Nobody, in that

case, deceives deliberately; everybody deceives innocently. Formerly it

was taken for granted that every legend implied deceivers and deceived;

in our opinion, all the collaborators of a legend are at once deceived

and deceivers. A miracle, in other words, presupposes three conditions:

first, general credulity; second, a little complaisance on the part of

some; third, tacit acquiescence in the principal author. Through a

reaction against the brutal explanations of the eighteenth century, we

did not fall into the trap of hypotheses which implied effects without

causes. Legend does not wholly create itself: people assist in giving

it birth. These points d'appui in a legend are often of a rare

elasticity. It is the popular imagination which makes the ball of snow;

there, nevertheless, must have been an original nucleus. The two

persons who composed the two genealogies of Jesus knew quite well that

the lists were not of any great authenticity. The apocryphal books, the

alleged apocalypses of Daniel, Enoch, and Esdras, proceeded from

persons of strong convictions; but the authors of these works knew well

they were neither Daniel, Enoch, nor Esdras. The priest of Asia who

composed the romance of Thekla declared that he had done it out of love

for Paul. It is incumbent that we should say a great deal about the

author of the fourth Gospel, who was assuredly a personage of the first

order. If you chase the illusion of religious history out of one door,

it will re-enter by another. In fine, it would be difficult to cite a

great event of the past, whatever it might be, in an entirely

defensible manner. Shall we cease to be Frenchmen because France has

been founded by centuries of perfidy? Shall we refuse to profit by the

benefits of the Revolution because the Revolution committed crimes

without number? If the house of Capet had succeeded in creating for us

a good constitutional assize, similar to that of England, would we have

wrangled over the cure of the king's evil?

Science alone is pure; for science possesses nothing practical; it does

not touch men; the Propaganda takes no notice of it; its duty is to

prove, not to persuade or to convert. He who has discovered a theorem

publishes its demonstration for those who are capable of comprehending

it. He does not mount a chariot; he does not gesticulate; he does not

have recourse to oratorical artifices in order to induce people to

adopt it who do not perceive its truth. Enthusiasm, certainly, has its

good faith, but it is an ingenuous good faith; it is not the deep

reflective good faith of the savant. Only the ignorant yield to bad

reasonings. If Laplace had been able to gain the multitude over to his

system of the world, he would not have limited himself to mathematical

demonstrations. M. Littr�, in writing the life of a man whom he

regarded as his master, pressed sincerity to the point of leaving

nothing unsaid that would render that man more amiable. That is without

example in religious history. Science alone seeks after pure truth. She

alone offers good reasons for truth, and brings a severe criticism into

the employment of the methods of conviction. This is no doubt the

reason why, up till now, she has had no influence on the people. It may

be that in the future, when people are better instructed, even as we

have been led to hope, they will yield only to good and carefully

deduced proofs. But it would not be equitable to judge the great men of

the past according to these principles. There are natures who resign

themselves to impotence, who accept humanity, with all its weaknesses,

such as it is. Many great things have not been accomplished without

lies and without violence. If to-morrow the incarnate ideal were to

come and offer itself to men in order to govern them, it would find

itself confronted by the foolish, who wish to be deceived; by the

wicked, who wish to be subdued. The sole irreproachable person is the

contemplative man, who only aims at finding the truth, without either

caring about making it a triumph or of applying it.

Morality is not history. To paint and to record is not to approve. The

naturalist who describes the transformations of the chrysalis neither

blames nor praises it. He does not tax it with ingratitude because it

abandons its shroud; he does not describe it as bold because it has

found its wings: he does not accuse it of folly because it aspires to

plunge into space. One may be the passionate friend of the true and the

beautiful, and show oneself indulgent at the same time to the simple

ignorance of the people. Our happiness has cost our fathers torrents of

tears and deluges of blood. In order that pious souls may taste at the

foot of the altar the inward consolation which gives them life, it has

taken centuries of severe constraint, the mysteries of a sacerdotal

polity, a rod of iron, funereal piles. The success which one owes to a

wholly great institution does not demand the sacrifice of the sincerity

of history. Formerly, to be a good Frenchman, it was necessary to

believe in the dove of Clovis, in the national antiquities of the

Treasure of Saint Denis, in the virtues of the oriflamme, in the

supernatural vision of Joan of Arc; it was necessary to believe that

France was the first of nations, that French royalty was superior to

all other royalties, that God had for that crown a predilection

altogether peculiar and was constantly engaged in protecting it. To-day

we know that God protects equally all kingdoms, all empires, all

republics; we own that many of the kings of France have been

contemptible men; we recognise that the French character has its

faults; we greatly admire a multitude of things which come from abroad.

Are we on that account worse Frenchmen? We can say, on the contrary,

that we are better patriots, since, in place of being blind to our

faults, we seek to correct them; that, in place of depreciating the

foreigner, we seek to imitate that which he has in him of good. In like

manner we are Christians. He who speaks with irreverence of the royalty

of the Middle Ages, of Louis XIV., of the Revolution, of the Empire,

commits an act of bad taste. He who does not speak kindly of

Christianity and of the Church of which he forms a part renders himself

guilty of ingratitude. But filial recognition ought not to be carried

to the length of closing our eyes to the truth. One is not wanting in

respect to the government in making the remark that it is not able to

satisfy the conflicting needs that are in man, nor to a religion in

saying that she is not free from the formidable objections which

science has raised against all supernatural belief. Responding to

certain social exigencies and not to some others, governments fall by

reason of the same causes which have founded them and which have been

their strength. Responding to the aspirations of the heart at the

expense of the protestations of reason, religions crumble away in turn,

because no force here below can succeed in stifling reason.

That day will be unfortunate for reason when she would stifle religion.

Our planet, believe me, labours at some profound work. Do not pronounce

rashly upon the inutility of such and such of its parts; do not say

that it is necessary to suppress this wheel-work, which to appearance

makes but the contrary play of the others. Nature, which has endowed

the animal with an infallible instinct, has not put into humanity

anything deceptive. From his organs you may boldly conclude his

destiny. Est Deus in nobis. Religions are false when they attempt to

prove the infinite, to determine it, to incarnate it, if I may so

speak, but they are true when they affirm it. The greatest errors that

they import into that affirmation are nothing compared to the price of

the truth which they proclaim. The greatest simpleton, provided he

practises the worship of the heart, is more enlightened as to the

reality of things than the materialist who thinks he explains

everything by accident, and leaves it there.

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INTRODUCTION.

WHICH TREATS PRINCIPALLY OF THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS OF THIS HISTORY.

A HISTORY of the "Origins of Christianity" ought to embrace the whole

obscure and, so to speak, subterranean period which extends from the

first beginnings of this religion to the time when its existence became

a public fact, notorious and apparent to everybody. Such a history

ought to consist of four parts. The first, which is now presented to

the public, treats of the particular fact which was the starting point

of the new religion, and is wholly concerned with the sublime

personality of the Founder. The second should treat of the Apostles and

their immediate disciples, or rather, of the revolutions which took

place in religious thought in the first two generations of

Christianity. This should end about the year 100, when the last friends

of Jesus were just dead, and when the whole of the books of the New

Testament had almost assumed the form in which they are now read. The

third book should set forth the state of Christianity under the

Antonines. We should then observe its slow development and its waging

of an almost permanent war against the empire, which latter, having at

that moment attained to the highest degree of administrative perfection

and being governed by philosophers, combated in the nascent sect a

secret and theocratic society, which the latter obstinately disowned,

but which was a continual source of weakness. This book would embrace

the whole of the second century. The fourth and last part should show

the decided progress which Christianity had made from the time of

Syrian emperors. In it we should see the learned constitution of the

Antonines crumble away, the decadence of ancient civilisation set in

irrevocably and Christianity profit by its ruin, Syria conquer the

entire West, and Jesus, in combination with the gods and the deified

sages of Asia, take possession of a society which philosophy and a

purely civil government were unable longer to cope with. It was then

that the religious ideas of the races established upon the coasts of

the Mediterranean underwent a great change; that the Eastern religions

everywhere took the lead; that Christianity, having become a large

Church, totally forgot its millennium dreams, broke its last

connections with Judaism, and passed entirely into the Greek and Roman

world. The strifes and the literary labours of the third century, which

had already taken place openly, have to be described only in their

general features. Again, the persecutions of the commencement of the

fourth century, the last effort of the empire to return to its old

principles, which denied to religious associations a place in the

State, should be recounted more briefly. Finally, the change of policy

which, under Constantine, inverted the position, and made of the most

free and most spontaneous religious movement an official worship

subject to State control, and in its turn persecutor, would need only

to be foreshadowed.

I do not know whether I shall have life and strength to execute no vast

a plan. I should be satisfied if, after writing the life of Jesus, it

is given to me to relate, as I understand it, the history of the

Apostles; the condition of the Christian conscience during the weeks

which immediately succeeded the death of Jesus; the formation of the

cycle of legends touching the resurrection; the first acts of the

Church of Jerusalem, the life of St. Paul, the crisis at the time of

Nero, the appearance of the Apocalypse, the ruin of Jerusalem, the

foundation of the Hebrew-Christian sects of Batanea, the compilation of

the Gospels, and the rise of the great schools of Asia Minor.

Everything pales by the side of that marvellous first century. By a

peculiarity rare in history, we can judge better of what passed in the

Christian world from the year 50 to 75 than from the year 80 to 150.

The plan upon which this history proceeds prevents the introduction

into the text of long critical dissertations upon controversial points.

A continuous succession of notes places likewise the reader in a

position to verify the sources of all the propositions in the text.

These notes are strictly limited to quotations at first hand--I mean,

to the indication of the original passages upon which each assertion or

hypothesis rests. I am aware that, to persons who have had little

experience in these studies, many other explanations might be

necessary; but it is not my habit to do over again what has once been

done and done well. To cite only books written in French, the following

can be recommended: [1]

The above works are for the most part excellent, and in them will be

found explained a multitude of details upon which I have had to be very

succinct. In particular, the criticism of the details of evangelical

texts has been done by M. Strauss in a manner which leaves little to be

desired. Although M. Strauss may at first have been deceived in his

theory in regard to the authorship of the Gospels, and although his

book, in my opinion, has the fault of occupying too much theological

and too little historical ground, it is indispensable, so as to

understand the motives which have guided me in a multitude of details,

to follow the argument (always judicious, though sometimes a little

subtle) of the book which has been so well translated by my learned

co-worker M. Littr�.

I am not aware that, in respect of ancient testimony, I have overlooked

any source of information. Not to mention a multitude of scattered data

respecting Jesus and the times in which he lived, we still have five

great collections of writings. These are: first, the Gospels and the

New Testament writings in general; second, the compositions called the

"Apocrypha of the Old Testament;" third, the works of Philo; fourth,

those of Josephus; fifth, the Talmud. The writings of Philo have the

inestimable advantage of showing us the thoughts which, in the time of

Jesus, stirred souls occupied with great religious questions. Philo

lived, it is true, in quite a different sphere of Judaism from Jesus;

yet, like him, he was quite free from the pharisaic spirit which

reigned at Jerusalem; Philo is in truth the elder brother of Jesus. He

was sixty-two years of age when the prophet of Nazareth had reached the

highest point of his activity, and he survived him at least ten years.

What a pity it is that the accidents of life did not direct his steps

into Galilee! What would he not have taught us!

Josephus, who wrote chiefly for the Pagans, did not exhibit the some

sincerity. His meagre accounts of Jesus, John the Baptist, and of Judas

the Gaulonite are colourless and lifeless. We feel that he sought to

represent these movements, so profoundly Jewish in character and

spirit, in a form which would be intelligible to the Greeks and Romans.

Taken as a whole I believe the passage in regard to Jesus to be

authentic. It is perfectly in the style of Josephus, and, if that

historian mentioned Jesus at all, it is indeed in this manner that he

would have spoken of him. We feel, however, that the hand of a

Christian has retouched the fragment, and has added to it passages

without which it would have been well nigh blasphemous, as well as

abridged and modified some expressions. It is necessary to remember

that Josephus owed his literary fortune to the Christians, who adopted

his writings as essential documents of their sacred history. It is

probable that in the second century they circulated an edition of them,

corrected according to Christian ideas. At all events that which

constitutes the immense interest of the books of Josephus in respect of

our present subject is the vivid picture he gives of the times. Thanks

to this Jewish historian, Herod, Herodias, Antipas, Philip, Annas,

Ka�aphas, and Pilate are personages whom, so to speak, we can touch,

and whom we can actually see living before us.

The Apocrypha of the Old Testament, especially the Jewish part of the

Sibylline verses, the book of Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, the

fourth book of Esdras, the Apocalypse of Baruch, together with the book

of Daniel, which is also itself a real Apocrypha, possess a primary

importance in the history of the development of the Messianic theories,

and in the understanding of the conceptions of Jesus in regard to the

kingdom of God. The book of Enoch, in particular, and the Assumption of

Moses, were much read in the circle of Jesus. Some expressions imputed

to Jesus by the synoptics are presented in the epistle attributed to

Saint Barnabas as belonging to Enoch: Os Enoch legei. It is very

difficult to determine the date of the different sections of which the

book attributed to that patriarch in composed. None of them are

certainly anterior to the year 150 B.C.: some of them may even have

been written by a Christian pen. The section containing the discourses

entitled "Similitudes," and extending from chapter xxvii. to chapter

lxxi., is suspected of being a Christian work. But this has not been

proved. Perhaps this part is only a proof of alterations. Other

additions or Christian revisions are recognisable here and there.

The collection of the Sibylline verses needs to be regarded in the same

light; but the latter is more easily established. The oldest part in

the poem contained in Book III., v. 97-817; it appeared about the year

140 B.C. Respecting the date of the fourth book of Esdras everybody now

is nearly agreed in assigning this Apocalypse to the year 97 A.D. It

has been altered by the Christians. The Apocalypse of Baruch has a

great resemblance to that of Esdras; we find there, as in the book of

Enoch, several utterances imputed to Jesus. As to the book of Daniel,

the character of the two languages in which it is written, the use of

Greek words, the clear, precise, dated announcements of events which go

back as far as the times of Antiochus Epiphanes; the false descriptions

which are there drawn of ancient Babylon; the general tone of the book,

which has nothing suggestive of the writings of the captivity, but, on

the contrary, corresponds, by numerous analogies, to the beliefs, the

manners, the turn of imagination of the epoch of Seleucid�; the

Apocalyptic form of the visions; the position of the book in the Hebrew

canon which is outside the series of the prophets; the omission of

Daniel in the panegyrics of chapter xlix. of Ecclesiasticus, in which

his position is all but indicated; and a thousand other proofs, which

have been deduced a hundred times, do not permit of a doubt that this

book was but the product of the general exaltation produced among the

Jews by the persecution of Antiochus. It is not in the old prophetic

literature that it most be classed; its place is at the head of

Apocalyptic literature, the first model of a kind of composition, after

which were to come the various Sibylline poems, the book of Enoch, the

Assumption of Moses, the Apocalypse of John, the Ascension of Isaiah,

the fourth book of Esdras.

Hitherto, in the history of the origins of Christianity, the Talmud has

been too much neglected. I think with M. Geiger that the true notion of

the circumstances which produced Jesus must be sought in this peculiar

compilation, in which so much knowledge is mixed with the most

insignificant scholasticism. The Christian theology and the Jewish

theology having followed uniformly two parallel paths, the history of

the one cannot be understood without the history of the other.

Innumerable material details in the Gospels find, moreover, their

commentary in the Talmud. The vast Latin collections of Lightfoot,

Schoettgen, Buxtorf, and Otho contained already on this point a mass of

information. I have taken upon myself to verify in the original all the

quotations which I have made use of, without an exception. The

assistance which has been given in this part of my task by a learned

Israelite, M. Newbauer, well-versed in Talmudic literature, has enabled

me to go further and to elucidate certain parts of my subject by some

new researches. The distinction here between epochs is very important,

the compilation of the Talmud extending from the year 200 to the year

500, or thereabout. In the actual condition of these studies, we have

brought to it as much discernment as it was possible in the actual

state of these studies. Dates no recent will excite fears among persons

accustomed to attach value to a document only for the epoch in which it

was written. But such scruples would here be out of place. Jewish

teaching from the Asmonean epoch up to the end of the second century

was chiefly oral. These sorts of intellectual states must not be judged

by the customs of an age in which much writing takes place. The Vedas,

the Homeric poems, the ancient Arabic poems, were for centuries

preserved only in memory, and yet these compositions present a very

distinct and delicate form. In the Talmud, on the other hand, the form

possesses no value. Let us add that before the Mischnah of Juda the

saint, which obliterated the recollection of all others, there had been

several essays at compilation, the commencement of which goes further

back perhaps than is commonly supposed. The style of the Talmud is that

of careless notes; the editors probably did no more than range under

certain titles the enormous medley of writings which, for generations,

had accumulated in the different schools.

It remains for us to speak of the documents which, pretending to be

biographies of the Founder of Christianity, must naturally take the

place of honour in a life of Jesus. A complete treatise upon the

compilation of the Gospels would be a work of itself. Thanks to the

excellent work which, for the last thirty years, has been devoted to

this question, a problem which was formerly held to be insoluble has

been resolved, and, though there is room still left for much

uncertainty, it is quite sufficient for the requirements of history. We

shall have occasion later on to revert to this in our second book,

seeing that the composition of the Gospels was one of the most

important facts in the future of Christianity in the second half of the

first century. We shall only touch in this place a single aspect of the

subject, but one which is indispensable to the solidarity of our

narrative. Putting to one side all that belongs to a picture of the

apostolic times, we will inquire only to what extent the data furnished

by the Gospels can be employed in a history arranged according to

rational principles.

That the Gospels are in part legendary is quite evident, inasmuch as

they are full of miracles and of the supernatural; but there are

legends and legends. Nobody disputes the principal traits in the life

of Francis d'Assisi, although at every step the supernatural is

encountered in it. Contrariwise, no one gives credence to the "Life of

Apollonius of Tyana," for the reason that it was written long after the

hero, and avowedly as a pure romance. When, by whom, and under what

conditions were the Gospels compiled? This is the chief question upon

which the opinion, it is necessary to form of their credibility,

depends.

We know that each of the four Gospels bears at its head the name of a

personage known either in Apostolic history or in evangelical history

itself. If these titles are correct it is clear that the Gospels,

without ceasing to be in part legendary, possess a high value, since

they take us back to the half century which followed the death of

Jesus, and even in two cases to eyewitnesses of his acts.

As for Luke, doubt is hardly possible. The Gospel of Luke is a studied

composition, founded upon anterior documents. It is the work of a man

who selects, adapts, and combines. The author of this Gospel is

undoubtedly the same as that of the Acts of the Apostles. Now, the

author of the Acts appears to be a companion of Paul, an appellation

which exactly fits Luke. I am aware that more than one objection can be

raised against this opinion; but one thing is beyond question, to wit,

the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts is a man belonging to

the second Apostolic generation, and that is sufficient for our

purpose. The date of that Gospel may, however, be determined with quite

enough precision by considerations drawn from the book itself. The 21st

chapter of Luke, which is an inseparable part of the work, was

certainly written subsequently to the siege of Jerusalem, but not very

long afterwards. We are here, then, upon solid ground; for the work in

question has been written by the same person, and its unity is perfect.

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark do not nearly possess the same stamp of

individuality. They are impersonal compositions, in which the author

wholly disappears. A proper name inscribed at the head of such works

does not count for much.

We cannot, moreover, reason here as in the case of Luke. The date which

belongs to a particular chapter (to Matthew xiv. and Mark xiii. for

example) cannot he rigorously applied to the works as a whole, for the

latter are made up of fragments of epochs and of productions which are

quite distinct. In general, the third Gospel appears to be posterior to

the two first, and exhibits the character of a much more advanced

composition. We cannot, nevertheless, conclude hence that the two

Gospels of Mark and Matthew were in the some condition as we have them

when Luke wrote his. These two works, entitled Mark and Matthew, in

fact, remained for a long time in a loose state, if I may so speak, and

were susceptible of additions. On this point we have an excellent

witness, who lived in the first half of the second century. This was

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, a grave man, a traditionist, who was busy

all his life in collecting what was known by any one of Jesus. After

declaring that in such cases he preferred oral tradition to books,

Papias mentions two accounts of the acts and words of Christ. First a

writing of Mark, the interpreter of the Apostle Peter, a short

incomplete composition, without chronological order, including

narratives and discourses (lechtheuta e prachtheuta), composed from the

information and recollections of the Apostle Peter; second, a

collection of sayings (logia) written in Hebrew by Matthew, which

everybody has translated as he listed. Certain it is that these two

descriptions accord pretty well with the general tenor of the two books

now called the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to

Mark--the former characterised by its long discourses; the second,

above all, by anecdote, and being much more exact than the other on

minor details--brief even to dryness, the discourses few in number and

indifferently composed. Nevertheless, that these two works as read by

us are absolutely identical with those which were read by Papias is not

sustainable, because, first, the writings of Matthew which were perused

by Papias were composed solely of discourses in Hebrew, different

translations of which were in circulation, and, secondly, because the

writings of Mark and those of Matthew were to him perfectly distinct,

written without any collusion, and it would seem m different languages.

Now in the actual state of the texts, the Gospel according to Matthew

and the Gospel according to Mark present parallelisms so long, and so

perfectly identical, that it must be supposed that the final compiler

of the first had the second before him, or vice vers�, or that both

copied from the same source. That which appears the most probable is

that we have not the original compilation of either Matthew or Mark,

that the two first Gospels as we have them are adaptations in which

each sought to fill up the lacunes of one text from the other. In fact,

each was desirous of possessing a complete copy. He whose copy

contained discourses only filled it out with narratives, and

contrariwise. It is in this way that "The Gospel according to Matthew"

is found to have appropriated all the anecdotes of Mark, and that "The

Gospel according to Mark" contains to-day many of the details which

have come from the Logia of Matthew. Each, moreover, imbibed largely of

the oral tradition which floated around him. This tradition is so far

from having been exhausted by the Gospels that the Acts of the

Apostles, and of the most ancient Fathers, cite many sayings of Jesus

which appear authentic and are not found in the Gospels that we

possess.

It matters little for our present purpose that we should press this

analysis further, or attempt, on the one hand, to reconstruct in a kind

of way the original Logia of Matthew, or, on the other, to restore the

primitive narrative to what it was when it left the pen of Mark. The

Logia are doubtless presented to us in the great discourses of Jesus,

which make up a considerable portion of the first Gospel. These

discourses, in fact, form, when detached from the rest, a complete

enough narrative. As for the original narratives of Mark, the text of

them seems to make its appearance now in the first, now in the second

Gospel, but most often in the second. In other words, the plan of the

life of Jesus in the synoptics is founded upon two original documents:

first, the discourses of Jesus collected by the Apostle Matthew;

second, the collection of anecdotes and of personal information which

Mark committed to writing from the recollections of Peter. It may be

said that we still possess these two documents, mixed up with the facts

of another production, in the two first Gospels, which bear, not

without reason, the titles of "The Gospel according to Matthew" and

"The Gospel according to Mark" respectively.

In any case, that which is indubitable is that very early the

discourses of Jesus were reduced to writing in the Aramean tongue;

also, that very early his remarkable actions were taken down. These

were not texts to be settled and fixed dogmatically. Besides the

Gospels which have come down to us, there might be others which

professed equally to set forth the tradition of eyewitnesses. We attach

little importance to these writings, while their preservers, such as

Papius, who lived in the first half of the second century, preferred

always to them oral tradition. Seeing that the world was believed to be

near an end, people had not much inclination to write books for the

future; they were solely concerned about preserving in their heart the

living image of him whom they hoped to see soon again in the clouds.

Hence, the small authority which, for nearly a hundred years,

evangelical texts enjoyed. People made no scruple about inserting

paragraphs in them, of combining various narratives, and in perfecting

the one by the other. The poor man who had only one book was anxious

that it should contain all that was dear to his heart. These little

books were lent by one to another; each transcribed into the margin of

his copy the phrases and parables he found in others which affected

him. The most beautiful thing in the world has thus proceeded from an

obscure and wholly popular elaboration. No edition possessed an

absolute value. The two editions attributed to Clement Romanus quote

the sayings of Jesus with two notable variances. Justin, who often

appeals to that which he calls "The Memoirs of the Apostles," had

before him a set of evangelical documents a little different from that

which we have; at all events, he does not take the trouble to give them

textually. The evangelical quotations in the pseudo-Clementine homilies

of Ebionite origin present the some character. The spirit was

everything; the letter nothing. It was when tradition, in the latter

half of the second century, lost its power, that the text bearing the

names of apostles or of apostolic men assumed a decisive authority and

obtained the force of law. Even then free compositions were not

absolutely interdicted; following the example of Luke people continued

to write special Gospels by changing the ensemble of older texts.

Who does not recognise the value of documents constructed thus out of

the tender recollections and simple narratives of the first two

Christian generations, still full of the strong impressions produced by

the illustrious Founder, and which seems to have survived him for a

long time? Let us add that those Gospels seemed to proceed from those

branches of the Christian family which were most closely related to

Jesus. The final labour of compilation of the text which bears the name

of Matthew appears to have been done in one of the countries situated

to the north-east of Palestine, such as Gaulonitis, Auranitis, and

Batanea, where many Christians took refuge at the time of the Roman

war, where were still to be found at the end of the second century

relatives of Jesus, and where the first Galilean tendency was longer

felt than elsewhere.

So far we have only spoken of the three Gospels called the synoptic. It

now remains to speak of the fourth, the one which bears the name of

John. Here the question is much more difficult. Polycarp, the most

intimate disciple of John, who often quotes the synoptics in his

epistle to the Philippians, makes no allusion to the fourth Gospel.

Papias, who was equally attached to the school of John, and who, if he

had not been his disciple, as Iren�us believes he was, had associated a

great deal with his immediate disciples--Papias, who had eagerly

collected all the oral accounts relative to Jesus, does not say a word

of a "Life of Jesus" written by the Apostle John. If such a mention

could have been found in his work, Eusebius, who notices everything in

it which bears on the literary history of the apostolic age, would

undoubtedly have mentioned it. Justin, perhaps, knew the fourth Gospel;

but he certainly did not regard it as the work of the Apostle John,

since he expressly designates that apostle as the author of the

Apocalypse, and takes not the least account of the fourth Gospel in the

numerous facts which he extracts from the "Memoirs of the Apostles."

More than this, upon all the points where the synoptics and the fourth

Gospel differ he adopts opinions at complete variance with the latter.

This is all the more surprising, seeing that the dogmatic tendencies of

the fourth Gospel are marvellously adapted to Justin.

The same remarks apply to the pseudo-Clementine homilies. The words of

Jesus quoted by that book are of the synoptic type. In two or three

places there are, it would seem, facts borrowed from the fourth Gospel.

But the author of the Homilies certainly does not accord to that Gospel

an apostolic authority, since on many points be puts himself in direct

contradiction with him. It appears that Marcion (about 140) could not

have known the said Gospel, or attributed to it no importance as an

inspired book. This Gospel accorded so well with his ideas that, if he

had known it, he would have adopted it eagerly, and would not have been

obliged, so as to have an ideal Gospel, to make a corrected edition of

the Gospel of Luke. Finally, the apocryphal Gospels which may be

referred to the second century, like the Protevangel of James, the

Gospel of Thomas the Israelite, embellished the synoptic canvas, but

they took no account of the Gospel of John.

The intrinsic difficulties which result from the reading of the fourth

Gospel itself are not less forcible. How is it that, by the side of

information so precise, and in places felt to be that of eyewitnesses,

we find discourses totally different from those of Matthew? How is it

that the Gospel in question does not contain a parable or an exorcism?

How is it to be explained that side by side with a general plan of the

life of Jesus, which plan in some respects seems more satisfactory and

more exact than that of the synoptics, appear those singular passages

in which one perceives a dogmatic interest peculiar to the author,

ideas most foreign to Jesus, and sometimes indications which put us on

our guard to the good faith of the narrator? How is it, finally, that

by the side of views the most pure, the most just, the most truly

evangelical, we find those blemishes which we would rather look upon as

the interpolation of an ardent sectary? Is this indeed John, son of

Zebedee, the brother of James (who is not mentioned once in the fourth

Gospel), who has written in Greek those abstract lessons on

metaphysics, to which the synoptics offer no analogy? Is this the

essentially Judaising author of the Apocalypse, who, in so few years,

should have been stripped to this extent of his style and of his ideas?

Is it an "Apostle of Circumcision," who is likely to have composed a

narrative more hostile to Judaism than the whole of St. Paul's, a

narrative in which the word "Jew" is almost equivalent to That of

"enemy of Jesus"? Is it indeed he whose example was invoked by the

partisans of the celebration of the Jewish passover in favour of their

opinion, who could speak with a sort of disdain of the "Feasts of the

Jews" and of the "Passover of the Jews"? All of this is important. For

my part, I reject the idea that the fourth Gospel could have been

written by the pen of a quondam Galilean fisherman. But that, taken all

in all, this Gospel may have proceeded, about the end of the first

century or the beginning of the second, from one of the schools of Asia

Minor which was attached to John, that it presents to us a version of

the life of the Master worthy of high consideration and often of being

preferred, is indeed rendered probable, both by external evidence and

by examining the document under consideration.

And, in the first place, no one doubts that about the year 170 the

fourth Gospel did exist. At that date there broke out at Laodicea on

the Lycus a controversy relative to the Passover, in which our Gospel

played an important part. Apollinaris, Athenagoras, Polycrates, the

author of the epistle to the Churches of Vienne and of Lyons, professed

already in regard to the alleged narrative of John the opinion that it

would soon become orthodox. Theophilus of Antioch (about 180) said

positively that the Apostle John was the author of it. Iren�us and the

Canon of Muratori attest the complete triumph of our Gospel, a triumph

in respect of which there could no longer be any doubt.

But, if about the year 170 the fourth Gospel appeared as a writing of

the Apostle John and invested with full authority, is it not evident

that at this date it was not of ancient creation? Tatian, the author of

the epistle to Diogenatus, seems indeed to have made use of it. The

part played by our Gospel in Gnosticism, and especially in the system

of Valentinus, in Montanism and in the controversy of the Aloges, is

not less remarkable, and shows that from the last half of the second

century this Gospel was included in every controversy, and served as a

corner stone for the development of the dogma. The school of John is

the one whose progress is the most apparent during the second century;

Iren�us proceeded from the school of John, and between him and the

Apostle there was only Polycarp. Now, Iren�us has not a doubt as to the

authenticity of the fourth Gospel. Let as add that the first epistle

attributed to Saint John is, according to all appearances, by the same

author as the fourth Gospel; now the epistle seems to have been known

to Polycarp; it was, it is said, cited by Papias; Iren�us recognised it

as John's.

But, as some light is now required to be cast upon the reading of the

work itself, we shall remark, first, that the author therein always

speaks as an eyewitness. He wishes to pass for the Apostle John, and it

is clearly seen that he writes in the interest of that apostle. In each

he betrays the design of fortifying the authority of the son of

Zebedee, of showing that he was the favourite of Jesus, and the most

far-seeing of his disciples; that on all the most solemn occasions (at

the Supper, at Calvary, at the Tomb), he occupied the chief place. The

relations of John with Peter, which were on the whole fraternal,

although not excluding a certain rivalry; the hatred, on the other

hand, of Judas, a hatred probably anterior to the betrayal, seem to

break through here and there. At times one is constrained to believe

that John, in his old age, having perused the evangelical narratives

which were in circulation, on the one hand, remarked various

inaccuracies; on the other, was chagrined at seeing that in the history

of Christ he was not accorded an important enough place; that then he

commenced to recount a multitude of things which were better known to

him than to the others, with the intention of showing that, in many

instances where Peter only was mentioned, he had figured with and

before him. Even during the life of Jesus these petty sentiments of

jealousy had been betrayed between the sons of Zebedee and the other

disciples. Since the death of James, his brother, John remained the

sole inheritor of the intimate remembrances of which the two apostles,

by common consent, were the depositaries. Those clear remembrances were

preserved in the circle of John, and as the ideas of the times in the

matter of literary good faith differed much from ours, a disciple, or

rather one of those numerous sectaries, already semi-Gnostics, who from

the end of the first century, in Asia Minor, commenced to modify

greatly the idea of Christ, might have been tempted to take the pen for

the apostle and to make on his own account a free revision of his

Gospel. It would cost him no more to speak in the name of John than it

cost the pious author of the second Epistle of Peter to write a letter

in the name of the latter. To identify himself with the beloved Apostle

of Jesus, he espoused all his sentiments, even his littlenesses. Hence

this perpetual design of the alleged author to recall that he is the

last surviving eyewitness, and the pleasure he takes in relating

circumstances which could only be known to him. Hence, so many petty

minute details which he would like passed off as the commentaries of an

annotator: "It was the sixth hour;" "it was night;" "that man was

called Malchus;" "they had lighted a fire, for it was cold;" "the coat

was without seam." Hence, finally, the bad arrangement of the

compilation, the irregularity of the narrative, the disjointedness of

the first chapters--so many inexplicable features, if we go on the

supposition that our Gospel is a mere theological thesis without any

historic value, yet perfectly comprehensible if we regard it as the

recollections of an old man arranged without the assistance of those

from whom they proceeded--recollections, sometimes possessing uncommon

freshness, at others having been subjected to singular modifications.

An important distinction, in fact, is to he remarked in the Gospel of

John. This Gospel, on the one hand, presents a sketch of the life of

Jesus which differs considerably from that of the synoptics. On the

other, it puts into the mouth of Jesus discourses whose tone, style,

character and doctrines have nothing in common with the Logia contained

in the synoptics. In respect of the latter, the difference is such that

one must make an unqualified choice. If Jesus spoke as Matthew would

have us believe, he could not have spoken in the manner represented by

John. Between these two authorities no one has hesitated, or will ever

hesitate. Removed by a thousand leagues from the simple, disinterested

and impersonal tone of the synoptics, the Gospel of John shows at every

step the prepossession of the apologist, the arri�re pens�e of the

sectary, the desire to establish a thesis and to overcome his

adversaries. It was not by pretentious tirades, clumsy, badly written,

and appealing little to the moral sense, that Jesus founded his divine

work. Even though Papias had not informed us that Matthew wrote the

sayings of Jesus in their original tongue, the natural, the ineffable

truth, the incomparable charm contained in the synoptic Gospels, the

profoundly Hebraic turn of these discourses, the analogies which they

present to the sayings of the Jewish doctors of the period, their

perfect harmony with the Galilean nature--all these characteristics,

compared with the obscure Gnosticism and the distorted metaphysics

which fill the discourses of John, speak loudly enough. We do not mean

to say that there are not to be found in the discourses of John some

brilliant flashes, some traits which really proceeded from Jesus. But

the mystical tone of these discourses corresponds in nothing to the

character of the eloquence of Jesus, such as it is pictured to us in

the synoptics. A new spirit breathes through them; Gnoticism has

previously found a footing; the Galilean era of the kingdom of God is

at an end, the hope of the near advent of Jesus is further off; we

enter the arid realm of metaphysics, into the darkness of abstract

dogmatism. The spirit of Jesus is not there, and if the son of Zebedee

has indeed traced those pages, it is to be supposed that in writing

them he had forgotten the Lake of Gennesareth and the charming

conversations he had heard upon its banks.

One circumstance, moreover, which proves indeed that the discourses

reported by the fourth Gospel are historical fragments, but that they

ought to be regarded as compositions, intended to cover, with the

authority of Jesus, certain doctrines dear to the author, is their

complete harmony with the intellectual condition of Asia Minor at the

time they were written. Asia Minor was then the theatre of a strange

movement of syncretic philosophy; all the germs of Gnosticism existed

there already. Cerinthus, a contemporary of John, said that �on named

Christos was united by baptism to the man named Jesus, and had

separated from him on the cross. Some of the disciples of John would

appear to have drunk deeply from these strange springs. Can we affirm

that the Apostle himself had not been subject to the same influences,

that he did not experience something anolagous to the change which was

wrought in St. Paul, and of which the epistle to the Colossians is the

principal witness? No, certainly not. It may be that after the crisis

of 68 (the date of the Apocalypse), and of the year 70 (the ruin of

Jerusalem), the old Apostle, with an ardent and plastic soul, disabused

of the belief of the near appearance of the Son of Man in the clouds,

inclined towards the ideas that he found around him, many of which

amalgamated quite well with certain Christian doctrines. In imputing

these new ideas to Jesus, he only followed a very natural leaning. Our

recollections are, like everything else, transformable; the ideal of a

person we have known changes as we change. Regarding Jesus as the

incarnation of truth, John has succeeded in attributing to him that

which he had come to accept as the truth.

It is nevertheless much more probable that John himself had no part in

them, that the change was made around him rather than by him, and

doubtless after his death. The long age of the apostle may have

terminated in such a state of feebleness that he was in a measure at

the mercy of those around him. A secretary might take advantage of this

state to speak in his name that which the world called par excellence,

"the old man," Ho Presbuteros. Certain parts of the fourth Gospel have

been added subsequently; such is the whole xxi. chapter, in which the

author seems to have resolved to render homage to the apostle Peter

after his death, and to answer the objections which might be drawn or

were already drawn from the death of John himself (v. 21-23). Several

other places bear the traces of erasures and of corrections. Not being

accounted as wholly the work of John, the book could well remain fifty

years in obscurity. Little by little people got accustomed to it, and

finished by accepting it. Even before it had become canonical many

simply made use of it as a book of mediocre authority, yet very

edifying. On the other hand, the contradictions that it offered to the

synoptic Gospels, which were much more widely circulated, prevented its

being taken into account when setting forth the contexture of the life

of Jesus, such as it was imagined to be.

In this mode some explain away the whimsical contradictions presented

in the writings of Justin and in the pseudo-Clementine Homilies, in

which are to be found traces of our Gospel, but which certainly are not

to be placed upon the same footing as the synoptics. Hence also those

species of allusions, which are not faithful quotations, but were made

from it about the year 180. Hence, finally, this singularity, that the

fourth Gospel appeared to emerge slowly from the Church of Asia in the

second century, was first adopted by the Gnostics, but only obtained in

the orthodox Church very limited credence, as can be seen from the

controversy on the Passover, then it was universally recognised. I am

sometimes led to believe that it was the fourth Gospel of which Papias

was thinking when he opposed to the exact information in regard to the

life of Jesus the long discourses and the singular precepts which

others have attributed to him. Papias and the old Jad�o-Christian party

came to esteem such novelties as very reprehensible. This could not

have been the only instance that a book which was at first heretical

would have forced the gates of the orthodox Church and become one of

its rules of faith.

There is one thing, at least, which I regard as very probable, and that

is, that the book was written before the year 100; that is to say, at a

time when the synoptics had not yet a complete canonicity. After this

date it is impossible any longer to conceive that the author could

force himself to go beyond the limits of the "Apostolic Memoirs." To

Justin, and apparently to Papias, the synoptic cadre constitutes the

true and only plan of the life of Jesus. An impostor who wrote about

the year 120 to 130 a fantastic gospel contented himself with treating

in his own way the received version, as had been done in the apocryphal

Gospels, and did not reverse from top to bottom what was regarded as

the essential lines of the life of Jesus. This is so true that, from

the second half of the second century, these contradictions became a

serious difficulty in the hands of the aloges, and obliged the

defenders of the fourth Gospel to invent the most embarrassing

solutions. There is nothing to prove that the author of the fourth

Gospel had, when writing, any of the synoptic Gospels under his eyes.

The striking similarities of his narrative to the other three Gospels

as touching the Passion leads one to suppose that there was then for

the Passion as well as for the Last Supper an almost fixed account,

which people knew by heart.

It is impossible at this distance of time to comprehend all these

singular problems, and we should undoubtedly encounter many surprises

if it were given to us to penetrate the secrets of that mysterious

school of Ephesus, which appeared frequently to take pleasure in

pursuing obscure paths. But the latter is a capital test. Every person

who sets himself to write the life of Jesus without having a decided

opinion upon the relative value of the Gospels, who allows himself to

be guided solely by the sentiment of the subject, would, in many

instances, be induced to prefer the narrative of the fourth Gospel to

that of the synoptics. The last months of the life of Jesus especially

are explained only by John; several details of the Passion, which are

unintelligible in the synoptics, assume both probability and

possibility in the narrative of the fourth Gospel. On the other hand, I

can defy anybody to compose a life of Jesus that is understandable,

which takes into account the discourses that the alleged John imputes

to Jesus. This fashion of his of incessantly preaching himself up and

of exhibiting himself, this perpetual argumentation, this studied

stage-effect, these long reasonings attached to each miracle, these

lifeless and incoherent discourses, the tone of which is so often false

and unequal, could not be endured by a man of taste alongside of the

delightful phraseology which, according to the synoptics, constituted

the soul of the teaching of Jesus. There are here evidently fictitious

fragments, which represent to us the sermons of Jesus in the same way

as the dialogues of Plato set forth the conversations of Socrates. They

resemble the variations of a musician improvising on his own account

upon a given theme. The theme in question may have existed previously;

but in the execution the artist gives his fancy free scope. We perceive

the factitious progressions, the rhetoric, the verisimilitude. Let us

add that the vocabulary of Jesus is nowhere to be found in the

fragments of which we speak. The expression of "Kingdom of God," which

was so common with the master, does not appear even once. But,

contrariwise, the style of the discourses attributed to Jesus by the

fourth Gospel offers the most complete analogy to that of parts of the

narrative of the same Gospel and to that of the author of the epistles

called John. We see that the author of the fourth Gospel, in writing

these discourses, did not give his recollections, but the somewhat

monotonous workings of his own thought. Quite a new mystical language

is displayed in them, language characterised by the frequent employment

of the words "world," "truth," "life," "light," "darkness," and which

resembles much less that of the synoptics than that of the book of the

sages--Philo and the Valentinians. If Jesus had ever spoken in that

style, which is neither Hebraic nor Jewish, how does it come that,

amongst the auditors, only a single one of the latter has kept the

secret?

For the rest, literary history offers one example which presents a

certain analogy to the historic phenomenon we have just been

describing, and which serves to explain it. Socrates, who, like Jesus,

did not write, is known to us through two of his disciples, Xenophon

and Plato; the former corresponding with the synoptics by reason of his

compilation, at once consecutive, transparent and impersonal; the

latter, by reason of his robust individuality, recalling the author of

the fourth Gospel. In order to describe the Socratic teaching must we

follow the "Dialogues" of Plato, or the "Discourses" of Xenophon? In

such a case doubt is not possible; everyone sticks to the "Discourses"

and not to the "Dialogues." Does Plato nevertheless teach us nothing

concerning Socrates? In writing the biography of the latter, would it

be good criticism to neglect the dialogues? Who would dare to maintain

this?

Without pronouncing upon the question, it is material to know as to

what hand indited the fourth Gospel; even if we were persuaded it was

not that of the son of Zebedee, we can at least admit that this work

possesses some title to be called "the Gospel according to John." The

historical sketch of the fourth Gospel is, in my opinion, the life of

Jesus, such as it was known to the immediate circle of John. It is also

my belief that this school was better acquainted with the different

exterior circumstances of the life of the Founder than the group whose

recollections go to make up the synoptic Gospels. Notably, in regard to

the sojourns of Jesus at Jerusalem, it was in possession of facts that

the other Gospels had not. Presbyteros Joannes, who is probably not a

different person from the Apostle John, regarded, it is said, the

narrative of Mark as incomplete and confused; he even had a theory

which explained the omissions of the latter. Certain passages in Luke,

which are a kind of echo of the Johannine traditions, prove, moreover,

that the traditions preserved by the fourth Gospel were not to the rest

of the Christian family something which was entirely unknown.

These explanations will suffice, I think, to show the motives which in

the course of my narrative have determined me to give the preference to

this or that one of the four guides which we have for the life of

Jesus. On the whole, I admit the four canonical Gospels to be important

documents. All four ascend to the century which succeeded the death of

Jesus; but their historic value is very diverse. Matthew evidently

merits unlimited confidence in respect of the discourses; the latter

are the Logia, the very notes which have been extracted from a clear

and lively memory of the teaching of Jesus. A species of �clat at once

mild and terrible, a divine force, if I may so speak, underlines these

words, detaches them from the context, and to the critic renders them

easily distinguishable. The person who undertakes the task of carving

out of evangelical history a consecutive narrative possesses, in this

regard, an excellent touchstone. The actual words of Jesus, so to

speak, reveal themselves; as soon as we touch them in this chaos of

traditions of unequal authority, we feel them vibrate; they translate

themselves spontaneously and fit into the narrative naturally, where

they constitute an unsurpassable relief.

The narrative parts which are grouped in the first Gospel around this

primitive nucleus do not possess the same authority. In them are to be

found many silly enough legends, which proceeded from the piety of the

second Christian generation. The accounts which Matthew gives in common

with Mark present faults of transcription which prove a mediocre

acquaintance with Palestine. Many of the episodes are repeated twice,

several persons are duplicated, which shows that different sources have

been utilised and largely amalgamated. The Gospel of Mark is much more

firm, more precise, and less weighted with circumstances which have

been added. Of the three synoptics it is the one which has remained the

most primitive, the most original, the Gospel to which has been annexed

the fewest posterior elements. Material details are given in Mark with

a clearness which we should seek in vain for in the other evangelists.

He delights to report certain sayings of Jesus in Syro-Chaldean. His

observations are most minute, and come, no doubt, from an eyewitness.

There is nothing to disprove that this eyewitness, who evidently had

followed Jesus, who had loved him and observed him very closely, and

who had preserved a lively image of him, was the Apostle Peter himself,

as is maintained by Papias.

As for the work of Luke, its historic value is sensibly more feeble. It

is a document at second hand. Its manner of narration is more matured.

The sayings of Jesus are there more reflective, more sententious. Some

sentences are carried to excess and are false. Writing outside

Palestine, and certainly after the siege of Jerusalem, the author

indicates the places with less exactness than the two other synoptics;

he is too fond of representing the temple as an oratory, where people

go to do their devotions; he does not speak of the Herodians; he

modifies details in order to bring the different narratives into closer

agreement; he softens down passages which had become embarrassing

because of the more exalted idea which people around him had attained

to in regard to the divinity of Jesus; he exaggerates the marvellous;

he commits errors of geography and of topography; he omits the Hebraic

glosses; he appears to know little of Hebrew; he does not quote a word

of Jesus in that language; he calls all the localities by their Greek

names; he corrects at times in a clumsy manner the sayings of Jesus. We

perceive in the author a compiler, a man who has not seen directly the

witnesses, who labours at the texts, and permits himself to do them

great violence in order to make them agree. Luke had probably under his

eyes the original narrative of Mark and the Logia of Matthew. But he

treats them with great freedom; at times he runs two anecdotes or two

parables together to make one; sometimes he divides one in order to

make two. He interprets the documents according to his own mind; he has

not the absolute impassibility of Matthew and Mark. We might affirm

this of his tastes and of his personal tendencies: he is a very exact

devotee; he holds that Jesus has accomplished all the Jewish rites; he

is a passionate democrat and Ebionite; that is to say, much opposed to

property, and is persuaded that the poor will soon have their revenge;

he is specially partial to the anecdotes which put into relief the

conversion of sinners and the exaltation of the humble; he frequently

modifies the ancient traditions so as to give them this acceptation. In

his first pages he includes the legends touching the infancy of Jesus,

related with the long amplifications, the canticles and the

conventional proceedings which constitute the essential feature of the

apocryphal Gospels. Finally, in the account of the last hours of Jesus,

he introduces some circumstances which are full of a tender sentiment,

as well as certain sayings of Jesus of rare beauty, which are not to be

found in the more authentic narratives, and in which can be detected

the hand of the legendary. Luke has probably borrowed them from a more

recent collection, in which it is seen his chief aim was to excite

sentiments of piety.

A great reserve was naturally bespoken in regard to a document of this

nature. It would have been as little scientific to neglect it as to

employ it without discernment. Luke had under his eyes originals which

we no longer have. He is less an evangelist than a biographer of Jesus,

a "harmonist," a reviser, after the manner of Marcion and Tatian. But

he is a biographer of the first century, a divine artist who,

independently of the information he has extracted from more ancient

sources, shows us the character of the Founder with a happiness of

treatment, a uniformity of inspiration, and a clearness that the other

two synoptic do not possess. His Gospel is the one the reading of which

possesses most charm: for, not to mention the incomparable beauty of

its common basis, he combines a degree of art and of skill in

composition which singularly enhances the effect of the picture,

without seriously marring its truthfulness.

To sum up, we are warranted in saying that the synoptic compilation has

passed through three stages: first, the original documentary stage

(logia of Matthew, lechthenta e prachthenta of Mark), primary

compilations no longer in existence; second, the simple amalgamation

stage, in which the original documents were thrown together without any

regard to literary form, and without any personal traits on the part of

the authors becoming manifest (the present Gospels of Matthew and

Mark); third, the combination stage, that of careful composition and

reflection, in which we are conscious of an effort made to reconcile

the different versions (the Gospel of Luke, the Gospels of Marcion,

Tatian, &c.). The Gospel of John, as we have above said, is a

composition of another order and altogether distinct.

It will be observed that I have not made any use of apocryphal Gospels.

In no sense ought these compositions to be placed on the same footing

as the canonical Gospels. They are tiresome and puerile amplifications,

having almost entirely the canonicals for a basis, and adding almost

nothing to them of any particular value. Contrariwise, I have been most

careful in collecting the shreds which have been preserved by the

Fathers of the Church, by the ancient Gospels which formerly existed

simultaneously with the canonicals, but which are now lost, such as the

Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel according to the Egyptians,

the Gospels attributed to Justin, Marcion, and Tatian. The first two

possess a peculiar importance, inasmuch as they were indited in Aramean

like the Logia of Matthew; as they appear to have formed a version of

the Gospel attributed to that apostle, and as they were the Gospel of

Ebionim, that is to say, of those small Christian sects of Batanea who

preserved the use of the Syro-Chaldean tongue, and appear to have

continued, to some extent, in the footsteps of Jesus. But it most be

owned that, in the condition they have come down to us, these Gospels

are inferior, for the purposes of criticism, to the edition of the

Gospel of Matthew which we possess.

It will now, I presume, be understood what sort of historic value I put

upon the Gospels. They are neither biographies after the manner of

Suetonius, nor fictitious legends, after the manner of Philostratus;

they are legendary biographies. I place them at once alongside of the

legends of the saints, the lives of Plotinus, Proclus, Isidore, and

other compositions of the same sort, in which historical truth and the

desire to present models of virtue are combined in divers degrees.

Inexactitude, a trait common to all popular compositions, makes itself

particularly felt in them. Let us suppose that fifteen or twenty years

ago three or four old soldiers of the Empire had individually set

themselves to write a life of Napoleon from recollections of him. It is

clear that their narratives would present numerous errors, great

discordances. One of them would place Wagram before Marengo; another

would boldly state that Napoleon ousted the government of Robespierre

from the Tuileries; a third would omit expeditions of the highest

importance. But one thing, possessing a great degree of truthfulness,

would certainly result from these simple narratives--that is, the

character of the hero, the impression he made around him. In this sense

such popular narratives would be worth more than a solemn and official

history. The same can also be said of the Gospels. Bent solely on

bringing out strongly the excellency of the master, his miracles, his

teaching, the evangelists manifest entire indifference to everything

that is not of the very spirit of Jesus. The contradictions in respect

of time, place, and persons were regarded as insignificant; for just as

the greater the degree of inspiration that is attributed to the words

of Jesus, so the less was granted to the compilers themselves. The

latter looked upon themselves as simple scribes, and cared only for one

thing--to omit nothing they knew. [2]

Without doubt some certain preconceived ideas must have been associated

with such recollections. Several narratives, especially in Luke, are

invented in order to bring out more vividly certain traits of the

personality of Jesus. This personality itself underwent alteration each

day. Jesus would be a unique phenomenon in history if, with the part

which he played, he had not soon become imbued with it. The legend

respecting Alexander was concocted before the generation of his

companions in arms was extinct; that respecting St. Francis d'Assisi

began in his lifetime. A rapid work of transformation went on in the

same manner in the twenty or thirty years which followed the death of

Jesus, and imposed upon his biography the absolute traits of an ideal

legend. Death makes perfect the most perfect man; it renders him

faultless to those who have loved him. At the same time, the wish to

paint the Master created likewise the desire to explain him. Many

anecdotes were concocted in order to prove that the prophecies regarded

as Messianic had been fulfilled in him. But this procedure, the

importance of which is undeniable, would not suffice to explain

everything. No Jewish work of the time gives a series of prophecies

declaring formally what the Messiah was to accomplish. Many of the

Messianic allusions referred to by the evangelists are so subtle, so

indirect, that it is impossible to believe they all had relation to a

generally admitted doctrine. Sometimes they reasoned thus: "The Messiah

was to do such a thing; now Jesus is the Messiah; therefore Jesus has

done such a thing." Sometimes they reasoned inversely: "Such a thing

has happened to Jesus; now Jesus is the Messiah; therefore such a thing

was to happen to the Messiah." [3] Explanations which are too simple

are always false when it is a question of analysing the tissues of

those profound creations of popular sentiment which baffle all science

by their fulness and infinite variety.

It is scarcely necessary to say that with such documents, in order to

present only what is incontestable, we must confine ourselves to

general lines. In almost all ancient histories, even in those which are

much less legendary than these, details give rise to infinite doubts.

When we have two accounts of the some fact, it is extremely rare that

the two accounts are in accord. Is not this a reason, when we are

confronted with but one perplexity, for falling into many? We may say

that amongst the anecdotes, the discourses, the celebrated sayings

reported by the historians, there is not one strictly accurate. Were

there stenographers to take down these fleeting words? Was there an

annalist always present to note the gestures, the conduct, the

sentiments, of the actors? Let any one essay to attain to the truth as

to the manner in which such or such a contemporary fact took place; he

will not succeed. Two accounts of the same event given by two

eyewitnesses differ essentially. Must we, hence, reject all the

colouring of the narratives, and confine ourselves to recording the

bare facts only? That would be to suppress history. Certainly I think,

however, that if we except certain short and almost mnemonic axioms,

none of the discourses reported by Matthew are textual; there is hardly

one of our stenographic reports which is so. I willingly admit that

that admirable account of the Passion embraces a multitude of trifling

inaccuracies. Would it, however, be writing the history of Jesus to

omit those sermons which exhibit to us in such a vivid manner the

nature of his discourses, and to limit ourselves to saying, with

Josephus and Tacitus, "that he was put to death by the order of Pilate"

at the instigation of the priests"? That would be, in my opinion, a

kind of inexactitude worse than that to which one exposes himself when

admitting the details supplied by the texts. These details are not true

to the letter, but they are rendered true by a superior truth; they are

more true than the naked truth, in the sense that they are truths

rendered expressive and articulate and raised to the height of an idea.

I beg those who think that I have placed an exaggerated confidence in

narratives which are in great part legendary to take note of the

observation I have just made. To what would the life of Alexander be

reduced if it were limited to that which is materially certain? Even

partly erroneous traditions contain a portion of truth which history

may not pass over. No one has reproached M. Sprenger for having, in

writing the life of Mahomet, set much store by the hadith or oral

traditions concerning the prophet, and for often having imputed to his

hero words which are only known through this source. The traditions

respecting Mahomet, nevertheless, do not have a superior historical

character to the discourses and narratives which compose the Gospels.

They were written between the year 50 and the year 140 of the Hegira.

When the history of the Jewish schools in the ages which immediately

preceded and followed the birth of Christianity shall be written, no

one will make any scruple of attributing to Hillel, Shammai, Gamaliel,

the maxims imputed to them by the Mishna and the Gemara, although these

great compilations were written many centuries after the time of the

doctors just mentioned.

Contrariwise, those who believe that history ought to consist of a

reproduction without comments of the documents which have come down to

us, I beg them to take notice that such a course is not allowable. The

four principal documents are in flagrant contradiction with one

another; Josephus, moreover, sometimes rectifies them. It is necessary

to make a choice. To allege that an event cannot take place in two ways

at once, or in an absurd manner, is not to impose � priori philosophy

upon history. Because he possesses several different versions of the

same fact, or because credulity has mixed with all these versions

fabulous circumstances, the historian most not conclude that the fact

is not a fact; but he ought, in such a case, to be very cautious,--to

examine the texts, and to proceed by induction. There is one class of

narratives especially, apropos of which this principle must necessarily

be applied--narratives of the supernatural. To seek to explain these

narratives, or to transform them into legends, is not to mutilate facts

in the name of theory; it is to begin with the observation of the very

facts themselves. None of the miracles with which the old histories are

filled took place under scientific conditions. Observation, which has

not once been falsified, teaches us that miracles never take place save

in times and countries in which they are believed, and in presence of

persons disposed to believe them. No miracle ever took place in

presence of an assembly of men capable of testing the miraculous

character of the event. Neither common people nor men of the world are

equal to the latter. It requires great precautions and long habit of

scientific research. In our own days, have we not seen the great

majority of people become dupes of the grossest frauds or of puerile

illusions! Marvellous facts, attested by the populations of small

towns, have, thanks to closer investigation, been condemned. [4] Since

it is proved that no contemporary miracle will bear discussion, is it

not probable that the miracles of the past, which have all been

performed in popular gatherings, would equally present their share of

illusion, if It were possible to criticise them in detail?

It is not, then, in the name of this or that philosophy, but in the

name of unbroken experience, that we banish the miracle from history.

We do not say, "The miracle is impossible." We say, "So far, a miracle

has never been proved." If to-morrow a thaumaturgist were to come

forward with credentials sufficiently important to be discussed; if he

were to announce that he was able, say, to raise the dead; what would

be done? A commission, composed of physiologists, physicists, chemists,

persons accustomed to historical criticism, would be named. That

commission would choose a corpse, would assure itself that the death

was indeed real, would designate the room in which the experiment

should be made, would arrange a whole series of precautions, so as to

leave no chance of doubt. If, under such conditions, resuscitation were

effected, a probability, almost equal to certainty, would be

established. As, however, it ought always to be possible to repeat an

experiment--to do over again that which has been done once--and as, in

the case of miracle, there can be no question of facility or

difficulty, the thaumaturgist would be invited to reproduce his

marvellous feat under different circumstances, upon other corpses, in

another place. If the miracle was repeated each time, two things would

be proved: first, that supernatural facts take place in the world;

second, that the power of producing them belongs, or is delegated to,

certain individuals. But who does not perceive that a miracle never

took place under these conditions? that hitherto the thaumaturgist has

always chosen the subject of the experiment, chosen the spot, chosen

the public; that, moreover, it is the people themselves who most often,

in consequence of the invincible desire to see something divine in

great events and great men, create afterwards the marvellous legends?

Until the order of things changes, we maintain it, then, as a principle

of historical criticism, that a supernatural account cannot be admitted

as such, that it always implies credulity or imposture, that it is the

duty of the historian to explain it, and search out what share of

truth, or of error, it may conceal.

Such are the rules which have been adhered to in the composition of

this narrative. In the reading of the texts, I have been able to

combine with it an important source of information--the viewing of the

places where the events occurred. The scientific mission, having for

its object the exploration of ancient Phoenicia, which I directed in

1860 and 1861, [5] led me to reside on the frontiers of Galilee, and to

travel thither frequently. I have traversed, in every sense of the

term, the country of the Gospels; I have visited Jerusalem, Hebron, and

Samaria; scarcely any important locality in the history of Jesus has

escaped me. All this history, which seems at a distance to float in the

clouds of an unreal world, took thus a form, a solidity, which

astonished me. The striking agreement of the texts and the places, the

marvellous harmony of the evangelical idea, and of the country which

served it as a framework, were to me a revelation. Before my eyes I had

a fifth Gospel, disfigured though still legible, and from that time, in

the narratives of Matthew and Mark, I saw instead of an abstract being,

who could be said never to have existed, an admirable human figure

living and moving. During the summer, having to go up to Ghazir, in

Lebanon, to take a little repose, I fixed, in rapid sketches, the

picture as it had appeared to me, and from them resulted this history.

When a cruel affliction came to hasten my departure, I had only a few

pages to write. In this manner the book was almost entirely composed

near the very places where Jesus was born and lived. Since my return, I

have laboured unceasingly to complete and arrange in detail the rough

sketch which I had hastily written in a Maronite cabin, with five or

six volumes around me.

Many will perhaps regret the biographical form which my work has thus

taken. When, for the first time, I conceived the idea of writing a

history of the origins of Christianity, my intention was, in fact, to

produce a history of doctrines, in which men and their actions would

have hardly had a place. Jesus was scarcely to be named; I was

especially bent on showing how the ideas which, under cover of his

name, were produced, took root and covered the world. But I have since

learned that history is not a simple game of abstractions; that men are

more important than doctrines. It was not a certain theory in regard to

justification and redemption which caused the Reformation; it was

Luther and Calvin. Parseeism, Hellenism, Judaism, might have been able

to combine under all forms; the doctrines of the Resurrection and of

the Word might have gone on developing for ages without producing that

grand, unique, and fruitful fact, which is called Christianity. That

fact is the work of Jesus, of St. Paul, and of the apostles. To write

the history of Jesus, of St. Paul, and of the apostles, is to write the

history of the origins of Christianity. The anterior movements do not

belong to our subject except as serving to explain the characters If

these extraordinary men, who, naturally, could not be severed from that

which preceded them.

In such an effort, to make the great souls of the past live again, some

degree of divination and of conjecture must be permitted. A great life

is an organic whole which cannot be exhibited by the mere agglomeration

of small facts. It requires a profound sentiment to embrace the whole,

and to make it a perfect unity. The artist method in such a subject is

a good guide; the exquisite tact of a Goethe would discover how to

apply it. The essential condition of the creations of art is to form a

living system of which all the parts are mutually dependent and

connected. In histories of this kind, the great indication that we hold

to the truth is to have succeeded in combining the texts in such a

fashion that they shall constitute a logical and probable narrative, in

which nothing shall be out of tune. The secret laws of life, of the

progression of organic products, of the action of minute particles,

ought to be consulted at each moment; for what is required to be

reproduced is not the material circumstance, which it is impossible to

verify; it is the soul itself of history; what most be sought after is

not the petty certainty of minuti�, it is the correctness of the

general sentiment, the truthfulness of the colouring. Each detail which

departs from the rules of classic narration ought to warn us to be on

our guard; for the fact which requires to be related has been confined

to the necessities of things, natural and harmonious. If we do not

succeed in rendering it such by our narrative, it is only because we

have not attained to seeing it aright. Suppose that, in restoring the

Minerva of Phidias according to the texts, we produced an ensemble at

once dry, jarring artificial; what must we conclude? Only one thing:

the texts lack an appreciative interpretation; we must inquire into

them calmly until they can be made to approximate and furnish a whole

in which all the parts are happily blended. Should we then be sure of

having feature for feature of the Greek statue? No; but we should not,

at least, have the caricature of it; we should have the general spirit

of the work--one of the forms in which it might have existed.

This sentiment of a living organism we have not hesitated to take as

our guide in the general arrangement of the narrative. The reading of

the Gospels would be sufficient to prove that the authors, although

conceiving a very true idea of the Life of Jesus, have not been guided

by very rigorous chronological data; Papias, moreover, expressly

teaches this, and bases his opinion upon evidence which seems to

emanate from the Apostle John himself. The expressions, "At this time

. . . after that . . . then . . . and it came to pass . . ." &c., are

the simple transitions designed to connect different narratives with

each other. To leave all the information furnished by the Gospels in

the disorder in which tradition gives it, would no more be writing the

history of Jesus than it would be writing the history of a celebrated

man to give pell-mell the letters and anecdotes of his youth, his old

age, and of his maturity. The Koran, which presents to us, in the

loosest manner possible, fragments of the different epochs in the life

of Mahomet, has discovered its secret to ingenious criticism; the

chronological order in which the fragments were composed has been hit

upon in such a way as to leave little room for doubt Such a

re-arrangement is much more difficult in the Gospel, owing to the

public life of Jesus having been shorter and less eventful than the

life of the founder of Islamism. Nevertheless, the attempt to find a

thread which shall serve as a guide through this labyrinth, ought not

to be taxed with gratuitous subtlety. There is no great abuse of

hypothesis in premising that a religious founder commences by attaching

himself to the moral aphorisms which are already in circulation, and to

the practices which are in vogue; nor, as he advances and gets full

possession of his idea, that he delights in a kind of calm and poetical

eloquence, remote from all controversy, sweet and free as pure feeling;

nor, as he gradually warms, that he is animated by opposition, and

finishes by polemics and strong invectives. Such are the periods which

are plainly distinguishable in the Koran. The order which, with

extremely fine tact, is adopted by the synoptic, supposes an analogous

progress. If we read Matthew attentively, we shall find, in the

arrangement of the discourses, a gradation greatly analogous to that

just indicated. We may observe also the studied turns of expression

which are made use of when it is desired to show the progress of the

ideas of Jesus. The reader may, if he prefers, see in the divisions

adopted in this respect, only the breaks indispensable for the

methodical exposition of a profound and complicated thought.

If love for a subject can assist in the understanding of it, it will

also, I hope, be recognised that I have not been wanting in this

condition. To construct the history of a religion, it is necessary

first to have believed it (without this, we should not be able to

understand why it has charmed and satisfied the human conscience); in

the second place, to believe it no longer in an absolute manner, for

absolute faith is incompatible with sincere history. But love exists

apart from faith. In order not to attach one's self to any of the forms

which captivate the adoration of men, one need not renounce the

appreciation of that which they contain of good and of beautiful. No

transitory apparition exhausts the Divinity; God was revealed before

Jesus--God will reveal Himself after him. Profoundly unequal, and so

much the more Divine, because they are grander and more spontaneous,

the manifestations of God which are hidden in the depths of the human

conscience are all of the same order. Jesus cannot then belong solely

to those who call themselves his disciples. He is the common honour of

him who carries a human heart. His glory does not consist in being

banished from history; we render him a truer worship in showing that

all history is incomprehensible without him.

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[1] See Volume VIII. of this series, which contains the author's notes

of the whole seven volumes of the series, together with a complete

index.--Ed.

[2] See the passage from Papias, before cited.

[3] See, for example, John xix. 23, 24.

[4] See the Gazette des Tribunaux, 10th Sept, and 11th Nov., 1851; 28th

May, 1857.

[5] The work which will contain the results of this mission is in the

press.

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THE LIFE OF JESUS.

CHAPTER I.

PLACE OF JESUS IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

The chief event in the world's history is the revolution by which the

noblest portions of humanity passed from the ancient religions

comprised under the name of Paganism to a religion based on the divine

unity, the trinity, and the incarnation of the Son of God. It took

nearly a thousand years to make this conversion. The new religion

itself was three hundred years in forming. But the revolution in

question had its origin in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. There

lived then a superior person, who, through his daring originality and

the love he could inspire, created the object and fixed the point of

departure of the future faith of humanity.

Man, since he distinguished himself from the animal, has been

religious: we mean, he sees something in nature beyond appearances, and

in himself something beyond death. This sentiment, for thousands of

years, was debased in the most singular manner. With many races it went

no further than a belief in sorcerers, under the gross form in which it

is still to be found in certain parts of Oceania. With other peoples

the religious sentiment degenerated into the hideous scenes of butchery

which characterised the ancient religion of Mexico. In other countries,

Africa in particular, it did not get beyond Fetichism: we mean the

adoration of a material object to which were attributed supernatural

powers. Like the instinct of love, which at moments elevates the most

vulgar man above himself, it sometimes takes the form of perversion and

ferocity; similarly, this divine faculty of religion had for a long

time the appearance of a cancer, which it was necessary to extirpate

from the human species, the source of errors and of crimes which it was

the duty of wise men to seek to suppress.

The brilliant civilisations developed at a remote period in China, in

Babylonia, and in Egypt, were the cause of a certain progress in

religion. China attained early to a sort of good common sense, which

prevented her from going wildly astray. She was cognisant neither of

the advantages nor the abuses of the religious spirit. At all events,

she had in this instance no influence in directing the great current of

human thought. The religions of Babylonia and Syria never disengaged

themselves from a substratum of strange sensuality; those religions

continued to be, until their extinction in the fourth and fifth

centuries of our era, schools of immorality from which, at times,

thanks to a kind of poetical instinct, glimpses of the divine world

emanated. Egypt, in spite of an apparent kind of Fetichism, was able

very early to embrace metaphysical dogmas and a lofty symbolism. But

these interpretations of a refined theology were unquestionably not

intuitive. Man, when possessed of a clear idea, has never amused

himself by clothing it in symbols; most often it is the result of long

reflection, and the impossibility felt by the human mind of giving

itself up to the absurd, that we seek for ideas whose meaning is lost

to us behind ancient mystic images. It is not from Egypt, moreover,

whence has come the faith of humanity. The elements in the Christian

religion which, after undergoing a thousand transformations, came from

Egypt and Syria, are exterior forms of little consequence, or of dross

such as is always retained in the purest worships. The grand defect of

the religions in question was their superstitious character; they only

threw into the world millions of amulets and charms. No great moral

thought could emanate from races debased by a secular despotism and

accustomed to institutions which prevented almost any exercise of

individual liberty.

The poetry of the soul, faith, liberty, sincerity, devotion, appeared

simultaneously in the world with the two great races which, in a sense,

have made humanity; we refer to the Indo-European and the Semitic

races. The first religious intuitions of the Indo-European race were

essentially naturalistic. But it was a profound and moral naturalism,

an amorous embrace of nature by man, a delicious poetry, full of the

sentiment of the infinite; the principle, in a word, of all that which

the Germanic and Celtic genius, of that which, in later times, a

Shakespeare and a Goethe, should express. This was neither religion nor

moral reflection; it was melancholy, tenderness, and imagination; above

all, it was extreme earnestness--that is to say, the essential

condition of morals and religion. The faith of mankind, nevertheless,

could not issue thence, for the reason that these old religions had

much difficulty in detaching themselves from polytheism, and could not

attain to a very distinct symbolism. Brahmanism has survived to our day

only by virtue of the astonishing conservatism which India seems to

possess. Buddhism has been stranded in all its attempts to reach the

West. Druidism was an exclusively national form, and without universal

application. The Greek attempts at reform, Orpheism, the Mysteries,

were not able to give solid nourishment to the soul. Persia alone

attained to the making of a dogmatic religion, which was almost

monotheistic, besides being skilfully organised; but it is very

possible that this organisation itself was only an imitation or

borrowed. In any case, Persia has not converted the world; on the

contrary, she was converted when she saw the flag of the divine unity

proclaimed by Islam appear on her frontiers.

It is the Semitic race whose glory it is to have founded the religion

of humanity. Away beyond the confines of history, the Bedouin

patriarch, resting under his tent and free from the disorders of an

already corrupted world, prepared the faith of humanity. His

superiority consisted in his strong antipathy against the voluptuous

religions of Syria, a marked simplicity of ritual, a complete absence

of temples, and the idol reduced to insignificant theraphim. Amongst

all the tribes of the nomadic Semites that of the Beni-Israel was

already marked out for a great future. From its ancient relations with

Egypt there resulted impressions whose extent it would be difficult to

determine, but this only served to enhance its hatred for idolatry. A

"Law," or Thora, written in very ancient times on tables of stone,

which they attributed to Moses, their great liberator, was already the

code of monotheism, and contained, when compared with the institutions

of Egypt and Chaldea, powerful germs of social equality and of

morality. A portable ark, surmounted by a sphinx, with staples on the

two sides through which to pass poles, constituted all their religious

mat�riel; all the sacred books of the nation were collected, its

relics, its souvenirs, and, finally, the "book," the journal of the

tribe, which was always open, but in which entries were made with great

discretion. The family charged with holding the poles and keeping watch

over these portable archives, being near and having control of the

book, acquired very soon some importance. The institution, however,

which was to determine the future did not proceed thence. The Hebrew

priest differed little from other priests of ancient times. The

character which essentially distinguishes Israel among theocratic

peoples is, that sacerdotalism has always been subordinated to

individual inspiration. Besides its priests, each nomadic tribe had its

nabi, or prophet, a sort of living oracle, who was consulted upon

obscure questions, the solution of which presupposed the gift of

clairvoyance in a high degree. The nabis of Israel, who were formed

into groups or schools, possessed great superiority. Defenders of the

ancient democratic spirit, enemies of the rich, opposed to all

political organisation and to whatever might attract Israel into the

paths of other nations, they were the true agents of the religious

pre-eminence of the Jewish people. Very early they held forth boundless

hopes, and when the people, victims to some extent of their impolitic

counsels, were crushed by the might of Assyria, they proclaimed that an

endless reign was in store for Judah, that Jerusalem would one day be

the capital of the whole world, and that the human race would be made

Jews. Jerusalem, with its temple, appeared to them as a city placed

upon the summit of a mountain, towards which all peoples should turn,

as an oracle whence universal law should issue, as the centre of an

ideal kingdom, where the human race, pacified by Israel, should find

once more the delights of Eden.

Obscure utterances began already to be heard, which extolled the

martyrdom and celebrated the power, of "the Man of Sorrows." Apropos of

one of these sublime sufferers, who, like Jeremiah, were to dye the

streets of Jerusalem with their blood, one of the inspired composed a

song upon the sufferings and the triumph of the "servant of God," in

which all the prophetic force of the genius of Israel seemed

concentrated.

" For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root

out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness. He is despised

and rejected of men; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he

was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our

grief, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken,

smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our

transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement

of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All

we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own

way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was

oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is

brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her

shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. And he made his grave

with the wicked. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,

he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure

of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." [Isaiah lii. 13 et seq., and

liii. entirely.]

Great alterations were made at the same time in the Thora. New texts,

such as Deuteronomy, assuming to represent the true law of Moses, were

produced, which inaugurated in reality a spirit very different from

that of the old nomads. An ardent fanaticism was the dominant

characteristic of this spirit. Infatuated believers provoked incessant

persecutions against all who strayed from the worship of Jehovah; a

code of blood, prescribing the penalty of death for religious

derelictions, was successfully established. Piety almost always brings

in its train the singular contradictions--vehemence and gentleness.

This zeal, unknown to the coarser simplicity of the age of the Judges,

inspired tones of eager prophecy and of tender unction of which the

world until now had never heard. A strong tendency towards social

questions already made itself felt. Utopias, dreams of a perfect

society, were admitted to the code. The Pentateuch, a m�lange of

patriarchal morality and of ardent devotion, primitive intuitions and

pious subtleties, like those with which the souls of Hezekiah, Josiah,

and Jeremiah were charged, was thus determined in its present form, and

was for ages the absolute rule of the national mind.

This great book once created, the history of the Jewish people

developed with an irresistible force The great empires which succeeded

each other in Western Asia, in destroying the hope of a terrestrial

kingdom, threw them into religious dreams, which they cherished with a

kind of sombre passion. Caring little for the national dynasty or for

political independence, they accepted all governments which permitted

them to practise freely their worship and to follow their usages.

Israel will no longer have other guidance than that of its religious

enthusiasts, other enemies than those of the Divine unity, other

country than its Law.

And this Law, it must be remarked, was entirely social and moral. It

was the work of men penetrated with a high ideal of the present life,

who believed they had found the best means of realising it. The general

conviction was that the Thora, closely followed, could not fail to give

perfect felicity. This Thora has nothing in common with the Greek or

Roman "Laws," which are cognisant of little else than abstract right,

and entered little into the questions of private happiness and

morality. We feel beforehand that the results which will proceed from

the Jewish Law will be of a social, and not of a political order, that

the work at which this people labours is a kingdom of God, not a civil

republic; a universal institution, not a nationality or a country.

Despite numerous failures, Israel admirably sustained this vocation. A

series of pious men, Ezra, Nehemiah, Onias, the Maccabees, eaten up

with zeal for the Law, succeeded each other in the defence of the

ancient institutions. The idea that Israel was a holy people, a tribe

chosen by God and bound to Him by a covenant, took more and more a firm

root. A great expectation filled their souls. The whole of the

Indo-European antiquity had placed paradise in the beginning; its

poets, who had wept a golden age, had passed away. Israel placed the

age of gold in the future. The perennial poesy of religious souls, the

Psalms, with their divine and melancholy harmony, blossomed from this

exalted piety. Israel became actually and par excellence the people of

God, while around it the Pagan religions were more and more reduced; in

Persia and Babylonia to an official charlatanism, in Egypt and Syria to

a gross idolatry, and in the Greek and Roman world to parade. That

which the Christian martyrs did in the first centuries of our era; that

which the victims of persecuting orthodoxy have done, even in the bosom

of Christianity, up to our time, the Jews did during the two centuries

which preceded the Christian era. They were a living protest against

superstition and religious materialism. An extraordinary activity of

ideas, terminating in the most opposite results, made of them, at this

epoch, a people the most striking and original in the world. Their

dispersion along the whole Mediterranean littoral, and the use of the

Greek language, which they adopted when out of Palestine, prepared the

way for a propagandism of which ancient societies, broken up into small

nationalities, had not yet presented an example.

Up to the time of the Maccabees, Judaism, in spite of its persistence

in announcing that it would one day be the religion of the human race,

had had the characteristic of all the other worships of antiquity--it

was a worship of the family and the tribe. The Israelite thought,

indeed, that his worship was the best, and spoke with contempt of

strange gods. Nevertheless, he believed also that the religion of the

true God had only been made for himself. One embraced the religion of

Jehovah when one entered the Jewish family; not otherwise. No Israelite

dreamed of converting the stranger to a worship which was the patrimony

of the sons of Abraham. The development of the pietistic spirit,

beginning with Ezra and Nehemiah, led to a much firmer and more logical

conception. Judaism became, in a more absolute manner, the true

religion; the right of entering it was given to him who wished it; soon

it became a work of piety to bring into it the greatest number

possible. True, the generous sentiment which elevated John the Baptist,

Jesus, and St. Paul above the petty ideas of race did not yet exist;

for, by a strange contradiction, these converts (proselytes) were

little respected, and were even treated with disdain. But the idea of

an exclusive religion, the idea that there was something in the world

superior to country, to blood, to laws, the idea which was to make

apostles and martyrs, was founded. A profound pity for the Pagans,

however brilliant might be their worldly fortune, was henceforward the

sentiment of every Jew. By a series of legends, destined to furnish

established models (Daniel and his companions, the mother of the

Maccabees and her seven sons, the romance of the racecourse of

Alexandria), the guides of the people sought above all to inculcate

this idea--that virtue consists in a fanatical attachment to fixed

religious institutions.

The persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes made of this idea a passion,

almost a frenzy. It was something very analogous to what happened under

Nero two hundred and thirty years later. Rage and despair threw

believers into the world of visions and of dreams. The first

apocalypse, "The Book of Daniel," appeared. It was like a revival of

prophecy, though under a very different form from the ancient one, and

with a much larger conception of the destinies of the world. The Book

of Daniel gave, in a manner, to the Messianic hopes their last

expression. The Messiah was no longer a king, after the manner of David

and Solomon, a theocratic and Mosaic Cyrus; he was a "Son of man"

appearing in the clouds, a supernatural being, invested with human

form, charged to rule the world, and to preside over the golden age.

Perhaps the Sosiosch of Persia, the great prophet who was to come,

charged with preparing the reign of Ormuzd, furnished some features for

this new ideal. The unknown author of the Book of Daniel had, in any

case, a decisive influence on the religious event which was going to

transform the world. He devised the mise-en-sc�ne, and the technical

terms of the new Messianism; and it might be applied to him what Jesus

said of John the Baptist,--"Before him, the prophets; after him, the

kingdom of God." A few years later the same ideas were reproduced under

the name of the patriarch Enoch. Essenism, which seems to have been in

direct relationship with the apocalyptic school, was created about the

same time, and offered a first rough sketch of the grand discipline

which was soon to constitute the education of humanity.

It must not, however, be supposed that this movement, so profoundly

religious and soul-stirring, had particular dogmas to give it impulse,

as was the case in all the conflicts which have broken out in the bosom

of Christianity. The Jew of this time had as little of the theologian

about him as may be. He did not speculate upon the essence of the

Divinity; the beliefs about angels, about the end of man, about the

Divine hypostasis, of which the first germs might already be perceived,

were quite optional--they were meditations, which each one cherished

according to the turn of his mind, but of which a great number of men

had never heard. Those who did not share in these particular imaginings

were even the most orthodox, and who adhered to the simplicity of the

Mosaic law. No dogmatic power, analogous to that which orthodox

Christianity has given to the Church, then existed. It was not until

the beginning of the third century, when Christianity had fallen into

the hands of reasoning races, crazy about dialectics and metaphysics,

that that fever for definitions commenced which made the history of the

Church the history of a great controversy. There were disputes also

among the Jews; some ardent schools brought opposite solutions to

almost all the questions which were agitated; but in these contests,

the principal details of which are preserved in the Talmud, there is

not a single word of speculative theology. Observe and maintain the

Law, because the Law was just, and because, in being well observed, it

gave happiness; this was the whole of Judaism. No credo, no theoretical

symbol. A disciple of the boldest Arabic philosophy, Moses Maimonides,

succeeded in becoming the oracle of the synagogue, because he was a

well-informed canonist.

The reigns of the last Asmoneans, and that of Herod, saw the excitement

grow still stronger. They were filled with an uninterrupted series of

religious movements. In proportion as that power became secularised,

and passed into the hands of unbelievers, the Jewish people lived less

and less for the earth, and allowed themselves to become more and more

absorbed by the strange force which was operating in their midst. The

world, distracted by other spectacles, knew nothing of what was passing

in this forgotten corner of the East. The minds in touch with their age

were, however, better informed. The tender and prescient Virgil seems

to respond, as by a secret echo, to the second Isaiah; the birth of a

child throws him into dreams of a universal palingenesis. These dreams

were general, and formed a species of literature which was indicated by

the name Sibylline. The quite recent formation of the empire exalted

the imagination; the great era of peace on which it entered, and that

impression of melancholy sensibility which souls experience after long

periods of revolution, gave rise everywhere to boundless hopes.

In Jud�a expectation was at its zenith. Holy persons, such as old

Simeon, who, legend tells us, held Jesus in his arms; Anna, daughter of

Phanuel, regarded as a prophetess, passed their life about the temple,

fasting and praying, that it might please God not to withdraw them from

the world until they should see the fulfilment of the hopes of Israel.

They felt a powerful presentiment of the approach of something unknown.

This confused mixture of clear views and of dreams, this alternation of

deceptions and of hopes, these ceaseless aspirations, which were driven

back by an odious reality, found at last their expression in the

incomparable man, to whom the universal conscience has most justly

decreed the title of Son of God, because he has given to religion a

direction which no other can or probably ever will be able to emulate.

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CHAPTER II.

INFANCY AND YOUTH OF JESUS--HIS FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

Jesus was born at Nazareth, a small town of Galilee, which until his

time had no celebrity. During the whole of his life he was designated

by the name of "the Nazarene," and it is only by a puzzling enough

evasion that, in the legends concerning him, it can be shown that he

was born at Bethlehem. We shall see later on the motive for this

supposition, and how it was the necessary consequence of the Messianic

character attributed to Jesus. The precise date of his birth is not

known. It took place during the reign of Augustus, about 750 of the

Roman year, that is to say, some years before the first of that era

which all civilised nations date from--the day on which it is believed

he was born.

The name of Jesus, which was given him, is an alteration from Joshua.

It was a very common name; but people naturally sought later on to

discover some mystery in it, as well as an allusion to his character of

Saviour. Perhaps Jesus himself, like all mystics, exalted himself in

this respect. It is thus that more than one great vocation in history

has been caused by a name given to a child without premeditation.

Ardent natures never can bring themselves to admit chance in anything

that concerns them. God has ordained everything for them, and they see

a sign of the supreme will in the most insignificant circumstances.

The population of Galilee, as the name indicates, was very mixed. This

province reckoned amongst its inhabitants, in the time of Jesus, many

who were not Jews (Phoenicians, Syrians, Arabs, and even Greeks). The

conversions to Judaism were not rare in mixed countries like this. It

is therefore impossible to raise any question of race here, or to try

to discover what blood flowed in the veins of him who has most of any

contributed to efface the distinctions of blood in humanity.

He sprang from the ranks of the people. His father Joseph and his

mother Mary were of humble position, artisans living by their work, in

that condition which is so common in the East, and which is neither

ease nor poverty. The extreme simplicity of life in such countries, by

dispensing with the need of modern comforts, renders the privileges of

the wealthy almost useless, and makes every one voluntarily poor. On

the other hand, the total absence of taste for art and for that which

tends to the elegance of material life, gives a naked aspect to the

house of the man who otherwise wants for nothing. If we take into

account the sordid and repulsive features which Islamism has carried

into the Holy Land, the town of Nazareth, in the time of Jesus, did not

perhaps much differ from what it is to-day. The streets where he played

as a child we can see in the stony paths or in the little cross-ways

which separate the dwellings. The house of Joseph no doubt closely

resembled those poor shops, lighted by the door, which serve at once as

workshop, kitchen, and bedroom, the furniture consisting of a mat, some

cushions on the ground, one or two earthenware pots, and a painted

chest.

The family, whether it proceeded from one or several marriages, was

rather numerous. Jesus had brothers and sisters, of whom he seems to

have been the eldest. All have remained obscure, for it appears that

the four personages who are given as his brothers--one of whom at

least, James, had acquired great importance in the earliest years. of

the development of Christianity--were his cousins-german. Mary, in

fact, had a sister also named Mary, who married a certain Alpheus or

Cleophas (these two names appear to designate the same person), and was

the mother of several sons, who played a considerable part among the

first disciples of Jesus. These cousins-german, who adhered to the

young Master, while his own brothers opposed him, took the title of

"brothers of the Lord." The real brothers of Jesus, as well as their

mother, had no notoriety until after his death. Even then they do not

appear to have equalled in importance their cousins, whose conversion

had been more spontaneous, and whose characters seem to have had more

originality. Their names were unknown to the extent that, when the

evangelist put in the mouth of the men of Nazareth the enumeration of

the brothers according to natural relationship, the names of the sons

of Cleophas first presented themselves to him.

His sisters were married at Nazareth, and he spent there the first

years of his youth. Nazareth was a small town situated in a hollow,

opening broadly at the summit of the group of mountains which close the

plain of Esdraelon on the north. The population is now from three to

four thousand, and it can never have varied much. The cold is keen

there in winter, and the climate very healthy. Nazareth, like all the

small Jewish towns at this period, was a heap of huts built without

plan, and would exhibit that withered and poor aspect which

characterise villages in Semitic countries. The houses, as it would

seem, did not differ much from those cubes of stone, without exterior

or interior elegance, which cover to-day the richest parts of the

Lebanon, and which, surrounded with vines and fig-trees, are far from

being disagreeable. The environs, moreover, are charming; and no place

in the world was so well adapted for dreams of absolute happiness. Even

to-day Nazareth is a delightful abode, the only place, perhaps, in

Palestine in which the soul feels itself relieved from the burden which

oppresses it in the midst of this unequalled desolation. The people are

amiable and cheerful; the gardens fresh and green. Anthony the Martyr,

at the end of the sixth century, gives an enchanting picture of the

fertility of the environs, which he compares with paradise. Some

valleys on the western side fully bear out his description. The

fountain, where formerly the life and gaiety of the little town were

concentrated, is destroyed; its broken channels contain now only a

muddy stream. But the beauty of the women who meet there in the

evening,--that beauty which was already remarked in the sixth century,

and which was looked upon as a gift of the Virgin Mary,--is still most

strikingly preserved. It is the Syrian type in all its grace, so full

of languor. There is no doubt that Mary was there almost every day, and

took her place with her jar on her shoulder in the file of her obscure

companions. Anthony the Martyr remarks that the Jewish women, usually

disdainful to Christians, were here very affable. At the present day

religious animosity is less pronounced at Nazareth than elsewhere.

The prospect from the town is limited; but if we ascend a little and

reach the plateau, swept by a perpetual breeze, which overlooks the

highest houses, the view is splendid. On the west are displayed the

fine outlines of Carmel, terminated by an abrupt spur which seems to

plunge into the sea. Next are spread out the double summit which

dominates Megiddo; the mountains of the country of Shechem, with their

holy places of patriarchal age; the hills of Gilboa, the small

picturesque group to which are attached the graceful or terrible

recollections of Shunem and of Endor; and Tabor, with its rounded form,

which antiquity compared to a bosom. Through a crevice between the

mountains of Shunem and Tabor are seen the valley of the Jordan and the

high plains of Per�a, which on the east side form a continuous line. On

the north, the mountains of Safed, in inclining towards the sea,

conceal St.-Jean-d'Acre, but reveal the outline of the Gulf of Khaifa.

Such was the country of Jesus. This enchanted circle, this cradle of

the kingdom of God, was the world of Jesus for years. Even in his later

life he did not depart much from the familiar scenes of his childhood.

For, yonder northwards, a glimpse is caught, almost on the flank of

Hermon, of C�sarea-Philippi, the furthest point he had reached in the

Gentile world; and southwards, the more sombre aspect of these

Samaritan hills foreshadows the dreariness of Judea beyond, parched as

by a scorching wind of desolation and death.

If the world, should it remain Christian, though it should attain to a

better idea of the esteem in which the origins of its religion should

be held, ever wishes to replace by authentic holy places the mean and

apocryphal sanctuaries to which the piety of dark ages attached itself,

it is upon this ground of Nazareth that it will rebuild its temple.

There, at the spot where Christianity was born, and at the centre of

the activity of its Founder, the great church ought to be raised in

which all Christians might worship. There, also, on the spot where

sleep Joseph the carpenter and thousands of forgotten Nazarenes, who

never passed beyond the outskirts of their valley, would be a better

station than any in the world for the philosopher to contemplate the

course of human events, to console himself for the disappointments

which those inflict upon our most cherished instincts, and to reassure

himself as to the divine end which the world pursues through endless

falterings, and in spite of the universal vanity.

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CHAPTER III.

EDUCATION OF JESUS.

Nature here, at once smiling and grand, was the whole education of

Jesus. He learnt to read and to write, no doubt, according to the

Eastern method, which consisted in putting into the hands of the child

a book, which he repeated rhythmically with his little comrades, until

he knew it by heart. It is doubtful, however, whether he understood the

Hebrew writings in their original tongue. His biographers make him

quote them according to the translations in the Aramean language; and

his methods of exegesis, as far as we can make them out from his

disciples, much resembled those which were then common, and which form

the spirit of the Targummim and the Midraschim.

The schoolmaster in the small Jewish towns was the hazzan, or reader in

the synagogues. Jesus frequented little the higher schools of the

scribes or sopherim (Nazareth had perhaps none of them), and he had not

any of those titles which confer, in the eyes of the vulgar, the

privileges of knowledge. It would, nevertheless, be a great error to

imagine that Jesus was what we call an ignoramus. Scholastic education

among us draws a great distinction, in respect of personal worth,

between those who have received and those who have been deprived of it.

It was different in the East, and in the good old days. The rude state

in which among us the person remains who has not passed through the

schools--in consequence of our isolated and entirely individual

life--was unknown in those societies where moral culture, and, above

all, the general spirit of the age, was transmitted by the constant

intercourse between men of all kinds. The Arab, who has never had a

teacher, is, notwithstanding that, a decidedly superior man; for the

tent is a sort of academy, always open, where, from meeting with

well-educated people, very considerable intellectual and even literary

activity is produced. Refinement of manners and acuteness of intellect

have, in the East, nothing in common with what we call education. The

men of the schools, on the contrary, are those who pass for pedantic

and badly-trained people. In this social state, ignorance, which among

us at once relegates a man to an inferior grade, is the condition of

great things and of great originality.

It is not at all likely that Jesus knew Greek. This language had spread

only to a small extent in Jud�a beyond the classes who participated in

the government, and the towns which were inhabited by Pagans, like

C�sarea. The mother tongue of Jesus was the Syrian dialect mixed with

Hebrew, which was spoken in Palestine at that time. There is even

greater reason to conclude that he knew nothing of Greek culture. This

culture was indeed proscribed by the doctors of Palestine, who included

in the same malediction "the man who breeds swine, and the person who

teaches his son Greek science." At all events, it had not penetrated to

little towns such as Nazareth. Notwithstanding the anathema of the

doctors, some Jews, it is true, had already embraced the Hellenic

culture. Without speaking of the Jewish school of Egypt, in which the

attempts to amalgamate Hellenism and Judaism had been in operation

nearly two hundred years, a Jew, Nicholas of Damascus, had become, even

at this time, one of the most distinguished men, one of the best

informed, and one of the most respected of his age. Josephus was

destined soon to furnish another example of a Jew completely

Grecianised. But Nicholas was only a Jew in blood. Josephus declares

that he himself was an exception among his contemporaries; and the

whole schismatic school of Egypt was detached to such a degree from

Jerusalem that we do not find the least allusion to it either in the

Talmud or in Jewish tradition. At Jerusalem itself Greek was very

little studied: indeed, Greek studies were considered to be dangerous,

and even servile; at the best they were held to be only an effeminate

accomplishment. The study of the Law stood alone as "liberal," and

worthy of a thoughtful man. When he was asked as to the time when it

would be right to teach children "Greek wisdom," a learned Rabbi

replied: "At the time which is neither day nor night; for it is written

of the Law, Thou shalt study it day and night."

It seems clear, therefore, that neither directly nor indirectly did any

element of "profane" culture reach Jesus. He knew nothing beyond

Judaism; his mind preserved that free innocence which is invariably

weakened by an extended and varied culture. In the very bosom of this

Judaism he remained a stranger to many efforts somewhat parallel to his

own. On the one hand, the asceticism of the Essenes or Therapeut� did

not seem to have had any direct influence upon him; on the other, the

fine efforts of religious philosophy made by the Jewish school of

Alexandria, of which Philo, his contemporary, was the ingenious

interpreter, were unknown to him. The frequent resemblances which may

be discovered between himself and Philo, those excellent maxims

concerning the love of God, of charity, and rest in God, which sound

like an echo between the Gospel and the writings of the illustrious

Alexandrian thinker, arise from the common tendencies which the demands

of the age inspired in all lofty minds.

Happily for him, he was also ignorant of the strange scholasticism

which was taught at Jerusalem, and which soon was to form the Talmud.

If some Pharisees had already brought it into Galilee, Jesus did not

associate with them, and when later he met this silly casuistry face to

face, it only inspired him with disgust. We may believe, however, that

the principles of Hillel were not unknown to him. This Rabbi, fifty

years before him, had uttered certain aphorisms which were almost

analogous to his own. By his poverty so meekly borne, by the sweetness

of his character, by his antagonism to priests and hypocrites, Hillel

was the true master of Jesus, if it may be allowed that one should

speak of a master in connection with such a lofty genius as his.

The perusal of the books of the Old Testament made a deep impression on

Jesus. The canon of the holy books was composed of two principal

parts--the Law, that is to say, the Pentateuch, and the Prophets, such

as we possess them now. An extensive and allegorical method of

interpretation was applied to all these books; and the attempt was made

to draw from them what was a response to the aspirations of the age.

The Law, which did not represent the ancient laws of the country, but

Utopias--the factitious laws, and the pious frauds of the pietistic

kings--had become, since the nation had ceased to govern itself, an

inexhaustible theme of subtle interpretations. As to the Prophets and

the Psalms, the popular persuasion was that almost all the somewhat

mysterious details that were in these books had reference to the

Messiah, and it was sought to find there the type of him who should

realise the hopes of the nation. Jesus participated in the liking which

every one had for these allegorical interpretations. But the true

poetry of the Bible which escaped the doctors of Jerusalem disclosed

itself most fully to the fine genius of Jesus. The Law does not seem to

have had much charm for him; he believed he could accomplish better

things. But the religious poetry of the Psalms discovered a wonderful

agreement with his own lyrical soul; and they remained, during his

whole life, his nourishment and support. The prophets, especially

Isaiah and the writer who continued his record of the times of the

captivity, with their brilliant dreams of the future, their impetuous

eloquence, and their invectives mingled with enchanting pictures, were

his true masters. He, doubtless, also read many apocryphal

works--somewhat modern writings, whose authors, in order to give their

productions an authority which would not be granted except to very

ancient scriptures, had invested themselves with the names of prophets

and patriarchs. One of these books above all others moved him; that was

the book of Daniel. This work, composed by an enthusiastic Jew of the

time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and headed by the name of an ancient sage,

was the resum� of the spirit of these later days. Its author, a true

creator of the philosophy of history, was the first who had been bold

enough to see in the onward march of the world and the succession of

empires only a series of facts subordinated to the destinies of the

Jewish people. Jesus was at an early age penetrated by these high

hopes. Perhaps, moreover, he had read the books of Enoch, then regarded

with equal reverence as the holy books, and the other writings of the

same class, which kept up so much excitement in the popular

imagination. The advent of the Messiah, with its glories and terrors,

the nations falling to pieces one after another, the cataclysm of

heaven and earth, were the familiar food of his imagination; and, as

these revolutions were believed to be so close at hand that numbers of

people sought to calculate their exact dates, the supernatural state

into which men are led by such visions appeared to Jesus from the first

quite simple and perfectly natural.

That he had no acquaintance with the general condition of the world is

a fact which is seen in each feature of his best authenticated

discourses. The earth to him appeared as still divided into kingdoms

making war upon each other; he seemed to ignore the "Roman peace," and

the new state of society which its age inaugurated. He had no exact

idea of the Roman power; the name of "C�sar" was all that had reached

him. He saw being built, in Galilee or its neighbourhood, Tiberias,

Julias, Dioc�sarea, C�sarea--splendid works of the Herods, who sought

by these magnificent structures to prove their admiration for Roman

civilisation, and their devotion to the members of the family of

Augustus; and the names of these places, although strangely altered,

now serve to designate, as by a caprice of fate, miserable hamlets of

Bedouins. Jesus probably also saw Sebaste, a work of Herod the Great, a

showy city, whose ruins would make one believe that it had been

transported there ready made, like some machine which had only to be

set up in its place. This ostentatious piece of architecture was

shipped to Jud�a in portions; the hundreds of columns, all of the same

diameter, the ornament of some insipid "Rue de Rivoli"--these were what

he called "the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them." But

this luxury of power, this administrative and official art, displeased

him. What he really loved were his Galilean villages, a confused

mixture of huts, of nests and holes cut in the rocks, of wells, of

tombs, of fig-trees and olives. He always clung closely to nature. The

courts of kings constantly presented to him the idea of places where

men wear fine clothes. The charming impossibilities with which his

parables abound, when he brings kings and mighty ones on the stage,

prove that he never had any conception of aristocratic society except

as a young villager who sees the world through the prism of his own

simplicity.

Jesus was still less acquainted with the new idea, created by Grecian

science, which is the basis of all philosophy and which modern science

has largely confirmed, viz., the exclusion of the supernatural forces

to which the simple faith of the ancient times attributed the

government of the universe. Almost a century before him, Lucretius had

expressed, in an admirable manner, the unchangeableness of the general

system of nature. The negation of miracle -- the idea that everything

in the world happens by laws in which the personal intervention of

superior beings has no share--was universally admitted in the great

schools of all the countries which had accepted Grecian science.

Perhaps even Babylon and Persia were not strangers to it. Jesus knew

nothing of this progress. Although born at a time when the principle of

positive science was already proclaimed, he lived entirely in the

supernatural. Never, perhaps, had the Jews been more possessed with the

thirst for the marvellous. Philo, who lived in a great intellectual

centre, and who had received a very complete education, possessed only

a chimerical and inferior knowledge of science.

Jesus on this point differed in no respect from his companions. He

believed in the devil, whom he regarded as a kind of evil genius, and

he imagined, like all the world, that nervous maladies were produced by

demons who possessed the patient and agitated him. The marvellous was

not the exceptional to him; it was his normal state. The idea of the

supernatural, with its impossibilities, does not arise except with the

birth of the experimental science of nature. The man who is a stranger

to all idea of physical law, and who believes that by prayer he can

alter the path of the clouds, can arrest disease and even death, finds

nothing extraordinary in miracle, inasmuch as the whole course of

things is for him the result of the freewill of the Divinity. This

intellectual condition was always that of Jesus. But in his great soul

such a belief produced effects altogether opposed to those wrought on

the vulgar. Among the latter, faith in the special action of God led to

a foolish credulity, and deceptions on the part of charlatans. With him

it led to a profound idea of the familiar relations of man with God,

and to an exaggerated belief in the power of man--beautiful errors

which were the secret of his influence; for, if they became one day the

means of putting him in a position of error in the eyes of the natural

philosopher and the chemist, they gave him, over his own age, a power

which no individual has ever possessed before or since.

At an early age his extraordinary character revealed itself. Legend

delights to show him even in his infancy in revolt against parental

authority, and deviating from the common lines to follow his vocation.

It is at least certain that for the relations of kinship he cared

little. His family do not seem to have loved him, and more than once he

appears to have been severe towards them. Jesus, like all men

exclusively preoccupied by an idea, came to think little of the ties of

blood. It is the bond of thought alone which natures like his

recognise. "Behold my mother and my brethren," said he, extending his

hand towards his disciples; "he that doeth the will of my Father, the

same is my brother and sister." The simple people did not understand

this view of things, and one day a woman who was passing near him cried

out, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast

sucked!" But he replied, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the

word of God and keep it!" Soon, in his daring revolt against nature, he

went still further; we shall soon see him trample under foot everything

that is human--blood, love, country--preserving soul and mind simply

for the idea which presented itself to him in the guise of absolute

goodness and truth.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE ORDER OF THOUGHT FROM WHOSE CENTRE JESUS WAS DEVELOPED.

As the cooled earth no longer permits us to comprehend the phenomena of

primitive creation, because the fire which once penetrated it is

extinct, so deliberate explanations contain always something

insufficient, when the question is one of applying our timid methods of

analysis to the revolutions of the creative epochs which have decided

the fate of humanity. Jesus lived at one of those epochs when the game

of public life is freely played, when the stake of human activity is

increased a hundredfold. Every great part, then, entails death; for

such movements suppose liberty and an absence of preventive measures,

which could not exist without a terrible alternative. In the present

day, man risks little and gains little. In the heroic periods of human

activity, man risked all and gained all. The good and the wicked, or at

least those who believe themselves and are believed to be such, form

opposing armies. The apotheosis is attained by the scaffold; characters

have distinctive features, which engrave them as eternal types in the

memory of men. Except in the French Revolution, no historical centre

was as appropriate as that in which Jesus was formed, for developing

those hidden forces which humanity holds as in reserve, and which are

not seen except in days of excitement and peril.

If the government of the world were a speculative problem, and the

greatest philosopher was the man best fitted to tell his fellow-men

what they ought to believe, it would be from calmness and reflection

that those great moral and dogmatic truths which we call religions

would proceed. But it is nothing of the kind. If we except Sakya-Mouni,

the great religious founders have not been metaphysicians. Buddhism

itself, which is based on pure thought, has conquered one-half of Asia

by motives wholly political and moral. As for the Semitic religions,

they are as little philosophical as it is possible to be. Moses and

Mahomet were not speculators: they were men of action. It was by

proposing action to their fellow-countrymen, and to their

contemporaries, that they governed humanity. Jesus, in like manner, was

not a theologian or a philosopher, having a more or less

well-constructed system. To be a disciple of Jesus, it was not

necessary to sign any formulary, or to repeat any confession of faith;

one thing only was necessary--to attach oneself to him, to love him. He

never disputed about God, for he felt Him directly in himself. The rock

of metaphysical subtleties, against which Christianity has dashed since

the third century, was in no wise erected by the founder. Jesus had

neither dogma nor system; he had a fixed personal resolution, which,

exceeding in intensity every other created will, directs to this hour

the destinies of humanity.

The Jewish people have had the advantage, from the Babylonian captivity

up to the Middle Ages, of being always in a state of extreme tension.

This is why the interpreters of the spirit of the nation, during this

long period, seem to have written under the action of a violent fever,

which placed them constantly either above or under reason, rarely in

its middle pathway. Never did man seize the problem of the future and

of his own destiny with a more desperate courage, or was more

determined to go to extremes. Not separating the fate of humanity from

that of their little race, the Jewish thinkers were the first who

sought to discover a general theory of the progress of our species.

Greece, always confined within itself, and only concerned with its

petty provincial quarrels, has had admirable historians. Stoicism had

enounced the highest maxims upon the duties of man considered as a

citizen of the world and as a member of a great brotherhood; but

previous to the Roman period it would be a vain attempt to discover in

classic literature a general system of the philosophy of history,

embracing all humanity. The Jew, on the contrary, thanks to a sort of

prophetic sense, has made history enter into religion. Possibly he owes

a little of this spirit to Persia, which, from an ancient date,

conceived the history of the world as a series of evolutions, over

which a prophet presided.

Each prophet had his reign of a thousand years, and out of those

successive ages, analogous to the millions of ages devolved to each

Buddha of India, was composed the train of events which prepared the

reign of Ormuzd. At the end of the time when the circle of the

revolutions shall be completed, the perfect Paradise will appear. Men

will then live happily: the earth will be like a great plain; there

will be only one language, one law, and one government for all men. But

this advent is to be preceded by terrible calamities. Dahak (the Satan

of Persia) will break his chains and fall upon the world. Two prophets

will then come to comfort mankind, and to prepare for the great advent.

These ideas ran through the world, and penetrated even to Rome, where

they inspired a cycle of prophetic poems, whose fundamental ideas were

the division of the history of humanity into periods, the succession of

the gods representing these epochs, a complete renewal of the world,

and the final coming of a golden age. The book of Daniel, certain parts

of the book of Enoch, and the Sibylline books are the Jewish expression

of the same theory. It was certainly not the case that these thoughts

were universal. They were, on the contrary, embraced at first only by

some people of vivid imaginations and readily impressed by strange

doctrines. The dry and narrow author of the book of Esther never

thought of the rest of the world except to despise it and to wish it

evil. The sated and undeceived Epicurean who writes Ecclesiastes thinks

so little of the future that he considers it even useless to work for

his children. In the eyes of this egotistical celibate, the highest

advice of wisdom is to find one's chief good in mis-spent money. But

great achievements made by any people are generally the work of the

minority. In spite of all their defects, hard, egotistical, scoffing,

cruel, narrow, subtle, sophistical, the Jews are nevertheless the

authors of the finest movement of disinterested enthusiasm of which

history speaks. Opposition always makes the glory of a country. In one

sense, the greatest men of a nation are often those whom it puts to

death. Socrates honoured the Athenians, who would not suffer him to

live. Spinoza was the greatest modern Jew, and the synagogue expelled

him with ignominy. Jesus was the glory of the people of Israel, and

they crucified him.

A gigantic dream haunted for centuries the Jewish people, constantly

renewing its youth in its decrepitude. A stranger to the theory of

individual recompenses which Greece had spread under the name of

immortality of the soul, Jud�a concentrated on her national future all

her power of love and longing. She believed herself to possess divine

promises of a boundless future; and as the bitter reality which, from

the ninth century before our era, gave the domination of the world more

and more to physical force brutally crushed these aspirations, she took

refuge in the union of the most impossible ideas, and attempted the

strangest gyrations. Before the captivity, when all the earthly future

of the nation disappeared in consequence of the separation of the

northern tribes, they had dreamt of the restoration of the house of

David, the reconciliation of the two divisions of the people, and the

triumph of theocracy and the worship of Jehovah over idolatrous

systems. At the time of the captivity, a poet full of harmony foresaw

the splendour of a future Jerusalem, to which the nations and distant

isles should be tributaries, under colours so charming that it teemed a

glance from the eyes of Jesus had leached him from a distance of six

centuries.

The victories of Cyrus at one time appeared to realise all that had

been hoped for. The grave disciples of the Avesta and the adorers of

Jehovah believed themselves brothers. Persia had begun by banishing the

multiple d�vas and by transforming them into demons (divs), to draw

from the old Arian imagination, which was essentially naturalistic, a

species of monotheism. The prophetic tone of many of the teachings of

Iran resemble greatly certain compositions of Hosea and Isaiah. Israel

reposed under the Achemenid�, and under Xerxes (Ahasuerus) made itself

feared by the Iranians themselves. But the triumphant and often cruel

entrance of Greek and Roman civilisation into Asia, threw it back upon

its dreams. More than ever it invoked the Messiah as the judge and

avenger of the nations. In fact, there was a complete renovation--a

revolution which should take hold of the world by its roots, and shake

it from top to bottom--in order to satisfy the fearful longing for

vengeance excited in Israel by the consciousness of its superiority and

the sight of its humiliations.

If Israel had possessed the doctrine called spiritualism, which divides

man into two parts--the body and the soul--and finds it quite natural

that while the body decays the soul survives, this paroxysm of rage and

of energetic protestation would have had no raison d'�tre. But such a

doctrine, proceeding from the Grecian philosophy, was not in the

traditions of the Jewish mind. The ancient Hebrew writings contain no

trace of future rewards or punishments. Whilst the idea of the

solidarity of the tribe existed, it was natural that a strict

retribution according to individual merits should not be thought of. So

much the worse for the pious man who happened to live in a time of

impiety; he suffered like the rest the public misfortunes consequent on

the general irreligion. This doctrine, bequeathed by the sages of the

patriarchal era, produced day by day unsustainable contradictions.

Already at the time of Job it was much shaken; the old men of Teman who

professed it were considered behind the age, and the young Elihu, who

intervened in order to combat them, dared to utter as his first thesis

this essentially revolutionary sentiment, "Great men are not always

wise; neither do the aged understand judgment." With the complications

which had taken place in the world since the time of Alexander, the old

Temanite and Mosaic principle became still more intolerable. Never had

Israel been more faithful to the Law, and yet it was subjected to the

atrocious persecution of Antiochus. Only a declaimer, accustomed to

repeat old phrases denuded of sense, would dare to assert that these

evils proceeded from the unfaithfulness of the people. What! these

victims who died for their faith, these heroic Maccabees, this mother

with her seven sons, will Jehovah forget them eternally? Will he

abandon them to the corruption of the grave? Worldly and incredulous

Sadduceeism might possibly not recoil before such a consequence, and a

consummate sage, like Antigonus of Soco, might indeed maintain that we

must not practise virtue like a slave in expectation of a

recompense--that we must be virtuous without hope. But the mass of the

nation could not be contented with that. Some, attaching themselves to

the principle of philosophical immortality, imagined the righteous

living in the memory of God, glorious for ever in the remembrance of

men, and judging the wicked who had persecuted them. "They live in the

sight of God; . . . they are known of God." That was their reward.

Others, especially the Pharisees, had recourse to the doctrine of the

resurrection. The righteous will live again in order to participate in

the Messianic reign. They will live again in the flesh, and for a world

of which they will be the kings and the judges; they will be present at

the triumph of their ideas and at the humiliation of their enemies.

We find among the ancient people of Israel only very indecisive traces

of this fundamental dogma. The Sadducee, who did not believe it, was in

reality faithful to the old Jewish doctrine; it was the Pharisee, the

believer in the resurrection, who was the innovator. But in religion it

is always the zealous sect which innovates, which progresses, and which

has influence. Besides this, the resurrection, an idea totally

different from that of the immortality of the soul, proceeded very

naturally from the anterior doctrines and from the position of the

people. Perhaps Persia also furnished some of its elements. In any

case, combining with the belief in the Messiah, and with the doctrine

of a speedy renewal of all things, the dogma of the resurrection formed

those apocalyptic theories which, without being articles of faith (the

orthodox Sanhedrim of Jerusalem does not seem to have adopted them),

pervaded all imaginations, and produced an extreme fermentation from

one end of the Jewish world to the other. The total absence of dogmatic

rigour caused very contradictory notions to be admitted at one time,

even upon so primary a point. Sometimes the righteous were to await the

resurrection; sometimes they were to be received at the moment of death

into Abraham's bosom; sometimes the resurrection was to be general;

sometimes it was to be reserved only for the faithful; sometimes it

presupposed a new earth and a new Jerusalem; sometimes it implied a

previous annihilation of the universe.

Jesus, from the moment he began to think, entered into the burning

atmosphere which had been created in Palestine by the ideas we have

just referred to. These ideas were taught in no school; but they were

"in the air" around him, and his soul was early penetrated by them. Our

hesitations and doubts never reached him. On this summit of the hill of

Nazareth, where no man of the present day can sit without an uneasy,

although frivolous, feeling as to his own destiny, Jesus sat habitually

without a doubt. Free from selfishness, the source of our troubles, he

thought of nothing but his work, his race, and humanity at large. Those

mountains, that sea, that azure sky, those high plains in the horizon,

were for him not the melancholy vision of a soul which interrogates

nature upon her fate, but the certain symbol, the transparent shadow of

an invisible world and a new heaven.

He never attached much importance to the political events of his time,

and he was probably badly informed regarding them. The dynasty of the

Herods lived in a world so different from his own that he doubtless

only knew it by name. Herod the Great died about the year in which

Jesus was born, leaving imperishable memories--monuments which must

compel the most malevolent posterity to associate his name with that of

Solomon; his woks, nevertheless, was incomplete, and could not be

continued. Profanely ambitious, lost in a maze of religious

controversies, this astute Idumean had the advantage which coolness and

judgment, stripped of morality, give one in the midst of passionate

fanatics. But his conception of a secular kingdom of Israel, even if it

had not been an anachronism in the state of the world in which it was

conceived, would have miscarried, like the similar project which

Solomon formed, in consequence of the difficulties arising from the

peculiar character of the nation. His three sons were nothing but

lieutenants of the Romans, analogous to the rajahs of India under the

English Government. Antipater, or Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and

Per�a, whose subject Jesus was all his life, was an idle and empty

prince, a favourite and flatterer of Tiberius, and too often misled by

the evil influence of his second wife Herodias. Philip, Tetrarch of

Gaulonitis and Batanea, into whose territories Jesus made frequent

journeys, was a much better sovereign. As to Archelaus, Ethnarch of

Jerusalem, he could not have known him. Jesus was about ten years of

age when this man, weak and characterless, although sometimes violent,

was deposed by Augustus. The last trace of self-government was, in this

way, lost to Jerusalem. United to Samaria and Idumea, Jud�a formed a

kind of dependency of the province of Syria, in which the senator

Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, a well-known consular personage, was the

imperial legate. A series of Roman procurators, subordinate in affairs

of importance to the imperial legate of Syria--Coponius, Marcus

Ambivius, Annius Rufus, Valerius Gratus, and lastly (in the 26th year

of our era) Pontius Pilate--followed each other, and were incessantly

occupied in extinguishing the volcano which was rumbling beneath their

feet.

Continual seditions, excited by the zealots of Mosaism, were constantly

during this period agitating Jerusalem. The death of the seditious was

certain; but death, when the matter concerned the integrity of the Law,

was sought for with avidity. To overturn the Roman eagles, to destroy

the works of art raised by the Herods, in which the Mosaic regulations

were not always respected, to rebel against the votive escutcheons

raised by the procurators, and whose inscriptions seemed to them

tainted by idolatry, were perpetual temptations to fanatics who had

reached that degree of exaltation which removes all regard for life.

Thus it was that Judas, son of Sariphea, and Matthias, son of

Margaloth, two greatly celebrated doctors of the Law, formed against

the established order a party of bold aggression, which continued after

their execution. The Samaritans were agitated by movements of the same

kind. The Law seems never to have counted more impassioned votaries

than at this period, when there already lived that man who, by the full

authority of his genius and of his great soul, was about to abrogate

it. The "zelotes" (kana�m) or "sicarii," pious assassins, who imposed

on themselves the task of killing whoever in their estimation broke the

Law, began to appear. Representatives of a totally different spirit,

the Thaumaturges, considered as in some measure divine, found credence

in consequence of the imperious necessity which the age expressed for

the supernatural and the divine.

A movement which had much more influence on Jesus was that of Judas,

the Gaulonite or Galilean. Of all the constraints to which countries

newly conquered by Rome were subjected, the census was the most

unpopular. This measure, which always irritates nations little

accustomed to the responsibilities of great central administrations,

was specially odious to the Jews. Already, under David, we see how a

numbering of the people provoked violent recriminations, and the

threatenings of the prophets. The census, in fact, was the basis of

taxation. Now, taxation, in the estimation of a pure theocracy, was

almost an impiety. God being the sole Master whom man ought to

recognise, to pay tithe to a secular sovereign was, in a manner, to put

him in the place of God. Completely ignorant of the idea of the State,

the Jewish theocracy only acted up to its logical induction -- the

negation of civil society and of all government. The money in the

public treasury was regarded as stolen. The census ordered by Quirinius

(in the sixth year of the Christian era) powerfully awakened these

ideas, and caused a tremendous ferment. A disturbance broke out in the

northern provinces. One Judas, of the town of Gamala, on the eastern

shore of the lake of Tiberias, and a Pharisee named Sadoc, by denying

the lawfulness of the impost, created a numerous party, which soon

broke out into open revolt. The fundamental maxims of this school were

that liberty was better than life, and that no man ought to be called

"master," this title belonging to God alone. Judas had, doubtless, many

other principles, which Josephus, always careful not to compromise his

co-religionists, designedly suppresses; for it is impossible to

understand how, for so simple an idea, the Jewish historian should give

him a place among the philosophers of his nation, and should regard him

as the founder of a fourth school, equal to those of the Pharisees, the

Sadducees, and the Essenes. Judas was evidently the chief of a Galilean

sect, which was imbued with Messianic ideas, and became a political

movement. The procurator, Coponius, crushed the sedition of the

Gaulonite; but the party survived and preserved its chiefs. Under the

leadership of Menahem, son of its founder, and of one Eleazar, his

kinsman, we find it again very active in the last struggles of the Jews

with the Romans. Jesus, it may be, saw this Judas, who had conceived a

Jewish revolution of a kind so different from his own ideal; at all

events, he knew the opinions of his school, and it was probably by a

reaction against his mistake that he pronounced the axiom upon the

"penny" of C�sar. Wisely standing aloof from all sedition, Jesus

profited by the fault of his predecessor, and dreamed of another

kingdom and of another deliverance.

Galilee was thus a vast furnace, in which the most diverse elements

were heaving to a boiling point. An extraordinary contempt for life,

or, to speak more correctly, a kind of longing for death, was the

result of these agitations. Experience counts for nothing in great

fanatical movements. Algeria, in the first days of the French

occupation, saw arise, each springtime, inspired men who declared that

they were invulnerable and were sent by God to expel the infidels; the

following year their death was forgotten, and their successors found an

undiminished credence. Very stern on the one hand, the Roman power was

not at all meddlesome, and permitted much liberty. These great

brute-force despotisms, terrible in repression, were not so suspicious

as powers which have some dogma to uphold. They allowed everything to

be done up to the point at which they thought they ought to use

vigorous measures. In his wandering career, Jesus does not appear to

have been once annoyed by the civil authorities. Such a liberty, and

above all the happiness which Galilee enjoyed in being much less

restrained by the bonds of Pharisaic pedantry, gave to this province a

real advantage over Jerusalem. The revolution, or, in other words, the

Messianic expectations, caused a general mental fermentation here. Men

believed that they were on the eve of beholding the great renovation;

the Scriptures, tortured into a variety of meanings, became food for

the most colossal hopes. In each line of the simple writings of the Old

Testament they saw the assurance, and, in a certain sense, the

programme of the future reign, which should bring peace to the

righteous, and seal for ever the work of God.

From all time this division into two parties, opposed to each other in

interest and spirit, had been for the Hebrew people a principle which

had been fertile in moral growth. Every nation called to high destinies

ought to form a complete little world, including within it the opposite

poles. Greece presented, a few leagues apart, Sparta and Athens, the

two antipodes to a superficial observer, but in reality rival sisters,

each necessary to the other. It was the same with Jud�a. Less brilliant

in one sense than the development of Jerusalem, that of the north was

on the whole much more fruitful; the noblest works of the Jewish people

have always proceeded thence. A complete absence of the love of nature,

almost amounting to something dry, narrow, and even ferocious, has

stamped upon all purely Jerusalemitish works a character grand indeed,

but sad, arid, and repulsive. With its solemn doctors, its insipid

canonists, its hypocritical and atrabilious devotees, Jerusalem could

not conquer humanity. The north has given to the world the simple

Shulamite, the humble Canaanite, the passionate Magdalene, the good

foster-father Joseph, and the Virgin Mary. It is the north alone which

has made Christianity; Jerusalem, on the contrary, is the true home of

that obstinate Judaism which, founded by the Pharisees and fixed by the

Talmud, has traversed the Middle Ages and come down to us.

A beautiful aspect of nature contributed to the formation of this less

austere, though less sharply monotheistic spirit, if I may venture so

to call it, which impressed all the dreams of Galilee with a charming

and idyllic character. The region round about Jerusalem is, perhaps,

the gloomiest country in the world. Galilee, on the contrary, was

exceedingly verdant, shady, smiling, the true home of the Song of Songs

and the Canticles of the well-beloved. During the two months of March

and April the country is a carpet of flowers, with an incomparable

variety of colouring. The animals are small and extremely

gentle,--delicate and lively turtle-doves, blue-birds so light that

they rest on a blade of grass without bending it; crested larks which

advance nearly under the very feet of the traveller; little

river-tortoises with sweet and lively eyes, and also storks with grave

and modest mien, which, dismissing all timidity, allow themselves to be

approached quite closely, and seem almost to invite the companionship

of men. In no country in the world do the mountains spread themselves

out with more harmony, or inspire loftier thought. Jesus seems to have

specially loved them. The most important acts of his career took place

on mountains. It was there he was the most inspired; it was there he

held secret communings with the ancient prophets; it was there he

showed himself transfigured before the eyes of his disciples.

This lovely country, which at the present day has become (through the

woful impoverishing influence which Islamism has wrought on human life)

so sad and wretched, but where everything that man cannot destroy

breathes still an air of freedom, sweetness, and tenderness, overflowed

with happiness and joy at the time of Jesus. The Galileans were

reckoned brave, energetic and laborious. If we except Tiberias, built

by Antipas in the Roman style, in honour of Tiberius (about the year

15), Galilee had no large towns. The country was nevertheless covered

with small towns and large villages well peopled, and cultivated with

skill in every direction. From the ruins of its ancient splendour which

survive we can trace an agricultural people in no way gifted in art,

caring little for luxury, indifferent to the beauties of form, and

exclusively idealistic. The country abounded in fresh streams and

fruits; the large farms were shaded with vines and fig-trees; the

gardens were a mass of apple and walnut trees, and pomegranates. The

wine was excellent, if it may be judged from what the Jews still obtain

at Safed, and they drank freely of it. This contented and easily

satisfied life did not at all resemble the gross materialism of our

peasantry, or the coarse happiness of agricultural Normandy, or the

heavy mirth of the Flemings. It spiritualised itself in mysterious

dreams, in a kind of poetical mysticism, blending heaven and earth.

Leave the austere John Baptist in his desert of Jud�a, to preach

penitence, to inveigh unceasingly, and to live on locusts in the

company of jackals! Why should the companions of the bridegroom fast

while the bridegroom is with them? Joy will be a part of the kingdom of

God. Is she not the daughter of the humble in heart, of the men of

goodwill?

The entire history of infant Christianity is in this sense a delightful

pastoral. A Messiah at the marriage supper, the courtesan and the good

Zaccheus called to his feasts, the founders of the kingdom of heaven

like a bridal procession;--this is what Galilee has dared to offer, and

what the world has really accepted. Greece has drawn admirable pictures

of human life in sculpture and poetry, but always without backgrounds

or receding perspectives. Here were wanting the marble, the practised

workmen, the exquisite and refined language. But Galilee has created

for the popular imagination the most sublime ideal; for behind its

idyll the fate of humanity moves, and the light which illumines its

picture is the sun of the kingdom of God.

Jesus lived and grew up amidst those elevating surroundings. From his

infancy, he went almost every year to the feast at Jerusalem. The

pilgrimage was for the provincial Jews a solemnity of sweet

associations. Several entire series of psalms were consecrated to

celebrate the happiness of thus journeying in family society during

several days in springtime across the hills and valleys, all having in

prospect the splendours of Jerusalem, the solemnities of the sacred

courts, and the joy of brethren dwelling together. The route which

Jesus usually followed in these journeys was that which is taken in the

present day, through Gin�a and Shechem. From Shechem to Jerusalem

travelling is very toilsome. But the neighbourhood of the old

sanctuaries of Shiloh and Bethel, near which the pilgrim passes, keeps

the mind awake with interest. Ain-el-Harami�, the last halting-place,

is a melancholy and yet charming spot; and few impressions equal that

which one feels when encamping there for the night. The valley is

narrow and sombre, while a dark stream issues from the rocks full of

tombs, which form its banks. It is, I believe, "the valley of tears,"

or of dropping waters, which is sung of as one of the stations on the

way in the delightful eighty-fourth Psalm; and it became, to the sweet

and sad mysticism of the Middle Ages, the emblem of life. The next day,

at an early hour, the travellers would be at Jerusalem; this

expectation, even at the present day, sustains the caravan, rendering

the night short and slumber light.

These journeys, during which the assembled nation exchanged its ideas,

and which created annually in the capital centres of great excitement,

placed Jesus in contact with the mind of his countrymen, and doubtless

inspired him from his youth with a lively antipathy to the defects of

the official representatives of Judaism. It is observable that very

early the desert had been for him like a school, and to this he had

made prolonged visits. But the God he found there was not his God. It

was emphatically rather the God of Job, severe and terrible, and who is

accountable to none. Sometimes Satan came to tempt him. He then

returned from these sojourns into his beloved Galilee, and found again

his heavenly Father, in the midst of the green hills and the clear

fountains--among the crowds of women and children who, with joyous soul

and the song of the angels in their hearts, waited for the salvation of

Israel.

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CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST SAYINGS OF JESUS--HIS IDEAS OF A "FATHER-GOD" AND OF A PURE

RELIGION--FIRST DISCIPLES.

Joseph died before his son had assumed any public position. Mary

remained, in a manner, the head of the family; and this explains why

Jesus, when it was desired to distinguish him from others of the same

name, was most frequently called "the son of Mary." It would seem that

having, through her husband's death, become friendless in Nazareth, she

retired to Cana, which was probably her native place. Cana was a little

town about two or two and a half hours' journey from Nazareth, at the

base of the hills which bound the plain of Asochis on the north. The

prospect, less grand than that at Nazareth, extends over the whole

plain, and is bounded in the most picturesque manner by the mountains

of Nazareth and the hills of Sepphoris. Jesus appears to have resided

in this place for some time. There he probably passed a part of his

youth, and his first manifestations were made at Cana.

He followed the same occupation as his father--that of a carpenter.

This was no humiliating or vexatious circumstance. The Jewish custom

demanded that a man devoted to intellectual work should assume a

handicraft. The most celebrated doctors had their trades; it was thus

that St. Paul, whose education was so elaborate, was a tent-maker, or

upholsterer. Jesus never married. All his power of loving expended

itself on what he considered his heavenly vocation. The extremely

delicate sentiment which one observes in his manner towards women did

not interfere with the exclusive devotion he cherished for his idea.

Like Francis d'Assisi and Francis de Sales, he treated as sisters the

women who threw themselves into the same work as he did; he had his

Saint Clare, and his Fran�oise de Chantals. However, it is probable

that they loved himself better than his work; he was certainly more

beloved than loving. As happens frequently in the case of very lofty

natures, his tenderness of heart transformed itself into an infinite

sweetness, a vague poetry, a universal charm. His relations, free and

intimate, but of an entirely moral kind, with women of doubtful

character, are also explained by the passion which attached him to the

glory of his Father, and which made him jealously anxious for all

beautiful creatures who could contribute to it.

What was the progress of thought in Jesus during this obscure period of

his life? Through what meditations did he enter upon his prophetic

career? We cannot tell, his history having come to us in the shape of

scattered narratives and without exact chronology. But the development

of living character is everywhere the same, and it cannot be doubted

that the growth of a personality so powerful as that of Jesus obeyed

very rigorous laws. An exalted conception of the Divinity--which he did

not owe to Judaism, and which appears to have been in all its parts the

creation of his great intellect--was in a manner the source of all his

power. It is essential here that we put aside the ideas familiar to us,

and the discussions in which little minds exhaust themselves. In order

properly to understand the precise character of the piety of Jesus, we

must forget all that is placed between the gospel and ourselves. Deism

and Pantheism have become the two poles of theology. The paltry

discussions of scholasticism, the dryness of spirit of Descartes, the

deep-rooted irreligion of the eighteenth century, by lessening God, and

by limiting Him, in a manner, by the exclusion of everything which is

not His very self, have stifled in the breast of modern rationalism all

fertile ideas of the Divinity. If God, in fact, is a fixed entity

outside of us, he who believes himself to have peculiar relations with

God is a "visionary," and, as the physical and physiological sciences

have shown us that all supernatural visions are illusions, the logical

Deist finds it impossible to understand the great beliefs of the past.

Pantheism, on the other hand, in suppressing the Divine personality, is

as far as it can be from the living God of the ancient religions. Were

the men who have best comprehended God--Sakya-Mouni, Plato, St. Paul,

St. Francis d'Assisi, and St. Augustine (at some periods of his

fluctuating life)--Deists or Pantheists? Such a question has no

meaning. The physical and metaphysical proofs of the existence of God

were quite indifferent to them. They felt the Divine within themselves.

We must place Jesus in the first rank of this great family of the true

sons of God. Jesus had no visions; God did not speak to him as to one

outside of himself; God was in him; he felt himself with God, and he

drew from his own heart all he said of his Father. He lived in the

bosom of God by an unceasing communication; he did not see Him, but he

understood Him, without need of the thunder or the burning bush of

Moses, of the revealing tempest of Job, of the oracle of the old Greek

sages, of the familiar genius of Socrates, or of the angel Gabriel of

Mahomet. The imagination and the hallucination of a Saint Theresa, for

example, are valueless here. The intoxication of the Soufi proclaiming

himself identical with God is also a totally different thing. Jesus

never once announced the sacrilegious theory that he was God. He

believed himself to be in direct communication with God--he believed

himself to be the Son of God. The highest consciousness of God which

has existed in the bosom of humanity is that of Jesus.

We understand, on the other hand, that Jesus, commencing his work with

such a disposition of mind, could never be a speculative philosopher

like Sakya-Mouni. Nothing is further from scholastic theology than the

Gospel. The speculations of the Greek doctors on the Divine essence

proceed from an entirely different spirit. God, conceived simply as

Father, was all the theology of Jesus. And this was not with him a

theoretical principle, a doctrine more or less proved, which he sought

to inculcate in others. He did not argue with his disciples; he

demanded from them no effort of attention. He did not preach his

opinions; he preached himself. Very great and very disinterested minds

often present, associated with much elevation, that character of

perpetual attention to themselves, and extreme personal susceptibility,

which, in general, is peculiar to women. Their conviction that God is

in them, and occupies Himself perpetually with them, is so strong that

they have no fear of obtruding themselves upon others; our reserve, and

our respect for the opinion of others, which is a part of our weakness,

could not belong to them. This exaltation of self is not egotism; for

such men, possessed by their idea, give their lives freely, in order to

seal their work; it is the identification of self with the object it

has embraced, carried to its utmost limit. It is regarded as vain glory

by those who see in the new teaching only the personal phantasy of the

founder; but it is the finger of God to those who see the result. The

fool stands side by side here with the inspired man, only the fool

never succeeds. It has not yet been given to mental aberration to

influence seriously the progress of humanity.

Jesus, no doubt, did not reach at one step this high assertion of

himself. But it is probable that, from the first, he looked on himself

as standing with God in the relation of a son to his father. This was

his grand act of originality; there was nothing here in common with his

race. Neither the Jew nor the Mussulman has understood this delightful

theology of love. The God of Jesus is not the tyrannical master who

kills, damns, or saves us, just as it pleases Him. The God of Jesus is

our Father. We hear Him while listening to the gentle inspiration which

cries within us--"Father." The God of Jesus is not the partial despot

who has chosen Israel for His people, and protects them against all the

world. He is the God of humanity. Jesus would not be a patriot like the

Maccabees, or a theocrat like Judas the Gaulonite. Boldly elevating

himself above the prejudices of his nation, he would establish the

universal Fatherhood of God. The Gaulonite maintained that it was

better for one to die than to give the title of "Master" to any other

than God; Jesus would allow any man to take this name, but reserves for

God a title dearer still. Yielding to the powerful of the earth, who

were to him the representatives of force, a respect full of irony, he

establishes the supreme consolation--the recourse to the Father whom

each one has in heaven, and the true kingdom of God which every man

carries in his heart.

This expression--"the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven"--was

the favourite term of Jesus to describe the revolution he was bringing

into the world. Like nearly all the terms relating to the Messiah, it

came from the book of Daniel. According to the author of that

extraordinary book, the four profane empires destined to extinction

would be succeeded by a fifth empire-- that of the saints, which should

endure for ever. This reign of God upon earth naturally led to the most

diverse interpretations. In the later days of his life Jesus believed

that this reign would be realised in a material form by a sudden

renovation of the world. But this was, doubtless, not his first idea.

The admirable moral which he drew from the notion of the Father-God is

not that of enthusiasts who believe the world to be nearly at an end,

and who prepare themselves by asceticism for a chimerical catastrophe;

it is that of a world which has lived and would live still. "The

kingdom of God is within you," he said to those who cunningly sought

for external signs. The realistic conception of the Divine Advent was

only a cloud, a transient error, which his death has made us forget.

The Jesus who founded the true kingdom of God, the kingdom of the meek

and the humble, was the Jesus of early life, of those pure and

cloudless days when the voice of his father re-echoed within his bosom

in clearer tones. It was then for some months--a year perhaps--that God

truly dwelt on earth. The voice of the young carpenter acquired all at

once an extraordinary sweetness. An infinite charm was exhaled from his

person, and those who had hitherto seen him recognised him as the same

no longer. He had not as yet any disciples, and the group of people

which gathered round him was neither a sect nor a school; but there was

already felt among them a common spirit, and an influence both sweet

and penetrating. His amiable character, and doubtless one of those

exquisite faces which sometimes appear in the Jewish race, threw around

him a fascination from which no one, in the midst of these kindly and

fresh-minded peoples, could escape.

Paradise would, in fact, have been brought to earth if the ideas of the

young Master had not far transcended that level of ordinary goodness

which the human race has found it hitherto impossible to pass. The

brotherhood of men, as sons of God, and the moral consequences which

have resulted from it, were deduced with exquisite feeling. Like all

the rabbis of the period, Jesus little affected consecutive reasonings,

but clothed his teaching in concise aphorisms, and in an expressive

form, oft-times enigmatical and singular. Some of these maxims came

from the books of the Old Testament. Others were the thoughts of more

modern sages, especially of Antigonus of Soco, Jesus, son of Sirach,

and Hillel, which had reached him, not through a course of learned

study, but as oft-repeated proverbs. The synagogue was rich in very

happily-expressed maxims, which formed a sort of current proverbial

literature. Jesus adopted almost all this oral teaching, but imbued it

with a superior spirit. Generally exceeding the duties laid down by the

Law and the elders, he demanded perfection. All the virtues of

humility, pardon, charity, abnegation, and self-denial--virtues which

have been called with good reason Christian--if it is meant by this

that they have been truly preached by Christ--were found in germ in

this first declaration. As to justice, he contented himself with

repeating the well-known axiom--"Whatsoever ye would that men should do

unto you, do ye even so to them." But this old wisdom, selfish enough

as it was, did not satisfy him. He went to excess,

declaring--"Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him

the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away

thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." "If thy right eye offend thee,

pluck it out, and cast it from thee." "Love your enemies, do good to

them that hate you; pray for them that persecute you." "Judge not, that

ye be not judged." "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." "Be therefore

merciful, as your Father also is merciful." "It is more blessed to give

than to receive." "Whosoever shalt exalt himself shall be abased; and

he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

In regard to alms, pity, good works, kindness, the desire for peace,

and complete disinterestedness of heart, he had little to add to the

teaching of the synagogue. But he stamped them with an emphasis full of

unction, and thus gave novelty to those aphorisms which had long been

current. Morality is not composed of principles more or less

well-expressed. The poetry of the precept, which makes one love it, is

more than the precept itself, viewed as an abstract truth. Now, it

cannot be denied that these maxims, borrowed by Jesus from his

predecessors, produce quite a different effect in the Gospel to that in

the ancient Law, in the Pirk� Aboth, or in the Talmud. It is neither

the ancient Law nor the Talmud which has conquered and changed the

world. Little original in itself--if it is meant by that that one might

recompose it almost entirely by means of more ancient maxims--the

morality of the Gospel remains no less the loftiest creation of the

human conscience, the most beautiful code of perfect life which any

moralist has traced.

Jesus did not speak against the Mosaic law; but it is clear that he saw

its insufficiency, and he let this be distinctly understood. He

repeated constantly that more must be done than the ancient sages

commanded. He forbade the least harsh word; he prohibited divorce, and

all swearing; he censured revenge; he condemned usury; he held

voluptuous desire to be as criminal as adultery. He demanded a

universal forgiveness of injuries. The motive on which he grounded

these maxims of exalted charity was always the same. . . . . "That ye

may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh

His sun to rise on the evil and the good." "For if," he added, "ye love

them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the

same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?

do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your

Father which is in heaven is perfect."

A pure worship, a religion without priests or external observances,

resting entirely on the feelings of the heart, on the imitation of God,

on the direct communication between the conscience and the heavenly

Father, was the result of these principles. Jesus never shrank from

this daring consequence, which made him, in the very centre of Judaism,

a revolutionist of the first rank. Why should there be any

intermediaries between man and his Father? As God only looks on the

heart, of what use are these purifications--these observances which

only relate to the body? Even tradition, a thing so sacred to the Jew,

is nothing compared to a pure feeling. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees,

who, in praying, turned their heads to see if they were observed, who

gave alms with ostentation, and put on their garments marks by which

they might be recognised as pious persons--all these grimaces of false

devotion disgusted him. "They have their reward," said he; "but thou,

when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right

hand doeth, that thy alms may be in secret; and thy Father, which seeth

in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly." "And thou, when thou

prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray

to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in

secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain

repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard

for their much speaking. Your Father knoweth what things ye have need

of before ye ask him."

He did not affect any outward sign of asceticism, contenting himself

with praying, or rather meditating, upon the mountains and in those

solitary places where man has always sought God. This lofty idea of the

relations of man with God, of which so few minds, even after him, have

been capable, is summed up in a prayer which he compiled from some

pious phrases already current amongst the Jews, and which he taught his

disciples: --

"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom

come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day

our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that

trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation; deliver us from the

evil one." Jesus insisted particularly upon the idea that the heavenly

Father knows better than we do what we need, and that we almost sin

against Him in asking Him for this or that particular thing.

Jesus did nothing more in this matter than to carry out the

consequences of the great principles which Judaism had established, but

which the official classes of the nation inclined more and more to

despise. The Greek and Roman prayers were almost always full of

egotism. Never had Pagan priest said to the faithful, "If thou bring

thy offering to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath

aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy

way; first be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy

gift." Alone in antiquity, the Jewish prophets, especially Isaiah, in

their antipathy to the priesthood, had discovered a little of the true

nature of the worship which man owes to God. "To what purpose is the

multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt-offerings

of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of

bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Incense is an abomination unto

me: for your hands are full of blood; cease to do evil, learn to do

well, seek judgment, and then come." In later times such doctors as

Simeon the Just, Jesus son of Sirach, and Hillel, almost reached this

point, and declared that the sum of the Law was righteousness. Philo,

in the Jud�o-Egyptian world, attained at the same time as Jesus ideas

of a high moral sanctity; and the consequence of this was a decreasing

regard for the customs of the Law. Shema�a and Abtalion also more than

once showed themselves very liberal casuists. Rabbi Johanan ere long

went so far as to place works of mercy above even the study of the Law!

Jesus alone, however, proclaimed this principle in an effective manner.

Never has any man been less a priest than Jesus, and never has there

been a greater enemy of forms which stifle religion under the pretext

of protecting it. In this way we are all his disciples and his

successors; in this way he has laid the eternal foundation-stone of

true religion; and if religion is the essential thing for humanity, by

this he has merited the divine rank which men have awarded him. An

absolutely new idea--the idea of a worship founded upon purity of heart

and on human brotherhood--made, through him, its entrance into the

world--an idea so elevated that the Christian Church ought by this fact

to disclose exhaustively its design, but an idea which, in our days,

only some minds are able to grasp.

An exquisite sympathy with nature furnished Jesus with expressive

images at every turn. Sometimes a wonderful ingenuity, which we call

wit, adorned his aphorisms; at other times their vivacity consisted in

the happy use of popular proverbs. "How wilt thou say to thy brother,

Let me pull the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine

own eye? Thou hypocrite; first cast out the beam out of thine own eye,

and then thou shalt see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's

eye."

These lessons, long concealed in the heart of the young Master, soon

gathered round him a few disciples. The spirit of the age was in favour

of small churches; it was the time of the Essenes or Therapeut�.

Certain Rabbis, each having his own distinctive teaching, Shema�a,

Abtalion, Hillel, Shamma�, Judas the Gaulonite, Gamaliel, and many

others whose maxims form the Talmud, appeared on all sides. They wrote

very little; the Jewish doctors of that age did not make books;

everything was done by conversation and public lessons, to which it was

sought to give a form easily remembered. The day when the youthful

carpenter of Nazareth began openly to proclaim those maxims, for the

most part already propagated, but which, thanks to him, have been able

to regenerate the world, marked therefore no very startling event. It

was only one Rabbi more (true, the most fascinating of them all), and

around him a few young people, greedy to hear him and to search for the

unknown. It requires time to awaken men from inattention. There was not

as yet any Christian, though true Christianity was founded already, and

doubtless it has never been more perfect than at this first period.

Jesus added nothing more enduring to it afterwards. What do I say? In

one sense he compromised it; for every idea, in order to prevail, must

make sacrifices; we never come out of the battle of life unscathed.

To conceive the good, in fact, is not enough; it is necessary to make

it succeed amongst men. To this end, less pure paths must be followed.

No doubt, if the Gospel were confined to some chapters of Matthew and

Luke, it would be more perfect, and would certainly not be open now to

so many objections; but without miracles would it have converted the

world? If Jesus had died at the period of his career which we have now

reached, there would not have been in, his life a single page that

could wound us; but, although greater thus in the eyes of God, he would

have remained unknown to men; he would have been lost in the crowd of

great unknown spirits--himself the noblest of them all; the truth would

not have been promulgated, and the world would not have profited by the

immense moral superiority with which the Father had endowed him. Jesus,

the son of Sirach, and Hillel had uttered aphorisms nearly as elevated

as his own. Hillel, however, will never be reckoned as the true founder

of Christianity. In morals, as in art, precept is nothing; practice is

everything. The idea which lies hidden in a picture of Raphael is of

small moment; it is the picture itself which is prized. In the same

manner, in morals, truth is very little thought of when it only reaches

the condition of being a mere feeling; it only attains its full value

when it is realised in the world as a certain fact. Some men of

mediocre morality have written a number of good maxims. Some very

virtuous men, on the other hand, have done nothing to continue in the

world the tradition of virtue. The palm is his who has been powerful

both in words and deeds, who has discerned the good, and at the price

of his blood, has made it triumph. Jesus, from this double point of

view, is without equal; his glory remains entire, and will ever be

renewed.

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CHAPTER VI.

JOHN THE BAPTIST--VISIT OF JESUS TO JOHN, AND HIS ABODE IN THE DESERT OF

JUD�A--HE ADOPTS THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

An extraordinary man, whose position, in the absence of documents to

describe it, remains to us in some measure enigmatical, appeared about

this time, and was unquestionably connected to some extent with Jesus.

This connection rather tended to make the young prophet of Nazareth

deviate from his path; but it also suggested many important accessories

to his religious institution, and, at all events, it furnished his

disciples with a very strong authority to recommend their master in the

eyes of a certain class of Jews.

About the year 28 of our era (the fifteenth year of the reign of

Tiberius), there spread through all Palestine the fame of a certain

Johanan or John, a young ascetic full of zeal and enthusiasm. John was

of the priestly race, and was born, it would seem, at Juttah, near

Hebron, or at Hebron itself. This city, which may be called patriarchal

beyond all others, situated a short distance from the desert of Jud�a,

and within a few hours' journey of the great desert of Arabia, was at

that time what it is still to-day, one of the bulwarks of monotheism in

its most austere form.

From his infancy John was a Nazir--that is to say, subjected by vow to

certain abstinences. The desert by which he was, so to speak,

surrounded, attracted him from early life. He led there a life like

that of a Yogui of India, clothed with skins or cloth of camel's hair,

having for food only locusts and wild honey. A certain number of

disciples were grouped around him, sharing his life or studying his

severe doctrine. We might imagine ourselves transported to the banks of

the Ganges, if special features had not revealed in this recluse the

last descendant of the grand prophets of Israel.

Since the Jewish nation had begun to reflect upon its destiny with a

kind of despair, the imagination of the people had reverted with much

complacency to the ancient prophets. Now, of all the personages of the

past, the remembrance of whom came like the dreams of a troubled night

to awaken and agitate the people, the greatest was Elias. This giant of

the prophets and his rough solitude of Carmel, where he shared the life

of wild beasts, dwelling in the hollows of the rocks, whence he issued

like a thunderbolt to make and unmake kings, had become, by successive

transformations, a sort of superhuman being, sometimes visible,

sometimes invisible, and one who had not tasted of death. It was

generally believed that Elias would return and restore Israel. The

austere life which he had led, the terrible remembrances he had left

behind him--the impression of which is still vivid in the East--that

sombre portraiture which, even in our own days, causes trembling and

death; all this mythology, full of vengeance and terrors, powerfully

struck the public imagination and stamped, as with a birth-mark, all

the creations of the popular mind. Whoever aspired to any great

influence over the people must imitate Elias; and, as a solitary life

had been the essential characteristic of that prophet, they were

accustomed to think of "the man of God" as a hermit. They imagined that

all holy personages would have their days of penitence, of solitary

life, and of austerity. The retreat to the desert thus became the

condition and the prelude of high destinies.

There can be no doubt that this idea of imitation had occupied John's

mind to a considerable degree. The anchorite life, so opposed to the

spirit of the ancient Jewish people, and with which the vows, such as

those of the Nazirs and the Rechabites, had no relation, pervaded all

parts of Jud�a. The Essenes were grouped near the birthplace of John,

on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea. Abstinence from flesh, wine, and

from sexual pleasures was regarded as the novitiate of the prophets.

People imagined that the chiefs of any sect should be recluses, having

their own rules and institutions, like the founders of religious

orders. The teachers of the young were also at times a species of

anchorites, resembling to some extent the gourous of Brahminism. In

fact, might there not in this be a remote influence of the mounis of

India? Perhaps, some of those wandering Buddhist monks who overran the

world, as the first Franciscans did in later times, preaching by their

actions and converting people who knew not their language, might have

turned their steps towards Jud�a, as they certainly did towards Syria

and Babylon. On this point we have no certainty. Babylon had become for

some time a true focus of Buddhism. Boudasp (Bodhisattva) was reputed a

wise Chaldean, and the founder of Sabeism. Sabeism was, as its

etymology indicates, baptism--that is to say, the religion of many

baptisms--the origin of the sect still existing called "Christians of

St. John," or Mendaites, which the Arabs call el-Mogtasila, "the

Baptists." It is very difficult to unravel these vague analogies. The

sects floating between Judaism, Christianity, Baptism, and Sabeism,

which we find in the region beyond the Jordan during the first

centuries of our era, present to criticism the most singular problem,

in consequence of the confused accounts of them which have come down to

us. We may believe, at all events, that many of the external practices

of John, of the Essenes, and of the Jewish spiritual teachers of this

time, were derived from influences then but recently received from the

far East. The fundamental practice which gave to the sect of John its

character, and which has given him his name, has always had its centre

in lower Chaldea, and constitutes a religion which is practised there

to this day.

This practice was baptism, or total immersion. Ablutions were already

familiar to the Jews, as they were to all the religions of the East.

The Essenes had given them a peculiar extension. Baptism had become an

ordinary ceremony at the introduction of proselytes into the bosom of

the Jewish religion--a sort of initiatory rite. But never before the

Baptist's time had there been given to immersion either this form or

importance. John had fixed the scene of his labours in that part of the

desert of Jud�a which borders on the Dead Sea. At the periods when he

administered baptism, he betook himself to the banks of the Jordan,

either to Bethany or to Bethabara, on the eastern shore, probably

opposite Jericho, or to a place called �non, or the Fountains, near

Salim, where there was much water. There considerable crowds, mainly of

the tribe of Judah, hastened to him to be baptized. In a few months he

thus became one of the most influential men in Jud�a, and all the

multitude held him in high estimation.

The people considered him a prophet, and many imagined that he was

Elias who had risen from the dead. The belief in such resurrections was

widely spread; it was thought that God would raise from their graves

certain of the ancient prophets to serve as the leaders of Israel to

its final destiny. Others took John for the Messiah himself, although

he certainly made no such pretension. The priests and scribes, opposed

to this revival of prophetism, and always antagonistic to enthusiasts,

despised him. But the popularity of the Baptist awed them, and they

dared not speak against him. It was a victory which the feeling of the

vulgar gained over the priestly aristocracy. When the chief priests

were obliged to explain their exact position on this point, they were

much embarrassed.

Baptism, however, was to John nothing more than a sign, destined to

make an impression and to prepare men's minds for some great movement.

There is no doubt that he was imbued in the highest degree with the

Messianic expectations. "Repent," said he, "for the kingdom of heaven

is at hand." He announced a "great wrath," that is to say, terrible

calamities which were to come, and declared that the axe was already at

the root of the tree, and that the tree would soon be cast into the

fire. The Messiah he described had a fan in his hand, gathering in the

wheat and burning the chaff. Repentance, of which baptism was the type,

the giving of alms, and the reformation of manners, were to John's mind

the great means of preparation for the coming events. We cannot

discover in what light exactly he looked at these events. What we are

sure of is that he preached with much power against the same

adversaries as Jesus attacked later on, against the rich priests, the

Pharisees, the doctors--in one word, against official Judaism; and

that, like Jesus, he was specially welcomed by the despised classes. He

reduced to a small value the title "son of Abraham," and declared that

God could raise up children to Abraham from the stones on the ground.

It does not seem that he possessed, even in germ, the great idea which

led to the triumph of Jesus--the conception of a pure religion; but he

powerfully served this idea by substituting a private rite for those

legal ceremonies for which priests were required, just as the

Flagellants of the Middle Ages were the precursors of the Reformation,

by denying to the official clergy the monopoly of the sacraments and of

absolution. The general tone of his sermons was severe and stern. The

expressions he used against his adversaries appear to have been very

violent. It was a harsh and continuous invective. It is probable that

he did not remain a complete stranger to politics. Josephus, who was

almost directly brought into connection with John through his teacher

Banou, lets us understand this by his ambiguous words, and the

catastrophe which put an end to the Baptist's life seems to imply that

it was so. His disciples led a very austere life, fasted frequently,

and affected a sad and anxious demeanour. We appear sometimes to

discover the dawn of the theory of communism in goods--the tenet that

the rich man is obliged to share what he possesses with the poor. The

poor already appeared as the class who would benefit in the first

instance by the kingdom of God.

Although the centre of John's action was Jud�a, his fame penetrated

quickly to Galilee and reached Jesus, who, by his first discourses, had

already gathered round him a little circle of hearers. Enjoying up to

this point little authority, and doubtless impelled by the desire to

see a teacher whose instructions had so much in them that was in

sympathy with his own ideas, Jesus left Galilee and went with his small

band of pupils to visit John. The new comers were baptized like every

one else. John very warmly welcomed this group of Galilean disciples,

and found nothing objectionable in their remaining distinct from his

own followers. The two teachers were young; they had many ideas in

common; they loved one another and vied with each other before the

public in reciprocal kindness of expression. At the first glance, such

a fact surprises us in John the Baptist, and we are tempted to call it

in question. Humility has never been a feature of strong Jewish minds.

It might have been expected that a character so stubborn, a sort of

Lamennais, always irritated, would be very passionate, and suffer

neither rivalry nor half adhesion. But this manner of viewing things

rests upon a false conception of the person of John. We imagine him an

old man; he was, on the contrary, of the same age as Jesus, and very

young according to the ideas of the time. In mental development, he was

the brother rather than the father of Jesus. The two young enthusiasts,

full of the same hopes and the same hatreds, were able to make common

cause, and mutually to support each other. Certainly an aged teacher,

seeing a man without celebrity approach him, and maintain towards him

an aspect of independence, would have rebelled; we have scarcely an

example of a leader of a school receiving with eagerness his future

successor. But youth is capable of all abnegations, and it may be

readily admitted that these two young enthusiasts, full of the same

hopes and the same hatreds, made common cause and mutually helped each

other.

These good relations became afterwards the starting-point of a whole

system developed by the evangelists, which consisted in giving John's

attestation as the primary basis of the Divine mission of Jesus. Such

was the degree of authority attained by the Baptist that men thought it

would be impossible to find in the world a better guarantee. But far

from the Baptist having abdicated before Jesus, Jesus, during all the

time he passed with him, recognised him as his superior, and only

developed his own genius with timidity.

It seems, indeed, that, notwithstanding his profound originality,

Jesus, during some weeks or months, was the imitator of John. The way

before him was yet obscure. At all times, moreover, Jesus yielded much

to opinion, and adopted many things which were not in exact accordance

with his own ideas, or for which he cared little, merely because they

were popular; but these accessories never injured his principal idea,

and were always subordinate to it. Baptism had been brought into great

favour by John; Jesus thought himself obliged to follow his example;

therefore he baptized, and his disciples also. No doubt they

accompanied this ceremony with preaching similar to that of John. The

river Jordan was thus covered on all sides by Baptists, whose

discourses were more or less successful. The disciple soon equalled the

master, and his baptism was much prized. There was on this subject some

jealousy among the disciples; the pupils of John came to him to

complain of the increasing success of the young Galilean, whose baptism

would soon, they feared, supplant their own. But the two masters

remained superior to these little jealousies. According to a tradition,

it was in the school of John where was formed the most celebrated group

of the disciples of Jesus. The superiority of John was, besides, too

indisputable for Jesus (still little known) to think of contesting it.

He desired only to increase under John's shadow, and considered himself

obliged, in order to gain the multitude, to employ the external means

which in the case of John had produced such astonishing success. When

he began to preach again after John's arrest, the first words which are

said to have been used by him are nothing but the repetition of one of

the familiar phrases of the Baptist. Many other expressions of John are

to be found verbally in his discourses. The two schools appear to have

lived for a long time with a good mutual understanding, and, after

John's death, Jesus, as his trusty friend, was one of the first to be

informed of the event.

John, in fact, was soon cut short in his prophetic career. Like the old

Jewish prophets, he was, in the highest degree, a censurer of the

established authorities. The extreme vivacity with which he expressed

himself regarding them could not fail to draw him into an embarrassing

position. In Jud�a, John does not appear to have been disturbed by

Pilate; but, in Perea, beyond the Jordan, he came into the territories

of Antipas. This tyrant was uneasy at the political leaven which was

thinly veiled by John in his preaching. The great assemblages of men,

formed by religious and patriotic enthusiasm, which had gathered round

the Baptist, had a suspicious aspect. An entirely personal grievance,

besides, was added to these motives of state, and rendered the death of

the austere censurer inevitable.

One of the most strongly-marked characters in this tragical family of

the Herods was Herodias, grand-daughter of Herod the Great. Violent,

ambitious, and passionate, she detested Judaism, and despised its laws.

She had been married, probably against her will, to her uncle, Herod,

son of Mariamne, whom Herod the Great had disinherited, and who never

had assumed any public part. The inferior position of her husband, in

comparison with the other members of the family, allowed her no peace

of mind; she resolved to be sovereign at any cost. Antipas was the

instrument through which she acted. This weak man, having become

desperately enamoured of her, promised to marry her and to repudiate

his first wife, the daughter of H�reth, king of Petra, and emir of the

neighbouring tribes of Perea. The Arabian princess, having obtained a

hint of this purpose, resolved to fly. Concealing her design, she

pretended that she wished to make a journey to Machero, in her father's

territory, and caused herself to be conducted by the officers of

Antipas.

Makaur, or Machero, was a colossal fortress built by Alexander Janneus,

and rebuilt by Herod, in one of the most rugged wadys to the east of

the Dead Sea. This was a wild and savage country, full of extraordinary

legends, and was believed to be haunted by demons. The fortress was

just on the boundary of the States of H�reth and Antipas. At this

period it was in the possession of H�reth. Having been forewarned, the

latter had prepared everything for the flight of his daughter, who was

reconducted, from tribe to tribe, to Petra.

The almost incestuous union of Antipas and Herodias then took place.

The Jewish laws as to marriage were a constant rock of offence between

the irreligious family of the Herods and the strict Jews. The members

of this numerous and somewhat isolated dynasty being obliged to

intermarry to a large extent, there frequently resulted violations of

the limits prescribed by the Law. John was thus the echo of the general

feeling when he rebuked Antipas. This was more than sufficient to

decide the latter to follow up his suspicions. He caused the Baptist to

be arrested and confined in the fortress of Machero, of which he had

probably taken possession after the departure of the daughter of

H�reth.

More timid than cruel, Antipas did not wish to put John to death.

According to certain reports, he feared popular sedition. According to

another version, he had taken pleasure in listening to his prisoner,

and these interviews had thrown him into great perplexities. What is

certain is, that the detention was prolonged, and that John preserved,

even in prison, an extensive influence. He correspnded with his

disciples, and we find him still in connection with Jesus. His faith in

the near approach of the Messiah only became firmer; he attentively

followed the movements outside, and sought to discover the signs that

were favourable to the accomplishment of the hopes by which he was

sustained.

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CHAPTER VII.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEAS OF JESUS RELATIVE TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Up to the arrest of John, which may be dated approximately in the

summer of the year 29, Jesus did not quit the neighbourhood of the Dead

Sea and of the Jordan. A sojourn in the desert of Jud�a was generally

considered as the preparation for great things, as a sort of "retreat"

before public acts. Jesus in this respect followed the example of

others, and passed forty days in no other society than that of the wild

beasts, maintaining a rigorous fast. The minds of the disciples were

much exercised in regard to this sojourn. The desert was, according to

popular belief, the abode of demons. There are to be found in the world

few regions more desolate, more God-forsaken, more shut off from all

outward life, than the rocky declivity which forms the western border

of the Dead Sea. It was believed that, during the time Jesus passed in

this frightful country, he had gone through terrible trials; that Satan

had assailed him with his illusions or tempted him by seductive

promises, and that finally, to reward him for his victory, angels had

come and ministered to him.

It was probably in returning from the desert that Jesus was informed of

the arrest of John the Baptist. He had no further reason now to prolong

his stay in a country which was comparatively strange to him. Perhaps

he feared also being involved in the severities exercised towards John,

and did not wish to expose himself at a time in which, seeing the

little celebrity he had, his death could in no way serve the

advancement of his ideas. He accordingly went back to Galilee, his true

fatherland, ripened by an important experience, and having acquired,

through contact with a great man very different from himself, a

consciousness of his own originality.

On the whole, the influence of John had been more harmful than useful

to Jesus. It checked his development; for everything leads us to

believe that when he went towards Jordan he had ideas superior to those

of John, and it was out of a kind of concession that he inclined for a

moment towards baptism. Probably if the Baptist, to whose authority it

would have been difficult to submit himself, had remained at liberty,

he would not have thought of casting off the yoke of rites and of

materialistic practices, and henceforth might have remained an unknown

Jewish sectary; for the world had not yet abandoned these practices for

others. It is the charm of a religion stripped of all exterior forms

that has attracted the most elevated minds to Christianity. The Baptist

once imprisoned, his followers became rapidly fewer, and Jesus found

himself at liberty to follow his own bent. The only things he was

indebted in a sort of way to John for were instruction in the art of

preaching and in attracting popularity. From that moment, in fact, he

preached with much more force, and awed the multitude with his

authority.

It appears also that his close intercourse with John, not so much by

the influence of the Baptist as by the natural development of his own

mind, matured many of his ideas about the "kingdom of heaven." His

watchword henceforth is "glad tidings;" and the announcement that the

kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus is no longer a delightful moralist

merely, aspiring to embody in a few vivid and concise aphorisms sublime

lessons; he is a transcendental revolutionary who attempts to renovate

the world from its very basis, and to found on earth the ideal which he

has conceived. "The kingdom of God" is at hand is to be synonymous with

being a disciple of Jesus. The phrase "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of

Heaven," as we have already said, had been long familiar to the Jews.

Jesus, however, gave to it a moral sense--a social application, that

the author of the book of Daniel himself, in his enthusiastic

apocalypse, dared hardly venture upon.

In the world, as it is constituted, it is the evil that prevails. Satan

is the "king of this world," and everything obeys him. The priests and

the doctors do not the things which they order others to do. The just

are persecuted, and the sole portion of the good is to weep. The

"world" is a species of enemies of God and His saints; but God will

reveal Himself and avenge His saints. The day is at hand; for

abomination is rampant. The reign of justice is to have its turn.

The advent of the reign of justice is to be a great and unexpected

revolution. The world is to be turned upside down; the present state

being bad, to represent the future, it is sufficient to conceive as

near as may be the contrary of that which exists. The first shall be

last. A new order will rule humanity. At present the good and the bad

are mixed like wheat and tares in a field. The Master allows them to

grow together; but the hour of abrupt separation is to come. The

kingdom of God is to be like a great net, which gathers both good and

bad fish; we put the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. The

beginning of that great revolution will be hardly recognisable. It will

be like the grain of mustard seed, which, though the least of all

seeds, being cast into the earth, becomes a tree under the leaves of

whose branches the birds come and repose; or again, it will be like the

leaven, which, put into bread, leavens the whole lump. A series of

often obscure parables was designed to express the surprises of that

unexpected advent, its apparent injustices, its inevitable and definite

character.

Who is to establish this kingdom of God? Let us recall that the first

thought of Jesus--a thought so deeply rooted in him that it was

probably intuitive forming part of his very being--was that he was the

son of God, the bosom friend of his father, the executor of His

decrees. The response of Jesus to such a question could not then be

doubtful. The persuasion that he should found the kingdom of God took,

in the most absolute manner, possession of his mind. He looked upon

himself as the universal reformer. Heaven, earth, all nature,

depravity, disease, and death are only his instruments. In the glow of

his heroic will, he believes himself to be all powerful. If the earth

does not lend itself to this complete transformation, it will be broken

up, purified by fire and by the breath of God. A new heaven will be

created, and the whole earth peopled with the angels of God.

A complete revolution, extending to nature itself --such was the

fundamental idea of Jesus. Henceforth, it is certain, he renounced

politics; the example of Judas the Gaulonite showed him the uselessness

of popular seditions. He never dreamt of revolting against the Romans

and the tetrarchs. The wild and anarchical principles of the Gaulonite

found no favour with him. His submission to the powers that be,

derisive at bottom no doubt, was outwardly complete. He paid tribute to

C�sar, to avoid trouble. Liberty and right do not belong to this world;

why then trouble himself with vain susceptibilities? Despising the

earth, convinced that the world did not merit solicitude, he sought

refuge in his ideal kingdom; he established that great doctrine of

transcendent contempt, the true doctrine of the freedom of mind which

alone can bring peace. But so far he had not said. "My kingdom is not

of this world." Much obscurity was mixed up with his most perfect

views. Sometimes singular temptations crossed his mind. In the desert

of Jud�a, Satan proposed to give him the kingdoms of this world. Not

knowing the power of the Roman Empire, he could, with the amount of

enthusiasm there was in Jud�a, resulting soon after in so terrible a

military resistance, he could, I say, considering the daring and the

numbers of his partisans, hope to establish a kingdom. Many times, no

doubt, this was the supreme thought with him: The kingdom of God, is it

to be realised by force or by gentleness, by revolt or by patience? One

day, we are told that the common people of Galilee sought to carry him

away and make him king; but Jesus fled into the mountains, and remained

there for some time alone. His lofty nature shielded him from the error

which would make him an agitator or a chief of rebels, a Theudas or a

Barkokeba.

The revolution that he sought to bring about was a moral revolution;

but he had not yet reached the point of trusting to the angels and the

last trumpet for its execution. It was only upon men and through men

that he wished to act. A visionary, who had no other idea than the

approximateness of the last judgment, would not have had this care for

the amelioration of human souls, and would not have laid down the

finest moral precepts humanity has ever received. There was no doubt

still much vagueness in his ideas; and it was exalted sentiment rather

than fixed design which urged him on to the sublime work he had

conceived, though in a manner quite different from what he imagined.

It is in fact the kingdom of God, I mean, the kingdom of mind, that he

founded, and, if Jesus from the bosom of his father sees his work

bearing fruit through the ages, he may indeed truly say: "This is what

I wished." That which Jesus founded, and which will remain his to all

eternity--deductions being made for the imperfections which enter into

everything accomplished by mankind--is the doctrine of freedom of mind.

Greece had already exalted ideas on the subject. Several stoics had

discovered the means of being free under a tyrant. But, in general, the

ancient world only understood liberty as attached to certain political

forms; Harmodius and Aristogiton, Brutus and Cassius were concrete

examples of such liberty. The true Christian is much more free from all

restraints; here below he is a stranger; what boots it to him who is

the temporary ruler of this earth, which is not his country? Liberty to

him means truth. Jesus was not sufficiently acquainted with history to

comprehend how opportune such a doctrine was--the very moment when

republican liberty was expiring, and when the small municipal

institutions of antiquity were being absorbed in the Roman Empire. But

his admirable sound sense and the truly prophetic instinct that he had

of his mission, guided him here with marvellous certainty. By these

words: "Render unto C�sar the things which are C�sar's, and unto God

the things which are God's," he originated something unknown to

politics--a refuge for souls in the midst of an empire of brute force.

To be sure, such a doctrine had its dangers. To establish as a

principle that to look at a coin was a symbol of the acknowledgment of

legitimate authority, to proclaim that the perfect man contemptuously

pays tribute without question, was to annihilate the ancient forms of

republicanism and to encourage all kinds of tyranny. Christianity, in

this sense, has contributed much to weaken the sense of duty in the

citizen, as well as to place the world absolutely in the power of

existing circumstances. But in constituting an immense free

association, which, during three hundred years, eschewed politics,

Christianity amply compensated for the wrong it had done to civic

virtue. Thanks to him, the power of the State was limited to

terrestrial things; the mind was freed, or at all events, the terrible

sceptre of Roman authority was broken for ever.

The man who is especially preoccupied with the duties of public life

does not spare those who place some other object above his party

strifes. He especially blames those who subordinate political to social

questions, and profess for the former a sort of indifference. In one

sense he is right; for exclusiveness is prejudicial to the good

government of human affairs. But what have parties done to promote the

general morality of our species? If Jesus, instead of founding his

heavenly kingdom, had betaken himself to Rome, and had worn his life

out in conspiring against Tiberius, or in regretting Germanicus, what

would have become of this world? Neither as a stern republican nor as a

zealous patriot could he have stemmed the great public current of his

age, though in pooh-poohing politics he has revealed to the world the

truth that country is not everything, and that the man is anterior and

superior to the citizen.

The principles of our positive science have been injured by the dreams

embraced in the scheme of Jesus. We know the history of the world. The

kind of revolutions expected by Jesus are only produced by geological

or astronomical causes, and no one has ever been able to connect them

with things moral. But to be just to great originators, they must not

be fastened with the prejudices they only shared. Columbus discovered

America, though he started out with the most erroneous ideas; Newton

believed his silly explanation of the Apocalypse to be as certain as

his theory of gravitation. Shall we place a mediocre man of our times

above a Francis d'Assisi, a St. Bernard, a Joan of Arc, or a Luther,

because he is exempt from the errors that these persons have taught?

Ought we to measure men by the correctness of their ideas of physics,

and by the more or less exact knowledge they possess of the true

natural laws of the universe? Let us understand better the position of

Jesus and whence he derived his power. The Deism of the eighteenth

century and a certain kind of Protestantism have accustomed us to

regard the founder of the Christian faith merely as a great moralist, a

benefactor of mankind. We see no more in the gospel than good maxims;

we throw a convenient veil over the strange intellectual state whence

it had its origin. There are some people who regret even that the

French Revolution departed more than once from principle, and that it

was not brought about by wise and moderate men. Let us not impose our

petty plans and commonplace notions on those extraordinary movements

which are so far above our grasp! Let us continue to admire the

"morality of the Gospel;" let us suppress in our religious teachings

the chimera which was the soul of it, but do not let us imagine that

with the simple ideas of happiness or of individual morality we can

again move the world. The idea of Jesus was much more profound. His was

the most revolutionary idea that human brain ever conceived. But the

historian must take it in its entirety, and not with those timid

suppressions which strip it of the very thing which has rendered it

efficacious for the regeneration of humanity.

At bottom, the ideal is always a Utopia. When we wish at the present

time to represent the Christ of the modern conscience, the consoler,

the judge of these times, what do we do? That which Jesus himself did

over 1800 years ago. We suppose the conditions of the real world quite

other than they are; we represent a moral liberator breaking without

weapons the chains of the negro, bettering the condition of the common

people, delivering oppressed nations. We forget that that implies the

subversion of the world, the climate of Virginia and that of the Congo

modified, the blood and the race of millions of men changed, our social

complications restored to a chimerical simplicity, and the political

stratifications of Europe displaced from their natural order. The

"restitution of all things" desired by Jesus was not more difficult.

That new earth, that new heaven, that new Jerusalem, which comes from

above, this cry, "Behold I make all things new," are the

characteristics common to reformers. The contrast of the ideal with the

sad reality invariably produces in mankind those revolts against cold

reason which mediocre minds consider as follies, until the day of their

triumph arrives, and then those who have combated them are the first to

acknowledge their great wisdom. That there may have been a

contradiction between the belief in the approaching end of the world

and the general moral system of Jesus, conceived in prospect of a

permanent state of humanity, nearly analogous to that which now exists,

no one will attempt to deny. It was exactly this contradiction that

ensured the success of his work. The millenarian alone would have done

nothing lasting; the moralist alone would have done nothing powerful.

The millenarian gave the impulse, the moralist ensured the future.

Hence Christianity united the two conditions of great success in this

world--a revolutionary starting point and the possibility of vitality.

Everything which is intended to succeed ought to respond to these two

wants; for the world seeks both to change and to endure. Jesus, at the

same time that he announced an unparalleled subversion in human

affairs, proclaimed the principles upon which society has reposed for

eighteen hundred years. That which, in fact, distinguishes Jesus from

the agitators of his time and from those of all times is his perfect

idealism. In some respects Jesus was an anarchist, for he had no notion

of civil government. The latter seemed to him an abuse, pure and

simple. He spoke of it in vague terms, after the manner of one of the

commonalty who knows nothing of politics. Every magistrate appeared to

him a natural enemy of the people of God; and he forewarned his

disciples of conflicts with the civil powers without imagining for a

moment that there was anything in this to be ashamed of. But the desire

to supplant the rich and powerful never manifests itself in him. His

aim is to annihilate wealth and power, but not to seize upon them. He

prepares his disciples for persecutions and punishments, but in no

single instance is the idea of armed resistance foreshadowed. The idea

that man is all-powerful through suffering and resignation, that man

triumphs over force through purity of heart, is an idea unique with

Jesus. Jesus is not a spiritualist; for everything to him had a

palpable realisation. But he is a thorough idealist, matter being for

him but the symbol of the idea, and the real the vivid expression of

that which does not manifest itself.

To whom shall we apply, upon whom shall we rely, to found the kingdom

of God? The opinion of Jesus never wavered upon this point. That which

is cherished by man is an abomination in the sight of God. The founders

of the kingdom of God are the weak and lowly. Neither the rich, the

learned, nor the priests; but women, common people, the humble, little

children. The grand distinguishing mark of the Messiah is:--"The poor

have the gospel preached to them." The idyllic and gentle nature of

Jesus here asserted its superiority. A great social revolution, in

which rank should be levelled, in which all authority should be brought

under, was his dream. The world will not believe him; the world will

kill him. But his followers will not be of this world. They will be a

small band of the lowly and humble, who will conquer the world by their

very humility. The sentiment which made the "world" the antithesis of

"Christian" has, in the mind of the Master, its full justification.

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CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS AT CAPERNAUM.

Haunted by a more and more imperious idea, Jesus, with a quiet

determination, henceforth follows the path his extraordinary genius and

the circumstances in which he lived have traced out for him. Till now,

he had only communicated his thoughts to a few persons who had been

secretly drawn towards him; henceforward his teaching was public and

sought after. He was now about thirty years of age. The small group of

hearers who went with him to John was undoubtedly increased, and

perhaps he had been joined by some of the disciples of John. It was

with this first nucleus of a church, on his return into Galilee, that

he boldly proclaimed the "glad tidings of the kingdom of God." This

kingdom was at hand; and it was he, Jesus, who was that "Son of Man,"

whom Daniel in his vision had beheld as the divine herald of the final

and supreme revelation.

We must remember that in the Jewish ideas, which were averse to art and

mythology, the simple form of man had a superiority over that of

Cherubim, and of the fantastic animals which the imagination of the

people, since it had been subjected to the influence of Assyria, had

ranged around the Divine Majesty. Already in Ezekiel, the Being seated

on the supreme throne, far above the monsters of the mysterious

chariot, the great revealer of prophetic visions, had the figure of a

man. In the book of Daniel, in the midst of the vision of the empires,

represented by animals, at the moment when the great judgment

commences, and when the books are opened, a Being, "like unto a Son of

Man," advances towards the Ancient of days, who confers on him the

power to judge the world, and to govern it for eternity. Son of Man, in

the Semitic languages, especially in the Aramean dialects, is a simple

synonym of man. But this chief passage of Daniel struck the mind; the

words, Son of Man, became, at least in certain schools, one of the

titles of the Messiah, regarded as judge of the world, and as king of

the new era about to be inaugurated. The application which Jesus made

of it to himself was therefore the proclamation of his Messiahship, and

the affirmation of the coming catastrophe in which he was to figure as

judge, clothed with the full powers which had been delegated to him by

the Ancient of days.

The success of the teaching of the new prophet was this time decisive.

A group of men and women, all characterised by the same spirit of

juvenile frankness and of simple innocence, adhered to him and said:

"Thou art the Messiah!" As the Messiah was to be the Son of David, he

was naturally conceded this appellation, which was synonymous with the

former. Jesus accepted it with pleasure, although it might cause him

some embarrassment, his origin being so well known. For himself, he

preferred the title of "Son of Man," an apparently humble title, but it

was connected directly with the Messianic hopes. That was the

appellation by which he designated himself, although, in his mouth, the

"Son of Man" was a synonym of the pronoun I, which he avoided using.

But no one ever thus addressed him, doubtless because the name in

question did not quite suit him, until the day of his coming advent.

Jesus' centre of action, at this period of his life, was the little

town of Capernaum--situated on the shore of the lake of Gennesareth.

The name of Capernaum, into which enters the word caphar, village,

seems to denote a small town of the old character, in contradistinction

to the great towns built according to the Roman fashion, such as

Tiberias. The name was so little known that Josephus, in one place in

his writings, takes it for the name of a fountain, the fountain having

more celebrity than the village close to it. Like Nazareth, Capernaum

had no history, and had not participated in the profane movement

favoured by the Herods. Jesus was much attached to this town, and made

it a second home. Shortly after his return, he made an unsuccessful

experiment upon Nazareth. One of his biographers na�vely remarks that

he could work no miracle there. The knowledge that was possessed of his

family--a family of little importance--destroyed his authority. People

could not regard as the son of David one whose brother, sister, and

sister-in-law they were seeing every day. Besides, it is to be remarked

that his family were very decidedly opposed to him, refusing point

blank to believe in his divine mission. At one time, his mother and his

brothers maintained that he had lost his senses, and, treating him as

an exalted idiot, attempted to put him under restraint. The Nazarenes,

much more violent, desired, it is said, to kill him by throwing him

down from a steep rock. Jesus pointedly retorted that this risk was

common to all great men, and applied to himself the proverb--"A prophet

hath no honour in his own country."

This check was far from discouraging him. He returned to Capernaum,

where he found the people much more favourably disposed to him, and

from there he organised a series of missions into the small surrounding

towns. The people of this beautiful and fertile country rarely

assembled together except on the Sabbath. This was the day he selected

for his teaching. Each town had then a synagogue or place of meeting.

It was a rectangular room, not very large, with a portico, decorated in

the Greek style. The Jews, not having any architecture of their own,

never attempted to give to those edifices an original design. The

remains of many ancient synagogues are still to be seen in Galilee.

They have all been constructed of large and good materials; but their

appearance is rather paltry, owing to the profusion of floral

ornaments, foliage, and network which characterise Jewish edifices. In

the interior there were benches, a pulpit for public reading, and a

recess for holding the sacred rolls. These edifices, which had nothing

of the temple about them, were the centres of Jewish life. There the

people assembled on the Sabbath for prayer, and to listen to the

reading of the Law and the Prophets. As Judaism, outside of Jerusalem,

had, properly speaking, no clergy, the first to arrive stood up and

read the lessons, parasch� et haphtara, of the day, adding thereto an

original, a personal midrasch, or commentary, in which he expounded his

own views. This was the origin of the "homily," whose finished models

we find in the smaller treatises of Philo. The auditors had a right to

interrupt and to question the reader; thus, the meeting degenerated

quickly into a kind of free discussion assembly. It had a president,

"elders," a hazzan--a recognised reader or apparitor, "deputies"-- a

sort of secretaries or messengers, who conducted the correspondence

between the different synagogues--a shammasch or sacristan. The

synagogues were thus really small independent republics; they had an

extended jurisdiction, guaranteed enfranchisement, exercised an

authority over the enfranchised. Like all the municipal corporations up

to an advanced period of the Roman Empire, they issued honorary

decrees, which had the force of law in the community, and pronounced

sentences of corporal punishment, which were executed ordinarily by the

hazzan.

With the marked activity of mind that has always characterised the

Jews, such an institution, despite the arbitrary restraints it

tolerated, could not fail to give rise to very animated discussions.

Thanks to the synagogues, Judaism has been able to pass unscathed

through eighteen centuries of persecution. These were so many little

separate worlds which at once conserved the national spirit, and

offered a ready field for intestine struggles. Within the walls of the

synagogues there was vented an enormous amount of passion. Disputes for

precedence were keen. To have a reserved seat in the first row was the

recompense for great piety, or the privilege of wealth which was the

most envied. On the other hand, the liberty accorded to every one, of

instituting himself reader and expounder of the sacred text, offered

wonderful facilities for the propagation of new ideas. This was one of

the great opportunities of Jesus, and the means he most often used in

laying down his doctrines. He entered the synagogue and stood up to

read; the hazzan gave him the scroll, which he unrolled, and from which

he read the lesson of the day. From this reading he evolved some points

bearing on his own ideas. As there were few Pharisees in Galilee, the

discussion did not assume that degree of animation and that acrimonious

tone of opposition which he would have encountered at the very first

step at Jerusalem. These good Galileans had never heard a discourse so

well adapted to their happy dispositions. They admired him, and they

encouraged him; they found that he spoke well, and that his reasonings

were convincing. He resolved the hardest questions without any

difficulty; the charm of his speech and of his person captivated these

ingenuous folk, whose minds had not yet been contaminated by the

pedantry of the doctors.

Thus, the authority of the young Master increased daily, and, as a

matter of course, the more people believed in him the more he believed

in himself. His sphere, however, was limited. It was confined to the

basin of the lake of Tiberias, and even here there was one locality

which he preferred. The lake is five or six leagues long and three or

four broad; though it has the appearance of an all but perfect oval, it

forms, from Tiberias to the mouth of the Jordan, a sort of gulf, whose

curve measures about three leagues. This was the field in which the

seed sown by Jesus found at length a congenial soil. Let us run over it

step by step, and endeavour to raise the mantle of aridity and of

desolation with which the demon of Islamism has covered it.

The first objects we encounter on leaving Tiberias are steep rocks, a

mountain which appears to roll into the sea. The mountains then

gradually recede, and a plain (El Ghoueir), almost level with the sea,

opens out. It is a charming grove of rich verdure, furrowed by the

plentiful waters which issue partly from a great round reservoir of

ancient construction (A�n Medawara). On the verge of this plain, which

is, strictly speaking, the country of Gennesareth, we find the

miserable village of Medjdel. At the opposite side of the plain (always

following the lake) we come upon the site of a town (Khan Minyeh) with

charming streams (A�n-et-Tin), a pretty road, narrow and deep, cut out

of the rocks, which Jesus certainly often traversed, and which serves

as an outlet into the plain of Gennesareth and to the northern slopes

of the lake. A mile from this place the traveller crosses a stream of

salt water (A�n Tabiga), issuing from several large springs a few yards

from the lake, and entering it through the middle of a dense mass of

verdure. After a further journey of forty minutes over the bare slopes

which stretch from A�n Tabiga to the mouth of the Jordan, we at last

find some huts and a collection of monumental ruins, called Tell-Houm.

Five small towns (which will be as long spoken of by mankind as Rome or

Athens) were in the time of Jesus scattered about the space which

extends from the village of Medjdel to Tell-Houm. Of these five towns,

Magdala, Dalmanutha, Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, the first

alone can to-day be identified with any certainty. The horrible village

of Medjdel has doubtless retained the name and the situation of the

little town that gave to Jesus his most faithful friend (Mary

Magdalene); Dalmanutha is altogether unknown. Possibly Chorazin was a

little more inland, on the north side. As for Bethsaida and Capernaum,

conjecture has placed them at Tell-Houm, A�n-et-Tin, Khan Minyeh, and

at A�n Medawara. In topography, as in history, it might indeed be said

that a profound design has sought to conceal the traces of the great

founder. It is doubtful whether, upon that wofully devastated soil, we

shall ever succeed in fixing the spots whence mankind would gladly

flock to kiss the imprints of his feet.

The lake, the horizon, the shrubs, the flowers, are all that remain of

the little canton, three or four leagues in extent, where Jesus began

his Divine work. The trees have totally disappeared. In this country,

where the vegetation was formerly so rich that Josephus saw in it a

kind of miracle--Nature, according to him, being pleased to bring forth

side by side the plants indigenous to cold countries, the products of

the torrid zones, the trees of temperate climates, laden all the year

round with flowers and fruits--in this country travellers are now

obliged to calculate a day beforehand the place where they will on the

morrow find a shady nook to sit down to lunch. The lake has become

deserted. A solitary, dilapidated barque now ploughs the waves,

formerly the scene of so much activity and of happiness. But the waters

are still smooth and transparent. The coast, formed of rocks and

pebbles, is indeed that of a small sea, not that of a mere pond, like

the banks of Lake Huleh. It is clean, neat, mudless, always beaten on

the same spot by the gentle waves. There are small clearly-defined

promontories, covered with rose laurels, tamarisks, and prickly caper

bushes; at two places especially, at the mouth of the Jordan near

Tarichea and at the edge of the plain of Gennesareth, there are

delightful parterres where the waves ebb and flow over masses of turf

and flowers. The A�n-Tabiga brook forms a little estuary, which is full

of pretty shells. Flocks of aquatic birds cover the lake. The sky is

dazzling with light. The empyrean blue waters, deeply embedded between

glittering rocks, appear, when viewed from the summit of the mountains

of Safed, to lie at the bottom of a cup of gold. To the north, the

snowy ravines of Hermon are traced in white lines upon the sky; to the

west, the high undulating plateaux of Gaulonitis and Per�a, absolutely

barren and clothed by the sun with a kind of velvety atmosphere, form

one compact mountain, or rather a long high terrace, which runs from

C�sarea-Philippi to the south as far as the eye can reach.

The heat upon the shore is, in summer, very oppressive. The lake

occupies a hollow which is over six hundred feet below the level of the

Mediterranean, and thus is subjected to the torrid conditions of the

Dead Sea. A luxurious vegetation tempered in former times these

excessive heats. One can hardly understand that a furnace such as the

whole lake basin now is, beginning with the month of May, had ever been

the scene of marvellous activity. Josephus, however, found the climate

very temperate. Undoubtedly, there has been here, as in the Campagna of

Rome, some change of climate, attributable to historical causes. It is

Islamism, and, above all, the Mussulman reaction against the crusades,

which has withered, as with a blast of death, the region preferred by

Jesus. The beautiful country of Gennesareth did not suspect that within

the brain of this peaceful wayfarer were concealed its destinies.

A dangerous compatriot indeed! He has ruined the country which had the

insuperable honour of giving him birth. Coveted by two rival

fanaticisms, after it had become the object of universal love or hate,

Galilee, as the price of its glory, has been changed into a desert. But

who will say that Jesus would have been happier if he had lived in

obscurity in his own village until he had reached the age of mature

manhood? and as for the ungrateful Nazarenes, who would ever think of

them if one of their number had not, at the risk of compromising the

future prosperity of their town, discovered his Father and proclaimed

himself the Son of God ?

At the time of which we speak, four or five large villages, situated

about half an hour's walk from one another, formed the little world of

Jesus. He seems never to have visited Tiberias, a heathen city, peopled

for the most part by Pagans, and the permanent residence of Antipas.

Sometimes, however, he wandered forth of his favourite region. For

instance, he went by boat along the eastern shore to Gergesa. In the

north, we find him at Paneas, or C�sarea-Philippi, at the foot of Mount

Hermon. Moreover, he finally made a journey to Tyre and Sidon, a

country which at that time must have been in an exceedingly flourishing

condition. In all these countries he was surrounded with Paganism. At

C�sarea he saw the celebrated grotto of Panium, which was considered

the source of the Jordan, and around which popular belief had entwined

many strange legends; he could admire the marble temple that Herod had

erected near there in honour of Augustus; he stopped probably before

the numerous votive statues erected to Pan, to the Nymphs, to the Echo

of the Grotto, which piety had already accumulated in this beautiful

spot. The rationalistic Jew, accustomed to look on strange gods for

deified men or for demons, had come to consider all these symbolical

representations as idols. The attractions of naturalistic worship,

which carried away the more sanguine races, did not move him. It is

undoubted that he had no knowledge of what the ancient sanctuary of

Melkarth at Tyre might still contain of a primitive worship more or

less analogous to that of the Jews. Paganism, which, in Phoenicia, had

raised on every hill a temple and a sacred grove--outward evidences of

great industry and vulgar riches--hardly elicited a smile from him.

Monotheism takes away the capacity for understanding Pagan religions. A

Mussulman suddenly introduced into polytheistic countries seems to have

no eyes. Certainly, Jesus learned little or nothing in these journeys.

He always came back to his beloved shores of Gennesareth. His thoughts

were centred there, and there he found faith and love.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS.

In this earthly paradise, which the great historic revolutions had, up

till then, affected but little, there lived a people in perfect harmony

with the country itself--active, honest, light and tender-hearted. The

lake of Tiberias is one of the best fishing-grounds in the world. Very

productive fisheries had been established, particularly at Bethsaida

and Capernaum, and had created a certain opulence. These fisherman

families formed a gentle and peaceable society, extending, by means of

numerous ties of relationship, over the whole lake region we have

named. Their comparatively idle lives left their imagination quite

free. The ideas concerning the kingdom of God found, amongst these

small coteries of good people, more credence than anywhere else.

Nothing that we call civilisation, in the Greek or worldly sense, had

yet penetrated into their midst. Nor had they any of our German and

Celtic earnestness; but although their goodness was often, perhaps,

wholly superficial, their manners were quiet, and they had a certain

amount of intelligence and shrewdness. We can imagine them as being

somewhat similar to the better population of the Lebanons, but with the

faculty, which the latter lacked, of producing great men. Jesus met

there his true kindred. He installed himself as one of them. Capernaum

became "his own city," and, in the midst of the little circle which

adored him, he forgot his sceptical brothers, ungrateful Nazareth and

its mocking incredulity.

One house especially, at Capernaum, offered him an agreeable asylum and

devoted disciples. It was that of two brothers, sons of one Jonas, who

was probably dead at the time when Jesus came to fix his abode upon the

banks of the lake. These two brothers were Simon, surnamed in

Syro-Chaldaic Cephas, in Greek Petros, "the Stone," or Peter, and

Andrew. Born at Bethsaida, they had established themselves at Capernaum

when Jesus entered on public life. Peter was married and had children,

and his mother-in-law lived with him Jesus loved that house, and

resided there constantly. Andrew appears to have been a disciple of

John the Baptist, and Jesus had probably become acquainted with him on

the banks of the Jordan. The two brothers, even at the time when it

seemed they were most occupied with their Master, continued always to

follow the calling of fishermen. Jesus, who delighted in playing upon

words, said sometimes that he would make them fishers of men. In fact,

among all his disciples, none of them were more firmly attached to him.

It would seem that John, like Andrew, had known Jesus in the school of

John the Baptist. The two families of Jonas and Zebedee appear to have

been very closely related.

Another family, that of Zabdia or Zebedee, a well-to-do fisherman and

the owner of several boats, extended to Jesus a hearty welcome. Zebedee

had two sons; James, who was the elder, and a younger son, John, who

later on was destined to play so important a part in the history of

infant Christianity. Both were zealous disciples. Salome, wife of

Zebedee, was also strongly attached to Jesus, and accompanied him till

his death.

The women, in fact, received him very gladly. He had in their society

those reserved manners which render a very agreeable union of ideas

between the two sexes possible. The separation of men and women which

has checked all refined development among the peoples of the East was,

undoubtedly, then, as in our day, much less rigorous in the country and

in the villages than in the large towns. Three or four devoted Galilean

women always accompanied the young Master, and disputed among

themselves for the pleasure of listening to him and of attending on him

in turn. These women imported into the new sect an enthusiastic

element, as well as something of the marvellous, the importance of

which was already felt. One of them, Mary Magdalene, who has made the

name of her poor native town so celebrated in the world, appears to

have been a very excitable person. In the language of the time, she had

been possessed of seven devils: that is to say, she had been afflicted

with nervous and apparently inexplicable maladies. Jesus, by his

unspotted and gentle loveliness, soothed that excitable organisation.

The Magdalene remained faithful to him even to Golgotha, and on the day

but one following his death played a most important part, for, as we

shall see later on, she was the principal medium through which was

established faith in the resurrection. Joanna, wife of Chuza, one of

the attendants of Antipas, Susannah, and others whose names are

unknown, accompanied him constantly and ministered unto him. Some of

them were rich, and, placing their fortunes at the disposal of the

young Prophet, put him in a position to live without having to follow

the occupation to which he had been brought up.

There were still many others who followed him habitually and recognised

him as their Master:-- one Philip of Bethsaida, Nathaniel, son of

Tolmai or Ptolemy, of Cana, perhaps a disciple of the first period; and

Matthew, probably the person who was the Xenophon of infant

Christianity. He had, according to tradition, been a publican, and, as

such, handled with greater facility the kalam than the others. It was

then probably that he began to think of writing those memoirs which are

the bases of that which we know of the teachings of Jesus. Others of

the disciples were Thomas or Didymus, who, though he doubted sometimes,

was warm-hearted, and a man of generous impulses; one Lebb�us or

Thaddeus; Simon the Zelot, who was, perhaps, a disciple of Judas the

Gaulonite, belonging to the party of the Kenaim, which was formed at

that time, and which was soon to play so great a part in the affairs of

the Jewish nation; lastly Joseph Barsaba, surnamed Justus; Matthias; a

personage conjectured to be named Ariston; Judas, son of Simon, of the

city of Kerioth, who was the black sheep of the faithful flock, and who

acquired such unenviable renown. He was, it appears, the only one of

them who was not a Galilean. Kerioth was a town at the extreme south of

the tribe of Judah, a day's journey beyond Hebron.

We have seen that the family of Jesus was in general little predisposed

towards him. Nevertheless, James and Jude, his cousins, by Mary

Cleophas, became from that time his disciples, and Mary Cleophas

herself was of the number of those persons who followed him to Calvary.

At this period we do not read of his mother being with him. It is only

after the death of Jesus that Mary becomes of great importance, and

that the disciples seek to attach her to themselves. It is then, too,

that the members of the family of the founder, under the appellation of

brothers of the Lord, form an influential group, which for long was at

the head of the Church at Jerusalem, and which after the sack of the

city sought refuge in Batanea. The simple fact of having been on terms

of intimacy with him became a decided advantage, just as, after the

death of Mahomet, the wives and daughters of the prophet, who were of

no account during his life-time, became great authorities.

In this friendly throng Jesus had avowedly his favourites, and a select

circle of confidants. The two sons of Zebedee, James and John, appear

to have taken the front rank in that small council. They were full of

fire and passion. Jesus had uniquely designated them "sons of thunder,"

on account of their excessive zeal, a zeal which, if it had had the

control of the thunder, would have made too frequent use of it. John,

in particular, appears to have been on a certain footing of familiarity

with Jesus. Perhaps the numerous and active school which later on

attached itself to the second of the sons of Zebedee, and who wrote, it

appears, his recollections in a manner which did not sufficiently

conceal the interests of the school, the records of which are to be

found in his recollections (souvenirs), has exaggerated the warm

attachment that the Master bore for him. But what is more significant

is, that in the synoptical Gospels, Simon Barjona, or Peter, James, son

of Zebedee, and John his brother, formed a sort of inner council, which

Jesus called together at certain times when he had reason to challenge

the faith and the intelligence of the others. It appears, besides, that

all three were associated as fishermen. The affection of Jesus for

Peter was deep. The character of that disciple --upright, sincere,

impulsive--pleased Jesus, who sometimes allowed himself to smile at his

eager manner. Peter, who was not much of a mystic, communicated to the

Master his simple doubts, his dislikes, his human weaknesses, with an

honest unreserve that recalls that of Joinville towards St. Louis.

Jesus, full of confidence and esteem, reproved him in a friendly

manner. As regards John, his youth, his exquisite tenderness of heart,

and his lively imagination, must have possessed a great charm. The

individuality of that extraordinary man did not develop itself till

afterwards. If he is not the author of the bizarre Gospel which bears

his name, and which, although the character of Jesus is misrepresented

in it in many particulars, embraces such precious teachings, it is at

least possible that he had been the occasion of it. Accustomed to

ponder over his recollections with the feverish restlessness of an

excited mind, he transformed his Master in wishing to describe him, and

has furnished to the skilful forgers the pretext of a narrative in the

compilation of which it does not appear that perfect good faith was the

guiding principle.

No hierarchy, strictly speaking, existed in this infant sect. They were

to call each other "brothers," and Jesus absolutely proscribed titles

of superiority, such as rabbi, "master," "father," he alone being

Master, and God alone being Father. The greatest was to be the servant

of the others. Nevertheless, Simon Barjona distinguished himself among

his fellows by a certain personal importance. Jesus lived with him and

discoursed from his boat; his house was the head-quarters of

evangelical preaching. In public, he was regarded as chief of the band,

and it was to him that the superintendent of the tax collectors

addressed himself for payment of the taxes due by the sect. Simon was

the first to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah. In a moment of

unpopularity, when Jesus demanded of his disciples: "Will ye also go

away?" Simon answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words

of eternal life." At various times Jesus conferred on him in his Church

a certain priority, and interpreted his Syriac surname of K�pha

(stone), wishing to signify thereby that he would make him the

corner-stone of the new building. At one time, he seems to promise him

"the keys of the kingdom of Heaven," and to accord him the right of

pronouncing upon earth decisions to be ratified always in eternity.

No doubt this preference given to Peter excited not a little jealousy.

In view of the future, particularly, was this jealousy kindled--in view

of that kingdom of God, in which all the disciples would be seated on

thrones, at the right and the left of the Master, in order to judge the

twelve tribes of Israel. They demanded of him who should then be the

nearest to the "Son of Man," acting in some sort as his first minister

and assessor. The two sons of Zebedee aspired to these positions.

Filled with such a thought they induced their mother, Salome, who one

day took Jesus apart, and solicited him for the two highest places for

her sons. Jesus evaded the request by repeating his habitual maxim that

he who exalteth himself shall be brought low, and that the kingdom of

heaven will be possessed by the meek and lowly. This created some stir

in the band: and there was ill-feeling manifested against James and

John. The same rivalry is frequently seen in the Gospel of John, in

which the writer is never tired of declaring himself to be "the beloved

disciple," and the one to whom the Master in dying confided the care of

his mother, who seeks to place himself near Simon Peter--nay, sometimes

before him--in the important situations in which the older evangelists

omitted to mention him.

Among the persons above mentioned, every one of them, of which we know

anything, commenced life as a fisherman. In a country of simple

manners, in which every one labours, this profession was not so

degrading as the declamations of preachers would have us believe, in

order the better to magnify the miraculous origins of Christianity. At

all events, none of them belonged to a socially elevated class. Matthew

or Levi, son of Alph�us, alone had been a publican. But those to whom

that name was given in Jud�a were not the farmers-general [of taxes],

who were men of exalted rank (always Roman patricians), and called at

Rome publicani. They were the agents of the farmers-general,

subordinate servants, simple customs officers. The great route from

Acre to Damascus, one of the most ancient routes in the world, which

traversed Galilee skirting the lake, increased greatly the number of

this class of employ�s there. At Capernaum, which was probably on the

line of the route, there was a numerous staff. That occupation has

never been popular; but amongst the Jews it was regarded as wholly

criminal. Taxation, which was new to them, was the symbol of their

vassalage. One school, that of Judas the Gaulonite, maintained that to

pay taxes was an act of Paganism. The customs officers, moreover, were

abhorred by the zealots of the Law. They were only spoken of in

conjunction with assassins, highway robbers, and people of infamous

character. Jews who accepted such positions were excommunicated and

rendered incapable of making a will; their money was accursed, and the

casuists forbade its being exchanged. These poor people, placed under

the ban of society, lived by themselves apart. Jesus accepted an

invitation to dine at the house of Levi, at which were present,

according to the language of the times, "many publicans and sinners."

That was a great scandal. In those proscribed houses one ran the risk

of meeting wicked society. We shall often see him in this

position--careless in regard to shocking the prejudices of

well-disposed persons, seeking to elevate the ignorant classes by means

of the orthodox, and thus exposing himself to the most cutting

reproaches of the zealots. Pharisaism, in addition to a sort of

external respectability, made infinite observances the test of

salvation. The true moralist--who proclaimed only that God required but

one thing--to wit, rectitude of sentiment--came to be welcomed by all

who were not imbued with the official hypocrisy.

Jesus owed these numerous conquests to an infinite charm of person and

of speech. One penetrating word, one look falling upon a simple

conscience, which was only waiting to be aroused, made such a one an

ardent disciple. Sometimes Jesus made use of an innocent artifice,

which was also employed at a later period by Joan of Arc. He pretended

to have an intimate knowledge of something affecting the person he

wished to gain over, or he would recall some circumstance dear to that

person's heart. It was in this manner, it is said, that he touched

Nathaniel, Peter, and the Samaritan woman. Dissimulating the real

source of his power--I mean his superiority to his surroundings--he

allowed it to be believed, in order to satisfy the aspirations of the

times--aspirations, moreover, which he fully shared--that a revelation

from on high had disclosed to him the secrets and the workings of

hearts. Everybody imagined that he moved in a higher sphere than that

of mankind. It was said that he spoke with Moses and Elias upon the

mountains; it was believed that in those moments of solitude the angels

came and ministered unto him, and established a supernatural

intercourse between him and heaven.

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CHAPTER X.

PREACHINGS ON THE LAKE.

Such was the group which, on the banks of the Lake of Tiberias,

surrounded Jesus. The aristocracy was represented there by a

customs-officer and the wife of a steward. The rest were composed of

fishermen and common people. They were extremely ignorant; their

intellect was feeble. They believed in apparitions and ghosts. Not one

particle of Greek culture had penetrated this chief circle. Moreover,

their Jewish instruction was very imperfect, but they were full of

heart and good will. The beautiful climate of Galilee rendered the

existence of these honest fishermen a perpetual enjoyment. They were a

true prelude to the kingdom of God--simple, good, happy--rocked gently

on their charming little lake, or sleeping at night on its banks. One

cannot realise the intoxication of a life which thus glides away under

the canopy of heaven; the feelings, now gentle, now ardent, produced by

this continual contact with nature; the dreams of those starry nights,

under the infinite expanse of the azure dome. It was during such a

night that Jacob, with his head resting on a stone, beheld in the stars

the promise of an innumerable posterity, and the mysterious ladder

reaching from earth to heaven, by which the Elohim ascended and

descended. At the time of Jesus heaven was not shut nor the earth grown

cold. The cloud still opened above the Son of Man; the angels ascended

and descended upon his head; visions of the kingdom of God were

reported everywhere, for the reason that man carried them in his heart.

The clear and mild eyes of those simple souls contemplated the universe

in its mythic origin. The world probably discovered its secret to the

divinely enlightened consciences of these happy children, whose purity

of heart merited that one day they should see God.

Jesus lived with his disciples almost always in the open air. Sometimes

he entered a boat and taught the multitudes assembled on the shore.

Sometimes he sat upon the mountains which skirted the lake, where the

air was so pure and the sky so luminous. The faithful band led thus a

gay and roaming life, receiving the inspirations of the Master fresh

from his lips. An innocent doubt was now and then started, some mildly

sceptical question raised. A smile or a look from Jesus sufficed to

silence the objection. At each step--in the passing cloud, in the

sprouting seed, in the ripening corn--they descried a sign of the

kingdom which was at hand. They believed they were about to see God,

and to become the masters of the world. Tears were turned into joy--it

was the advent of "peace on earth" (universelle consolation).

"Blessed," said the Master, "are the poor in spirit for theirs is the

kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be

comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for

they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain

mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed

are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which, are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for

theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3-10).

His preaching was unimpassioned and pleasing, redolent of nature and of

the perfume of the fields. He loved the flowers, and drew from them his

most charming lessons. The birds of the air, the sea, the mountains,

the frolics of children, were introduced by turn into his discourses.

His style had nothing of the Greek period about it, but resembled much

more the turn of the Hebrew parabolists, and in particular the

sentences of the Jewish doctors, his contemporaries, which are to be

found in the Pirke Aboth. His expositions were not very extended; they

formed a species of sorites after the manner of the Koran, which, being

put together, constituted later on those long discourses which were

written by Matthew. No note of transition linked together these diverse

fragments. In general, however, the same inspiration pervaded them all

and gave them unity. It was in the parable, especially, that the Master

excelled. Nothing in Judaism could have served him as a model for that

charming style. It was a creation of his. No doubt there are to be

found in Buddhist books some parables precisely of the same tone and of

the same form as the Gospel parables. But it is hard to allow that a

Buddhist influence had any effect on them. The spirit of meekness and

of deep sentiment which animated equally primitive Christianity and

Buddhism is sufficient to explain these similarities.

A total indifference to exterior things, and for vain superfluities as

regards manners and customs, which our colder climates render

imperative, were the outcome of the innocent and sweet lives passed in

Galilee. Cold climates, by bringing man and the outer world into

perpetual conflict, have caused too much store to be set by researches

after comfort and luxury. On the other hand, the climates which awaken

fewer desires are the countries of idealism and of poetry. The

accessories of life are there insignificant as compared to the pleasure

of living. The adornment of dwellings is there superfluous, for people

remain within doors as little as possible. The strong and

regularly-served food of less generous climates would be looked upon as

heavy and disagreeable. And, as for the luxury of clothing, what can

equal that which God has given to the earth and to the birds of the

air? Labour, in climates of this description, seems useless; what it

affords is not worth what it costs. The animals of the field are better

clothed than the most opulent of men, and they toil not. This contempt,

when it does not proceed from idleness, greatly assists to elevate the

souls of men, and inspired Jesus with some charming apologues. "Lay not

up for yourselves," said he, "treasures upon earth, where moth and rust

doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; for where your

treasure is, there will your heart be also. No man can serve two

masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he

will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and

Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what

ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye

shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than

raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they

reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are

ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add

one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither

do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his

glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe

the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the

oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we

drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? (For after all these

things do the Gentiles seek): for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye

have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God,

and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take

thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil

thereof" (Matt. vi. 19-34).

This essentially Galilean sentiment had a decisive influence upon the

destinies of the primitive sect. The happy band, trusting to its

Heavenly Father to supply its wants, held, as a fundamental principle,

the cares of life to be an evil, which extinguished in man the germ of

all that was good. Each day it asked of God the bread for the morrow.

Wherefore lay up treasure? The kingdom of God is at hand. "Sell that ye

have and give alms," said the Master; "provide yourselves bags which

wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not." What more

nonsensical than for one to heap up treasures for heirs one shall never

see! As an example of human folly, Jesus loved to cite the case of a

man who, when he had enlarged his barns and laid up goods for many

years, died before having enjoyed them. Brigandage, which was deeply

rooted in Galilee, added much force to this point of view. The poor,

who could not suffer from it, came to regard themselves as the favoured

of God, whilst the rich, whose possessions were so unsafe, were the

people actually disinherited. In our communities, established upon a

very rigorous idea in regard to property, the position of the poor is

wretched; they have not the right to a spot under the sun. There are no

flowers, no grass, no shade except for the one who possesses the earth.

In the Orient these are the gifts of God, which belong to no one. The

landlord has but a slender privilege; nature is the patrimony of all.

Further, primitive Christianity in those things was only following in

the footsteps of the Jewish sects who practised the monastic life. A

communistic element pervaded all those sects (Essenians, Therapeut�),

which were looked upon with disfavour equally by Pharisees and

Sadducees. The Messianic beliefs, which among the orthodox Jews wore a

wholly political aspect, had for the two sects just named a purely

social meaning. By means of an easy, regulated, and contemplative mode

of life, leaving to each individual freedom of action, these small

churches, which were supposed (not wrongly, perhaps) to be an imitation

of the neo-pythagorian institutes, thought to inaugurate on earth the

kingdom of Heaven. Dreams of a blessed life, founded upon the

fraternity of man and the worship of the true God, engrossed exalted

intellects, which resulted in bold and sincere attempts being made

everywhere, but to no purpose.

Jesus, whose relations with the Essenes it is very difficult to make

out (resemblances in history do not always imply relations), was in

this unquestionably at one with them. Community of goods was for some

time the rule in the new society. Avarice was the cardinal sin. Now, it

is necessary to remark that the sin of "avarice," against which moral

Christianity has been so severe, was then the mere attachment to

property. The first condition of being a perfect disciple of Jesus was

to sell one's property and give the proceeds to the poor. Those who

recoiled from that step were not admitted into the community. Jesus

often repeated that he who finds the kingdom of God must buy it at the

sacrifice of all his goods, and that in doing so he makes an

advantageous exchange. "Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto

treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth,

and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that

field. Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking

goodly pearls: who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, he

went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. xiii. 44-46). But,

alas! The inconveniences of this method were not long in making

themselves felt. A treasurer was required. Judas of Kerioth was chosen

for the office. Rightly or wrongly, he was accused of stealing from the

common purse; a great antipathy was raised against him--he came to a

bad end. Sometimes the Master, better versed in things pertaining to

Heaven than in those belonging to earth, taught a political economy yet

more remarkable. In a fanciful parable, a steward is praised for having

made friends amongst the poor at the expense of the rich, so that the

poor in turn might introduce him into the kingdom of Heaven. The poor,

in fact, having become the dispensers of this kingdom, would not admit

anyone to it unless those who had given them something. A discreet man,

thinking of the future, had, therefore, to seek to win their favour.

"And the Pharisees, also, who were covetous," says the Evangelist,

"heard all these things; and they derided him." Did they also hear the

remarkable parable which follows?--"There was a certain rich man, which

was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his

gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell

from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his

sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the

angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham

afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: and he cried and said, Father

Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of

his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this

flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime

receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now

he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Luke xvi. 19-25). What could

be more just? Later on this was denominated the parable of the "wicked

rich man." But it is purely and simply the parable of the rich man. He

is in hell because he is rich, because he does not give his goods to

the poor, because he dines well, whilst others at his door fare badly.

Finally, Jesus, in a less extravagant moment, does not insist on the

obligation of selling one's goods and of giving them to the poor,

except as suggesting perfection; but he nevertheless makes this

terrible declaration:--"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye

of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

In all this a very admirable sentiment dominated the mind of Jesus as

well as the minds of the band of joyous children which accompanied him,

and made him the true source of the peace of the soul for eternity, and

the grand consoler of life. In disengaging men from what he called "the

cares of this world," Jesus may have gone to excess, and struck at the

conditions essential to human society; but he founded that high

spirituality which has during centuries filled souls with joy in

passing through this vale of tears. He saw quite clearly that man's

inattention, his want of philosophy and morality, proceeded most often

from the amusements he indulges in, from the cares which assail him,

and which are multiplied beyond measure by civilisation. The Gospel, in

some sort, has been the supreme remedy for the weariness of ordinary

life, a perpetual sursum corda, a powerful distraction from the

miserable cares of the world, a gentle appeal like that of Jesus to the

ear of Martha: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about

many things; but one thing is needful." Thanks to Jesus, existence the

most gloomy, the most absorbed by sad and humiliating duties, has been

cheered by a glimpse of heaven! In our troublous civilisations, the

recollection of the free life led in Galilee is like perfume from

another world, like the "dew of Hermon," which has prevented barrenness

and vulgarity from pervading entirely the field of God.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD CONCEIVED AS THE INHERITANCE OF THE POOR.

These maxims--good for a country in which life is nurtured by the air

and the light, and that delicate communism of a band of children of

God, leaning with confidence on the bosom of their Father--might suit a

simple sect which was firmly of the belief that its dreams were about

to be realised. But it is evident that such principles did not satisfy

the whole of the society. Jesus, in fact, soon perceived that the

official world would on no account tolerate his kingdom. He therefore

took his resolution with extreme boldness. Putting the world, with its

unfeeling heart and its narrow prejudices, on one side, he turned

towards the common people. A great substitution of one class for

another must take place. The kingdom of God is made: first, for

children and for those who resemble them; second, for the outcast of

this world, victims of that social arrogance which repels the good

though humble man; third, for heretics and schismatics, publicans,

Samaritans, and Pagans of Tyre and Sidon. A forcible parable explained

and justified that appeal to the people. A king prepares a wedding

feast, and sends his servants to seek out those that are invited. Each

one of the invited excuses himself; some even maltreat the messengers.

The king thereupon takes firm measures. The fashionable people have

rejected his invitation. Be it so; he will have the first comers

instead, the people collected from the highways and byeways, the poor,

the beggars, the lame; it matters not; the room must be filled. "I say

unto you," said the king, "that none of those men which were bidden

shall taste of my supper."

Pure Ebionism, that is to say, the doctrine that the poor (ebionim)

alone shall be saved, that the kingdom of the poor is at hand, was,

hence, the doctrine of Jesus. "Woe unto you that are rich," said he,

"for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for

ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and

weep" (Luke vi. 24, 25). "Then said he also to him that bade him, When

thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy

brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also

bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a

feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt

be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be

recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv. 12-14). It is,

in an analogous sense, perhaps, that he often repeated, "Be good

bankers"--that is to say, make good investments for the kingdom of God,

in giving your wealth to the poor, conformably to the old proverb, "He

that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord" (Prov. xix. 17).

But this was no new fact. The most exalted democratic movement, the

memory of which has been preserved by mankind (the only one, also, that

has succeeded, for it alone has maintained itself in the domain of pure

thought) had agitated for a long time the Jewish race. The idea that

God is the avenger of the poor and of the weak against the rich and

powerful is found in every page of the books of the Old Testament. The

history of Israel is, of all histories, that in which the popular

notions have most certainly predominated. The prophets, the truest, and

in a sense the boldest tribunes, had thundered incessantly against the

great, and had established a close relation between the terms "rich,

impious, violent, wicked," on the one hand, and between "poor, gentle,

humble, pious," on the other. Under the Seleucid�, the aristocracy

having almost all apostatised and gone over to Hellenism, these

associations of ideas were but strengthened. The Book of Enoch contains

even fiercer maledictions against the world, the rich, and the powerful

than those of the Gospels. In this book luxury is held up as a crime.

"The Son of Man," in that fantastic apocalypse, dethrones kings, tears

them away from their voluptuous life and plunges them into hell. The

initiation of Jud�a into profane life, the recent introduction of an

exclusively worldly element of luxury and of comfort, provoked a

violent reaction in favour of patriarchal simplicity. "Woe unto you who

despise the humble dwelling and inheritance of your fathers? Woe unto

you who build your palaces with the sweat of others! Each stone, each

brick of which it is built is a sin." The word "poor" (ebion) had

become a synonym of "saint," of "friend of God." This was the

appellation the Galilean disciples of Jesus loved to give one another:

it was for a long time the designation of the Judaising Christians of

Batanea, and of the Hauran (Nazarenes, Hebrews) who remained faithful

to the language as well as to the earlier teachings of Jesus, and who

boasted of having amongst them the descendants of his family. At the

end of the second century, these devout sectaries, who had lived

outside the path of the great current that had carried away the other

churches, were treated as heretics (Ebionites), and in order to explain

their name a pretended heresiarch, Ebion, was invented.

We may see, at a glance, that this exaggerated taste for poverty could

not be very durable. It was one of those Utopian elements which always

mingle in the origin of great movements, and which time rectifies.

Thrown into the centre of human society, Christianity very easily

consented to receive rich men into her bosom, just as Buddhism,

exclusively monastical in its origin, soon began, as conversions

multiplied, to admit the laity. But the mark of origin is ever

preserved. Although it quickly passed away and was forgotten, Ebionism

left a leaven in the whole history of Christian institutions which has

not been lost. The collection of the principal Logia, or discourses, of

Jesus was made in the Ebionitish centre of Batanea. "Poverty" remained

an ideal from which the true followers of Jesus were never after

separated. To possess nothing was the truly evangelical state;

mendicancy became a virtue, a holy condition. The great Umbrian

movement of the thirteenth century, which is, among all the attempts at

religious construction, that which most resembles the Galilean

movement, took place entirely in the name of poverty. Francis d'Assisi,

the man who, more than any other, by his exquisite goodness, by his

delicate, pure, and tender communion with universal life, most

resembled Jesus, was a poor man. The mendicant orders, the innumerable

communistic sects of the middle ages (Pauvres de Lyon, B�gards,

Bons-Hommes, Fratricelles, Humili�s, Pauvres �vang�liques, &c.) grouped

under the banner of the "Everlasting Gospel," pretended to be, and in

fact were, the true disciples of Jesus. But even in this instance the

most impracticable dreams of the new religion were fruitful in results.

Pious mendicity, so impatiently borne by our industrial and

well-organised communities, was in its day, and in a suitable climate,

full of charm. It offered to a multitude of mild and contemplative

souls the only condition suited to them. To have made poverty an object

of love and desire, to have raised the beggar to the altar, and to have

sanctified the coat of the poor man, was a master-stroke which

political economy may not appreciate, but in the presence of which the

true moralist cannot remain indifferent. Humanity, in order to bear its

burden, needs to believe that it is not paid entirely by wages. The

greatest service which can be rendered to it is to repeat often that it

lives not by bread alone.

Like all great men, Jesus loved the people, and felt himself at home

with them. The Gospel, in his idea, is made for the poor; it is to them

he brings the glad tidings of salvation. All the despised ones of

orthodox Judaism were his favourites. Love of the people and pity for

its weakness (the sentiment of the democratic chief, who feels the

spirit of the multitude live in him, and recognises him as its natural

interpreter) shine forth at each moment in his acts and discourses.

The chosen flock presented, in fact, a very mixed character, and one

likely to astonish rigorous moralists. It counted in its fold men with

whom a Jew, respecting himself, would not have associated. Perhaps

Jesus found in this society, unrestrained by ordinary rules, more mind

and heart than in a pedantic and formal middle-class, proud of its

apparent morality. The Pharisees, exaggerating the Mosaic

prescriptions, had come to believe themselves defiled by contact with

men less strict than themselves; in their meals they almost rivalled

the senseless distinctions of caste in India. Jesus, despising these

miserable aberrations of the religious sentiment, loved to eat with

those who suffered on account of them; by his side at table were to be

found persons said to lead wicked lives, perhaps solely from the fact

that they did not share the follies of the false devotees. The

Pharisees and the doctors cried out against the scandal. "See," said

they, "with what men he eats!" Jesus returned apt answers, which

exasperated the hypocrites: "They that be whole need not a physician."

Or again: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of

them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go

after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it he

layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." Or again, "The Son of man is

come to save that which was lost." Or, once more: "I am not come to

call the righteous, but sinners." Lastly, that delightful parable of

the prodigal son, in which he who has fallen is represented as having a

sort of privilege of love over him who has always been just. Weak or

guilty women, surprised at so much that was charming, and perceiving,

for the first time, the great attractions of contact with virtue,

approached him freely. People were astonished that he did not repulse

them. "Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake

within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have

known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she

is a sinner." Jesus rejoined with the parable of a creditor who

forgives his debtors' unequal debts, and he did not hesitate to prefer

the lot of him to whom was remitted the greater debt. He appreciated

conditions of soul only in proportion to the love contained therein.

Women, with sorrowful hearts, and disposed on account of their sins to

feelings of humility, were nearer to his kingdom than ordinary natures,

who often are deserving of little credit for not having fallen. On the

other hand, we can conceive that these tender souls, finding in their

conversion to the sect an easy means of rehabilitation, would

passionately attach themselves to him.

Far from seeking to allay the murmurs raised by his disdain for the

social susceptibilities of the time, he seemed to take pleasure in

exciting them. Never did any one avow more loftily this contempt for

the "world," which is the first condition of great things and of great

originality. He pardoned the rich man only when the rich man, because

of some prejudice, was disliked by society. He much preferred people of

questionable lives and who had little consideration in the eyes of the

orthodox leaders. "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of

God before you. For John came unto you and ye believed him not: but the

publicans and the harlots believed him." We can understand how galling

the reproach of not having followed the good example set by prostitutes

would be to men making a profession of seriousness and of rigid

morality.

He had no outward affectation or any show of austerity. He did not

eschew pleasure; he went willingly to marriage feasts. One of his

miracles was performed to enliven a wedding feast at a small town. In

the East, weddings take place in the evening. Each person carries a

lamp; and the lights coming and going produce a very agreeable effect.

Jesus liked these gay and animated scenes and drew parables from them.

Such levity, compared with that of John the Baptist, gave offence. One

day, when the disciples of John and the Pharisees were observing the

fast, it was asked, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees

fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the

children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the

days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and

then they shall fast in those days." His sweet gaiety found expression

in lively reflections and amiable pleasantries "But whereunto," said

he, "shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in

the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped

unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have

not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say,

He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say,

Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and

sinners. But Wisdom is justified of her children."

He thus traversed Galilee in the midst of a continual feast. He rode on

a mule (which in the East is a good and safe mode of travelling), whose

large black eyes, shaded by long eye-lashes, give it an expression of

gentleness. His disciples sometimes disposed themselves around him with

a kind of rustic pomp, at the expense of their garments, which they

used as carpets. They placed them on the mule which carried him, or

spread them on the earth in his path. When he entered a house it was

considered a joy and a blessing. He halted in the villages and at the

large farms, where he received open hospitality. In the East, when a

stranger enters a house it becomes at once a public place. All the

village assembles there; the children invade it; they are put out by

the servants, but always return. Jesus could not suffer these innocent

auditors to be treated harshly; he caused them to be brought to him and

embraced them. The mothers, encouraged by such treatment, brought him

their children in order that he might touch them. Women came to pour

oil upon his head, and perfumes on his feet. His disciples sometimes

repulsed them as importunates; but Jesus, who loved ancient usages, and

everything that indicated simplicity of heart, rectified the ill done

by his too zealous friends. He protected those who wished to honour

him. In this way children and women came to adore him. The reproach of

alienating from their families these gentle creatures, always ready to

be led astray, was one of the most frequent charges of his enemies.

The nascent religion was thus in many respects confined to women and

children. The latter were like a young guard around Jesus for the

inauguration of his innocent royalty, and made him little ovations

which much pleased him, calling him "son of David," crying Hosanna, and

bearing palms around him. Jesus, like Savonarola, perhaps made them

serve as instruments for pious missions; he was very glad to see these

young apostles, who did not compromise him, rush to the front and give

him titles which he dared not take himself. He let them speak, and when

he was asked if he heard, he replied evasively that the praise which

fell from young lips was the most agreeable to God.

He lost no opportunity of repeating that the little ones are sacred

beings, that the kingdom of God belongs to children, that we must

become children to enter there, that we ought to receive it as a child,

that the heavenly Father hides his secrets from the wise, and reveals

them to babes. The notion of disciples in his mind is almost synonymous

with that of children. Once, when they had one of those quarrels for

precedence which were not uncommon, Jesus took a little child, placed

him in their midst, and said to them, "Whosoever therefore shall humble

himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of

heaven."

It was infancy, in fact, in its divine freshness, in its simple

bewilderments of joy, which took possession of the earth. Every one

believed that the kingdom so much desired might appear at any moment.

Each one already saw himself seated on a throne beside the master. They

divided the places amongst themselves; they strove to reckon the

precise date of its advent. The latter was called the "Glad Tidings;"

the doctrine had no other name. An old word, "paradise," which the

Hebrew, like all the languages of the East, had borrowed from the

Persian, and which at first designated the parks of the Ach�menid�

kings, summed up the general dream; a delightful garden, in which the

charming life led here below would be continued for ever. How long did

this intoxication last? We do not know. No one, during the course of

this magical apparition, measured time any more than we measure a

dream. Duration was suspended; a week was as an age. But, whether it

filled years or months, the dream was so beautiful that humanity has

lived upon it ever since, and it is still our consolation to gather its

weakened perfume. Never did so much joy fill the bosom of man. For one

moment humanity, in the most vigorous effort she ever made to rise

above the world, forgot the leaden weight which pressed her to earth

and the sorrows of the life below. Happy the one who has been able to

behold this divine unfolding, and to enjoy, though but for one day,

this unexampled illusion! But more happy still, Jesus would say to us,

is he who, freed from all illusion, shall reproduce in himself the

celestial vision, and, with no millenarian dream, no chimerical

paradise, no signs in the heavens, but by the uprightness of his

motives and the poetry of his soul, shall be able to create anew in his

heart the true kingdom of God!

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CHAPTER XII.

EMBASSY TO JESUS FROM JOHN IN PRISON--DEATH OF JOHN--THE RELATIONS OF HIS

SCHOOL WITH THAT OF JESUS.

Whilst joyous Galilee was celebrating in feasts the coming of the

well-beloved, the disconsolate John, in his prison of Machero, was

pining away with expectation and desire. The success of the young

master whom he had seen some months before as his auditor had reached

him. It was said that the Messiah predicted by the prophets, he who was

to re-establish the kingdom of Israel, had come, and was making known

his presence in Galilee by marvellous works. John wished to inquire

into the truth of this rumour, and, as he was allowed to communicate

freely with his disciples, he chose two of them to go to Jesus in

Galilee.

The two disciples found Jesus at the height of his fame. The appearance

of happiness which reigned around him surprised them. Accustomed to

fasts, to earnest prayer, and to a life full of aspirations, they were

astonished to see themselves transported suddenly into the midst of

welcome rejoicings. They told Jesus their message: "Art thou he that

should come? Or do we look for another?" Jesus, who from that time

hesitated no longer respecting his peculiar character as Messiah,

enumerated to them the works which ought to characterise the coming of

the kingdom of God--such as the healing of the sick, and the glad

tidings of a salvation near at hand preached to the poor. He had done

all these works. "And blessed is he," said Jesus, "whosoever shall not

be offended in me."

We do not know whether this answer reached John the Baptist, or into

what temper it threw the austere ascetic. Did he die consoled and

certain that he whom he had announced already lived, or did he retain

some doubts as to the mission of Jesus? There is nothing to inform us.

Seeing, however, that his school continued to exist a considerable time

side by side with the Christian churches, we are constrained to believe

that, notwithstanding his regard for Jesus, John did not regard him as

the one who was to realise the divine promises. Death came, moreover,

to end his perplexities. The untamable freedom of the ascetic was to

crown his restless and troubled career by the only end which was worthy

of it.

The indulgence which Antipas had at first shown towards John was not of

long duration. In the conversations which, according to the Christian

tradition, John had had with the tetrarch, he did not cease repeating

to him that his marriage was unlawful, and that he ought to send

Herodias away. We can easily imagine the hatred which the

grand-daughter of Herod the Great must have engendered against this

importunate counsellor. She only waited an opportunity to ruin him.

Her daughter, Salome, by her first marriage, and like her ambitious and

dissolute, entered into her designs. That year (probably the year 30)

Antipas was at Machero on the anniversary of his birthday. Herod the

Great had caused to be constructed in the interior of the fortress a

magnificent palace, in which the tetrarch frequently resided. He gave a

great feast there, during which Salome executed one of those character

dances which were not considered in Syria as unbecoming a distinguished

person. Antipas, being greatly delighted, asked the dancer what she

most desired, who, at the instigation of her mother, replied, "Give me

here John Baptist's head in a charger." Antipas was sorry, but he could

not refuse. A guard took the charger, went and cut off the head of the

prisoner, and brought it.

The disciples of the Baptist obtained his body and placed it in a tomb.

The people were much offended. Six years later, H�reth having attacked

Antipas, in order to recover Machero and avenge the dishonour of his

daughter, Antipas was completely beaten; and his defeat was generally

regarded as a punishment for the murder of John.

The news of John's death was brought to Jesus by the disciples of the

Baptist. The last step John had taken in regard to Jesus had succeeded

in establishing between the two schools the most intimate bonds. Jesus,

fearing an increase of ill-will on the part of Antipas, took the

precaution to retire to the desert. Many people followed him thence.

Thanks to a strict frugality, the holy band succeeded in living there,

and in this there was naturally seen a miracle From that time Jesus

always spoke of John with redoubled admiration. He declared

unhesitatingly that he was more than a prophet, that the Law and the

ancient prophets had force only until he came, that he had abrogated

them, but that the kingdom of heaven in turn had superseded him. In

fine, he assigned him a special place in the economy of the Christian

mystery, which constituted him the link of union between the Old

Testament and the advent of the new reign.

The prophet Malachi, whose opinion in this matter was soon brought to

bear, had persistently declared a precursor of the Messiah, who was to

prepare men for the final renovation, a messenger who should come to

make straight the paths before the elected of God. This messenger was

none other than the prophet Elias, who, according to a widely-spread

belief, was soon to descend from heaven, whither he had been carried,

in order to prepare men by repentance for the great advent, and to

reconcile God with His people. Sometimes they associated with Elias

either the patriarch Enoch, to whom for one or two centuries they had

been attributing high sanctity; or Jeremiah, whom they regarded as a

sort of protecting genius of the people, constantly occupied in praying

for them before the throne of God. This idea, of two of the old

prophets rising again, to act as precursors to the Messiah, is

discovered in so striking a form in the doctrine of the Parsees that we

feel much inclined to believe that it comes from that source. Be that

as it may, it formed at the time of Jesus an integral portion of the

Jewish theories in regard to the Messiah. It was admitted that the

appearance of "two faithful witnesses," clothed in garments of

repentance, would be the preamble of the great drama about to be

unfolded, to the astonishment of the universe.

We can understand that, with these ideas, Jesus and his disciples could

not hesitate about the mission of John the Baptist. When the scribes

raised the objection that it could not yet be a question of the

Messiah, inasmuch as Elias had not yet appeared, they replied that

Elias had come, that John was Elias raised from the dead. By his manner

of life, by his opposition to the established political authorities,

John recalled, in fact, that strange figure in the ancient history of

Israel. Nor was Jesus silent in regard to the merits and excellences of

his forerunner. He said that among the children of men none greater had

been born. He vehemently blamed the Pharisees and the doctors for not

having accepted his baptism, and for not being converted at his voice.

The disciples of Jesus were faithful to these principles of their

master. Respect for John was an unquestioned tradition during the whole

of the first Christian generation. He was supposed to be a relative of

Jesus. His baptism was regarded as the most important fact, and, in

some sort, as the prefatory obligation of all gospel history. In order

to establish the mission of the son of Joseph upon testimony admitted

by all, it was stated that John, at the first sight of Jesus,

proclaimed him the Messiah; that he recognised himself his inferior,

unworthy to unloose the latchets of his shoes; that he refused at first

to baptize him, and maintained that it was he who ought to be baptized

by Jesus. These were exaggerations, which are sufficiently refuted by

the doubtful form of John's last message. But, in a more general sense,

John remains in the Christian legend that which he was in reality,--the

austere forerunner, the gloomy preacher of repentance before the joy on

the arrival of the bridegroom, the prophet who announces the kingdom of

God and dies before beholding it. This giant in primitive Christianity,

this eater of locusts and wild honey, this rugged redresser of wrongs,

was the absinthe which prepared the lip for the sweetness of the

kingdom of God. His beheading by Herodias inaugurated the era of

Christian martyrs; he was the first witness for the new faith. The

worldly, who regarded him their true enemy, could not permit him to

live; his mutilated corpse, extended on the threshold of Christianity,

indicated the bloody path in which so many others were to follow.

The school of John did not die with its founder. It existed some time

distinct from that of Jesus, and from the first on good terms with the

latter. Many years after the death of the two masters, people were

still baptized with the baptism of John. Certain persons were members

of the two schools at the same time,--for example, the celebrated

Apollos, the rival of St. Paul (about the year 54), and a goodly number

of the Christians of Ephesus. Josephus entered in the year 53 the

school of an ascetic named Banou, who presents a striking resemblance

to John the Baptist, and who was perhaps of his school. This Banou

lived in the desert, and was clothed with the leaves of trees. His only

nourishment was wild plants and fruits, and he baptized himself

frequently, both day and night, in cold water, in order to purify

himself. James, who was called the "brother of the Lord," practised a

similar asceticism. Later, about the year 80, Baptism was in conflict

with Christianity, especially in Asia Minor. The author of the writings

attributed to John the evangelist appears to combat it in an indirect

manner. One of the Sibylline poems seems to proceed from this school.

As to the sects of Hemerobaptists, Baptists, and Elchasa�tes (Sabiens,

Mogtasila of the Arabian writers), who in the second century filled

Syria, Palestine, and Babylonia, and whose representatives still exist

in our days among the Mendaites, called "Christians of St. John," they

had the same origin as the movement of John the Baptist rather than

being an authentic descent from him. The true school of John, half

Christian in its character, became a small Christian sect, and died out

in obscurity. John had distinctly foreseen the destiny of the two

schools. If he had yielded to a pitiful rivalry, he would to-day be

forgotten in the crowd of sectaries of his time. By his

self-abnegation, he has attained a glorious and unique position in the

religious pantheon of humanity.

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CHAPTER XIII.

FIRST ATTEMPTS ON JERUSALEM.

Jesus went almost every year to Jerusalem for the feast of the

passover. The particulars of these journeys are meagre, for the

synoptics do not speak of them, and the remarks in the fourth Gospel

are on this point very confused. It was, it would seem, in the year 31,

and certainly after the death of John, that the most important of the

visits of Jesus to Jerusalem took place. Several of the disciples

followed him. Although Jesus attached at that time little value to the

pilgrimage, he conformed himself to it in order not to offend Jewish

opinion, with which he had not yet broken. These journeys besides were

essential to his design; for he felt already that, in order to play a

leading part, he must go from Galilee, and attack Judaism in its

stronghold, which was Jerusalem.

The little Galilean community was here by no means at home. Jerusalem

was then nearly what it is to-day, a city of pedantry, acrimony,

disputes, hatreds, and littleness of mind. Its fanaticism was extreme,

and religious seditions were very frequent. The Pharisees were

dominant; the study of the Law, pushed to the most insignificant

minutiae, and reduced to questions of casuistry, was the only study.

This exclusively theological and canonical culture contributed in

nowise to refine the intellect. It was something analogous to the

barren doctrine of the Mussulman fakir, to that empty science debated

round the mosques, which is a great expenditure of time and a pure

waste of dialectical skill, without aiding the right discipline of the

mind. The theological education of the modern clergy, although very

dry, can give us no idea of this, for the Renaissance has introduced

into all our teachings, even the most extravagant, something of belles

lettres and of method, the consequence of which is that scholasticism

has taken a taint, more or less, of the humanities. The science of the

Jewish doctor, of the sofer, or scribe, was purely barbarous, absurd

beyond measure, and stripped of all moral element. To cap the evil, it

filled with ridiculous pride those who had wearied themselves in

acquiring it. Proud of the pretended knowledge which had cost him so

much trouble, the Jewish scribe had the same contempt for Greek culture

as the learned Mussulman of our time has for European civilisation, as

the old catholic theologian had for the knowledge of men of the world.

The tendency of this scholastic culture was to turn the mind against

all that was refined, to create esteem only for those childish

difficulties on which they had wasted their lives, and which were

regarded as the natural occupation of persons making a profession of

seriousness.

This odious society could not but weigh very heavily on the tender and

susceptible northern mind. The contempt of the Jerusalemites for the

Galileans rendered the separation still more complete. In that

beautiful temple, the object of all their desires, they often only

experienced insult. A verse of the pilgrim's psalm, "I had rather be a

doorkeeper in the house of my God," seemed expressly made for them. A

contemptuous priest-hood laughed at their simple devotion, just as

formerly in Italy the clergy, familiarised with the sanctuaries,

witnessed coldly and almost jestingly the fervour of the pilgrim

arriving from afar. The Galileans spoke a rather corrupt dialect, their

pronunciation was faulty; they confounded diverse aspirates which led

to mistakes that were much laughed at. In religion, they were regarded

as ignorant and not very orthodox; the expression "foolish Galileans"

had become proverbial. It was believed (not without reason) that they

were not of pure Jewish blood, and it was held, as a matter of course,

that Galilee could not produce a prophet. Placed thus on the confines

of Judaism, nay almost outside of it, the poor Galileans had only one

badly interpreted passage in Isaiah on which to build their hopes.

"Land of Zebulon, and land of Naphtali, way of the sea, Galilee of the

nations! The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light:

they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the

light shined." The reputation of the native city of Jesus was

particularly bad. It was a popular proverb, "Can there any good thing

come out of Nazareth?"

The great barrenness of nature in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem must

have added to the dislike Jesus had for the place. The valleys are

without water; the soil is arid and stony. Casting the eye into the

valley of the Dead Sea, the view is somewhat striking; elsewhere it is

monotonous. The hill of Mizpeh, around which clusters the most ancient

historical remembrances of Israel, alone relieves the eye. The city

presented, at the time of Jesus, nearly the same aspect that it does

now. It had very few ancient monuments, for until the time of the

Asmoneans the Jews had remained strangers to all the arts. John

Hyrcanus had begun to embellish it, and Herod the Great had made it one

of the most magnificent cities of the East. The Herodian constructions,

by their grand character, perfection of execution, and beauty of

material, may dispute superiority with the most finished works of

antiquity. A great number of superb tombs, displaying original taste,

were erected at the same time in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The

style of these monuments was Grecian, but appropriate to the customs of

the Jews, and considerably modified in accordance with their

principles. The ornamental sculptures of the human figure which the

Herods had sanctioned, to the great disgust of the purists, were

discarded and superseded by floral decorations. The taste of the

ancient inhabitants of Phoenicia and Palestine for monoliths cut out of

the solid rock seemed to be revived in these singular tombs cut in the

rock, and in which Grecian orders are so strangely applied to an

architect of troglodytes. Jesus, who regarded works of art as a pompous

display of vanity, viewed these monuments with displeasure. His

absolute spiritualism, and his settled conviction that the form of the

old world was about to pass away, left him only a taste for things

belonging to the heart.

The temple, at the time of Jesus, was quite new, while its exterior

works were not yet completed. Herod had begun its reconstruction in the

year 20 or 21 before the Christian era, in order to make it uniform

with his other edifices. The main body of the temple was finished in

eighteen months; the porticoes took eight years; and the accessory

portions were raised slowly, and were only finished a short time before

the taking of Jerusalem. Jesus probably saw the work progressing, not

without a degree of secret vexation. These hopes of a long future

seemed an insult to his approaching advent. Clearer-sighted than the

unbelievers and the fanatics, he foresaw that these superb edifices

would have but a short duration.

The temple, nevertheless, formed a marvellously imposing whole, of

which the present haram, in spite of its beauty, can scarcely give us

any idea. The courts and the porticoes served as the daily rendezvous

for a considerable gathering, so much so that this great space was at

once temple forum, tribunal, and university. All the religious

discussions of the Jewish schools, all the canonical instruction, even

the legal processes and civil causes, all the activity of the nation,

in short, was concentrated there. It was a place where arguments were

perpetually clashing, a battle-field of disputes, resounding with

sophisms and subtle questions. The temple thus resembled much a

Mahometan mosque. At this period the Romans treated all strange

religions with the greatest respect, provided they were kept within

proper limits, and carefully refrained from entering the sanctuary;

Greek and Latin inscriptions marked the point up to which those who

were not Jews were permitted to advance. But the tower of Antonia, the

headquarters of the Roman forces, commanded the whole enclosure, and

enabled them to see all that passed therein. The guarding of the temple

belonged to the Jews; its superintendence was entrusted to a captain,

who caused the gates to be opened and shut, prohibited any one from

crossing the enclosure with a stick in his hand, or with dusty shoes,

or when carrying parcels, or to take a near cut. They were especially

scrupulous in watching that no one entered within the inner gates in a

state of legal impurity. The women had an entirely separate court.

It was in the temple that Jesus passed his days, whilst he remained at

Jerusalem. The period of the feasts attracted to the city extraordinary

affluence. Lodged in parties of ten to twenty persons in one chamber,

the pilgrims invaded every quarter and lived in that huddled state in

which Orientals delight. Jesus was lost in the crowd, and his poor

Galileans who grouped around him were of small account. He probably

felt that there he was in a hostile world which would receive him only

with disdain. Everything he saw he disapproved of. The temple, like all

much-frequented places of devotion, presented a not very edifying

spectacle. The service of this entailed a multitude of repulsive enough

details, especially of mercantile operations, in consequence of which

actual shops were established within the sacred enclosure. There people

sold beasts for the sacrifices; there one found tables for the exchange

of money; at times it seemed as if one were in a bazaar. The inferior

officers of the temple fulfilled, doubtless, their functions with the

irreligious vulgarity characteristic of the sacristans of all ages.

This profane and indifferent air in the handling of holy things wounded

the religious sentiment of Jesus, sometimes leading him to excess. He

said that they had made the house of prayer a den of thieves. One day,

in fact, it is said, that, carried away by his anger, he scourged the

vendors with a "scourge of small cords," and overturned their tables.

In general, he cared little for the temple. The worship that he had

conceived for his Father had nothing to do with scenes of butchery. All

these old Jewish institutions displeased him, and he was pained in

being obliged to conform to them. Thus, neither the temple nor its site

inspired pious sentiments in the bosom of Christianity, except in the

case of the Judaising Christians. The true proselytes had an aversion

to this ancient sanctuary. Constantine and the first Christian emperors

left the Pagan constructions of Hadrian standing there. It was the

enemies of Christianity, such as Julian, who remembered the temple.

When Omar entered Jerusalem, the site of the temple was designedly

polluted in hatred of the Jews. It was Islamism, that is to say, a sort

of resurrection of Judaism, in its most Semitic form, which rendered it

honours The place has always been antichristian.

The pride of the Jews completed the discontent of Jesus, and rendered

his sojourn in Jerusalem painful. In proportion as the great ideas of

Israel ripened, the priesthood were debased. The institution of

synagogues had given to the interpreter of the Law, to the doctor, a

great superiority over the priest. There were no priests except at

Jerusalem, and even there, reduced to entirely ritual functions,

almost, like our parish priests, excluded from preaching, they were

surpassed by the orator of the synagogue, the casuist, the sofer or

scribe, though the latter was but a layman. The celebrated men of the

Talmud were not priests; they were learned men according to the ideas

of the time. The high priesthood of Jerusalem held, it is true, a very

elevated rank in the nation; but it was by no means at the head of the

religious movement. The sovereign pontiff, whose dignity had already

been degraded by Herod, became more and more a Roman functionary, who

was frequently removed in order that others might share the profits of

the office. Opposed to the Pharisees, who were important lay zealots,

the priests were almost all Sadducees, that is to say, members of that

unbelieving aristocracy which had been formed around the temple, lived

by the altar, though they saw the vanity of it. The sacerdotal caste

was separated to such a degree from the national sentiment and from the

great religious movement which urged the people on, that the name of

"Sadducee" (sadoki), which at first simply designated a member of the

sacerdotal family of Sadok, had become synonymous with "Materialist"

and with "Epicurean."

An element worse still had begun, since the reign of Herod the Great,

to corrupt the high-priesthood. Herod having fallen in love with

Mariamne, daughter of a certain Simon, son of Bo�thus of Alexandria,

and having wished to marry her (about the year 28 J.C.), saw no other

means of ennobling his father-in-law and raising him to his own rank

than by making him high-priest. This intriguing family remained

masters, almost without interruption, of the sovereign pontificate for

thirty-five years. Closely allied to the reigning family, it did not

lose the office until after the deposition of Archelaus, and recovered

it (the year 42 of our era) after Herod Agrippa had for some time

recommenced the work of Herod the Great. Under the name of Bo�thusim, a

new sacerdotal nobility was formed, which was very worldly, being

little devotional, and closely allied to the Sadokites. The Bo�thusim,

in the Talmud and the rabbinical writings, are depicted as a kind of

unbelievers, and always reproached as Sadducees. From all this there

resulted a kind of "court of Rome" around the temple, living by

politics, little carried away by excess of zeal, even rather fearing

them, not wishing to hear of holy personages or of innovators, for this

"court" derived profit from the established routine. These epicurean

priests had not the violence of the Pharisees; they only wished for

quietness; it was their moral indifference, their cold irreligion,

which revolted Jesus. Although quite distinct, the priests and the

Pharisees were thus confounded in his antipathies. But being a

stranger, and without influence, he was long compelled to restrain his

displeasure within himself, and only to communicate his sentiments to

the intimate friends who accompanied him.

Before his last stay, much more protracted than any he had made at

Jerusalem, and which was terminated by his death, Jesus endeavoured,

however, to make himself heard. He preached; people spoke of him; and

they conversed upon certain acts of his which were looked upon as

miraculous. But from all that there resulted neither an established

church at Jerusalem, nor a group of Jerusalemite disciples. The

charming lawgiver, who forgave everyone provided they but loved him,

could not find much response in this sanctuary of vain disputes and of

obsolete sacrifices. The sole result was that he formed some valuable

friendships, the advantage of which he reaped afterwards. He does not

appear at that time to have made the acquaintance of the family of

Bethany, which, amidst the trials of the latter months of his life,

brought him so much consolation. But perhaps he had relations with that

Mary, mother of Mark (whose house became some years later the

rendezvous of the apostles), and with Mark himself. But very early he

attracted the attention of a certain Nicodemus, a rich Pharisee, a

member of the Sanhedrim, and a man highly considered in Jerusalem. This

man, who appears to have been upright and sincere, felt himself drawn

towards the young Galilean. Not wishing to compromise himself, he came

to see Jesus by night, and had a long conversation with him. He

undoubtedly preserved a favourable impression of him, for later on he

defended Jesus against the prejudices of his colleagues, and, at the

death of Jesus, we find him tending with pious care the corpse of the

master. Nicodemus did not become a Christian; he had too much regard

for his position to take part in a revolutionary movement which as yet

numbered no men of note amongst its adherents. But he evidently had

much friendship for Jesus, and rendered him service, though powerless

to rescue him from a death which even at this period was all but

decreed.

As to the celebrated doctors of the time, Jesus does not appear to have

had any connection with them. Hillel and Shammai were dead; the

greatest authority of the day was Gamaliel, grandson of Hillel. He had

a liberal mind, was a man of the world, open to secular opinions, and

rendered tolerant by his intercourse with good society. Differing from

the very strict Pharisees, who walked veiled or with closed eyes, he

gazed even upon Pagan women. The sectaries excused this, as well as a

knowledge of Greek in him, because he had access to the court. After

the death of Jesus he expressed very moderate views in regard to the

new sect. St. Paul sat at his feet, but it is highly improbable that

Jesus ever entered his school.

One idea, at least, which Jesus carried away from Jerusalem, and which

henceforth appeared to be rooted in his mind, was that there was no

union possible between him and the ancient Jewish religion. The

abolition of the sacrifices, which had caused him so much disgust, the

suppression of an impious and haughty priesthood, and, in a general

sense, the abrogation of the Law, appeared to him an absolute

necessity! From this moment he is no longer a Jewish reformer, but it

is as a destroyer of Judaism that he poses. Some advocates of the

Messianic notions had already admitted that the Messiah would bring a

new law, which should be common to all people. The Essenes, who were

scarcely Jews, appear also to have been indifferent to the temple and

to the Mosaic observances. But these were only isolated or unavowed

instances of boldness. Jesus was the first who dared to say that from

his time, or rather from that of John, the Law was abolished. If

sometimes he used more guarded terms it was in order not to shock too

violently existing prejudices. When he was driven to extremities he

lifted the veil entirely, and declared that the Law had no longer any

force. On this subject he used striking comparisons. "No man putteth a

piece of new cloth into an old garment, neither do men put new wine

into old bottles." Herein lies his chief characteristic as teacher and

originator. The temple excluded all except Jews from its enclosure by

scornful placards. Jesus did not approve this. That narrow, hard, and

uncharitable Law was only made for the children of Abraham. Jesus

maintained that every well-disposed man, every man who received and

loved him, was a son of Abraham. The pride of blood appeared to him the

chief enemy that he had to combat. In other words, Jesus was no longer

a Jew. He was in the highest degree revolutionary; he called all men to

a worship founded solely on the fact of their being children of God. He

proclaimed the rights of man, not the rights of the Jew; the religion

of man, not the religion of the Jew; the deliverance of man, not the

deliverance of the Jew. Ah! how far removed was this from a Gaulonite

Judas or a Matthias Margaloth, preaching revolution in the name of the

Law! The religion of humanity was thus established, not upon blood, but

upon the heart. Moses was superseded, the temple was rendered useless,

and was irrevocably condemned.

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CHAPTER XIV.

RELATIONS OF JESUS WITH THE PAGANS AND THE SAMARITANS.

As a consequence of these principles, Jesus contemned all religion

which was not of the heart. The foolish practices of the devotees, the

exterior rigorism, which trusted to formality for salvation, had in him

a mortal enemy. He cared little for fasting. He preferred forgiving an

injury to sacrifice. The love of God, charity and reciprocal

forgiveness, were his whole law. Nothing could be less priestly. The

priest, by virtue of his office, ever advocates public sacrifice, of

which he is the appointed minister; he discourages private prayer,

which is a means of dispensing with his office. We should seek in vain

in the Gospel for one religious rite recommended by Jesus. Baptism to

him was only of secondary importance; and as to prayer, he prescribes

nothing, except that it must come from the heart. As is always the

case, many thought to substitute the good-will of feeble souls for

genuine love of goodness, and imagined they could gain the kingdom of

heaven by saying to him, "Rabbi, Rabbi," but he rebuked them, and

proclaimed that his religion consisted in doing good. He often quoted

the passage in Isaiah, "This people honour me with their lips, but

their heart is far from me."

The Sabbath was the principal point upon which was raised the whole

edifice of Pharisaic scruples and subtleties. This ancient and

excellent institution had become a pretext for the miserable disputes

of casuists, and a source of a thousand superstitious beliefs. It was

believed that nature observed it; all intermittent sources were

accounted "Sabbatical." This was, moreover, the point upon which Jesus

most delighted in defying his adversaries. He openly violated the

Sabbath, and only replied by subtle raillery to the reproaches that

were heaped upon him. For a still stronger reason he despised a host of

modern observances, which tradition had added to the Law, and which on

that very account were dearer than any other to the devotees.

Ablutions, and the too subtle distinctions between things pure and

impure, found in him a pitiless opponent. "There is nothing from

without a man," said he, "that entering into him can defile him: but

the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man."

The Pharisees, who were the propagators of these mummeries, were the

target for all his attacks. He accused them of exceeding the Law, of

inventing impracticable precepts, in order to create occasions of sin

in man: "Blind leaders of the blind," said he, "take care lest ye also

fall into the ditch." "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil,

speak good things for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth

speaketh."

He was not sufficiently acquainted with the Gentiles to think of

founding anything lasting upon their conversion. Galilee contained a

great number of Pagans, but, as it appears, no public and organised

worship of false gods. Jesus could see this worship displayed in all

its splendour in the country of Tyre and Sidon, at C�sarea Philippi and

in the Decapolis, but he paid little attention to it. In him we never

find the wearisome Jewish pedantry of his time, nor those declamations

against idolatry so familiar to his co-religionists from the time of

Alexander, and which fill, for instance, the book of "Wisdom." That

which struck him in the Pagans was not their idolatry, but their

servility. The young Jewish democrat agreeing on this point with Judas

the Gaulonite, admitting no master but God, was hurt at the honours

with which they surrounded the persons of sovereigns, and the

mendacious titles frequently given to them. With this exception, in the

greater number of instances in which he comes in contact with Pagans,

he shows towards them great indulgence; sometimes he professes to

conceive more hope of them than of the Jews. The kingdom of God is to

be transferred to them. "When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard

cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen? He will miserably

destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vine-yard unto other

husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus

adhered so much the more to this idea, as the conversion of the

Gentiles was, according to Jewish notions, one of the surest signs of

the advent of the Messiah. In his kingdom of God he represents, as

seated at a feast, by the side of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, men come

from the four winds of heaven, whilst the lawful heirs of the kingdom

are rejected. Sometimes, it is true, there is to be found, in the

commands he gives to his disciples, an entirely contrary tendency: he

seems to recommend them to preach salvation to the orthodox Jews only;

he speaks of Pagans in a manner conformable to the prejudices of the

Jews. But we must remember that the disciples, whose narrow minds did

not lend themselves to this supreme indifference for the privileges of

the sons of Abraham, may have given the instruction of their master the

bent of their own ideas. Besides, it is very possible that Jesus may

have vacillated on this point; just as Mahomet speaks of the Jews in

the Koran, sometimes in the most honourable manner, sometimes with

extreme harshness, according as he hoped or not to win their favour.

Tradition, in fact, ascribes to Jesus two entirely opposite rules of

proselytism, which he may have practised in turn: "He that is not

against us is on our part." "He that is not with me is against me."

Impassioned contention involves almost necessarily these sorts of

contradictions.

It is certain that he numbered amongst his disciples many men whom the

Jews designated "Hellenes." This term had in Palestine divers meanings.

Sometimes it designated the Pagans; sometimes the Greek-speaking Jews

dwelling among the Pagans; sometimes men of Pagan origin converted to

Judaism. It was probably in this last category of Hellenes that Jesus

found sympathy. The affiliation with Judaism had numerous degrees; but

the proselytes always remained in a state of inferiority as compared

with the Jew by birth. The former were called "proselytes of the gate,"

or "men fearing God," and were subject to the precepts of Noah, and not

to those of Moses. This very inferiority was unquestionably the cause

which drew them to Jesus, and gained them his favour.

It was in the same manner that he treated the Samaritans. Surrounded

like a small island, by the two great provinces of Judaism (Jud�a and

Galilee), Samaria formed in Palestine a kind of enclosure in which was

preserved the ancient worship of Gerizim, closely related and rivalling

that of Jerusalem. This poor sect, which had neither the genius nor the

perfect organisation of Judaism, properly so called, was treated by the

Jerusalemites with extreme harshness. They placed them on the same

footing with Pagans, but hated them more. Jesus, from a spirit of

opposition, was well disposed towards them. He often preferred the

Samaritans to the orthodox Jews. If, on the other hand, he seems to

forbid his disciples from going to preach to them, reserving his gospel

for the Israelites proper, this was no doubt a precept dictated by

special circumstances, to which the apostles have attached too absolute

a meaning. Sometimes, in fact, the Samaritans received him badly,

because they supposed him to be imbued with the prejudices of his

co-religionists; in like manner as in our days the European

free-thinker is regarded as an enemy by the Mussulman, who always

believes him to be a fanatical Christian. Jesus knew how to rise above

these misunderstandings. He had many disciples at Shechem, and he

passed there at least two days. On one occasion he meets with gratitude

and true piety from a Samaritan only. One of his most beautiful

parables is that of the man injured on the way to Jericho. A priest

passes by and sees him, but goes on his way; a Levite also passes, but

does not stop; a Samaritan has compassion on him, approaches, and pours

oil into his wounds, and binds them up. Jesus argues hence that true

brotherhood is established amongst men by charity, and not by religious

tenets. The "neighbour" who in Judaism was limited to the

co-religionist was in his estimation the man who has pity on his fellow

without distinction of sect. Human brotherhood in its widest sense

abounds in all his teaching.

These ideas, which beset Jesus on his leaving Jerusalem, found vivid

expression in an anecdote which has been preserved in regard to his

return. The route from Jerusalem into Galilee passes Shechem at a

distance of about half an hour's walk, at the opening of the valley

commanded by Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. This route was in general shunned

by the Jewish pilgrims, who preferred journeying by the long detour

through Per�a rather than expose themselves to the ill-treatment of the

Samaritans, or have to ask anything of them. It was forbidden to eat

and drink with them; for it was an axiom of certain casuists that "a

piece of Samaritan bread is the flesh of swine." When they followed

this route, provisions were always laid up beforehand; yet it was

rarely they could avoid scuffles and ill-treatment. Jesus shared

neither these scruples nor these fears. Arrived, by this route, at the

point whence the valley of Shechem opens on the left, he felt fatigued,

and stopped near a well. The Samaritans were then as now in the habit

of giving to the different spots of their valley names drawn from

patriarchal reminiscences. They called this well the well of Jacob; it

was probably the same that is called even up to this day Bir-Iakoub.

The disciples entered the valley and went to the city to buy

provisions; Jesus sat by the side of the well, having Gerizim in front

of him.

It was about noon, and a woman of Shechem came to draw water. Jesus

asked of her to drink. which excited great astonishment in the woman,

the Jews generally forbidding all intercourse with the Samaritans. Won

by the conversation of Jesus, the woman recognising in him a prophet,

and anticipating reproaches about her worship, she took up speech

first. "Sir," said she, "our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and

ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus

saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall

neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But

the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship

the Father in spirit and in truth."

The day on which he uttered this saying, he was in reality Son of God.

He uttered for the first time the sentence upon which will repose the

edifice of eternal religion. He founded the pure worship, of all ages,

of all lands, that which all elevated souls will embrace until the end

of time. Not only was his religion on this day the best religion of

humanity, it was the absolute religion; and if other planets have

inhabitants endowed with reason and morality, their religion cannot be

different from that which Jesus proclaimed near Jacob's well. Man has

not been able to hold to it; for we can attain the ideal but for a

moment. This sentiment of Jesus has been a bright light amidst gross

darkness; it has taken eighteen hundred years for the eyes of mankind

(I ought rather to say for an infinitely small portion of mankind) to

become accustomed to it. But the light will grow into the full day,

and, after having traversed all the circles of error, mankind will come

back to this sentiment and regard it as the immortal expression of its

faith and its hopes.

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CHAPTER XV.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE LEGEND OF JESUS--HIS OWN IDEA OF HIS SUPERNATURAL

CHARACTER.

Jesus, having completely lost his Jewish faith, and being filled with

revolutionary ardour, returned to Galilee. His ideas are now expressed

with perfect clearness. The simple aphorisms of the first part of his

prophetic career, borrowed in part from the Jewish rabbis anterior to

him, and the beautiful moral teachings of his second period, are

discarded for a decided policy. The Law must be abolished; and it is to

be abolished by him. The Messiah has come, and he it is who is the

Messiah. The kingdom of God is soon to be revealed; and it is he who

will reveal it. He knows well that he will suffer for his boldness; but

the kingdom of God cannot be conquered without violence; it is by

crises and commotions that it is to be established. The Son of man

after his death will return in glory, accompanied by legions of angels,

and those who have rejected him will be confounded.

The boldness of such a conception ought not to surprise us. Long before

this Jesus regarded his relation to God as that of a son to his father.

That which in others would be insupportable pride ought not in him to

be treated as presumption.

The title of "Son of David" was the first that he accepted, probably

without his being implicated in the innocent frauds by which it was

sought to secure it to him. The family of David had, as it appears,

been long extinct; nor did the Asmoneans, who were of priestly origin,

nor Herod, nor the Romans dream for a moment that any representative

whatever of the ancient dynasty existed in their midst. But from the

close of the Asmonean dynasty the dream of an unknown descendant of the

ancient kings, who should avenge the nation of its enemies, worked in

every brain. The universal belief was that the Messiah would be son of

David, and, like him, would be born at Bethlehem. The first thought of

Jesus was not this exactly. The remembrance of David, which was

uppermost in the minds of the majority of the Jews, had nothing in

common with his heavenly reign. He believed himself the Son of God, and

not the son of David. His kingdom, and the deliverance which he

meditated, were of quite another order. But opinion on this point made

him do himself a sort of violence. The immediate consequence of the

proposition, "Jesus is the Messiah," was this other proposition, "Jesus

is the son of David." He allowed a title to be given him without which

he could not hope for success. And in the end he appears to have taken

pleasure in it, inasmuch as he performed most willingly the miracles

which were asked of him by those who used this title in addressing him.

In this, as in many other circumstances of his life, Jesus yielded to

the notions which were current in his time, although they were not

precisely his own. He associated with his doctrine of the "kingdom of

God" all that could stimulate the heart and the imagination. Hence it

is that we have seen him adopt the baptism of John, although it could

not be of much importance to him.

One great difficulty presented itself, to wit, his birth at Nazareth,

which was of public notoriety. We do not know whether Jesus endeavoured

to remove this objection. Perhaps it did not present itself in Galilee,

where the idea that the son of David should be a Bethlehemite was less

spread. To the Galilean idealist, moreover, the title of "son of David"

was sufficiently justified, if he to whom it was given should retrieve

the glory of his race, and bring back the great days of Israel. Did

Jesus, by his silence, assent to the fictitious genealogies which his

partisans invented in order to prove his royal descent? Did he know

anything of the legends invented to prove that he was born at

Bethlehem; and particularly of the attempt to connect his Bethlehemite

origin with the census which had taken place by order of Quirinius, the

imperial legate. We cannot tell. The inexactitude and the

contradictions of the genealogies lead to the belief that they were the

result of popular notions operating at various points, and that none of

them was sanctioned by Jesus. Never with his own lips does he designate

himself son of David. His disciples, much less enlightened than he,

some-times magnified what he said of himself; but very often he knew

nothing of these exaggerations. And we must add that, during the first

three centuries, considerable portions of Christendom obstinately

denied the royal descent of Jesus and the authenticity of the

genealogies.

The legend about him was thus the result of a great and entirely

spontaneous conspiracy, and began to surround him during his lifetime.

There has been no great event in history which has not given rise to a

series of fables; and Jesus could not, even had he wished, put a stop

to these popular creations. Doubtless a sagacious observer would have

detected in them the germ of the narratives which were to ascribe to

him a supernatural birth, either by reason of the idea, very prevalent

in ancient times, that the incomparable man could not be born of the

ordinary relations of the two sexes; or for the purpose of fulfilling

the requirements of an imperfectly understood chapter of Isaiah, which

was believed to foretell that the Messiah should be born of a virgin;

or, lastly, as the result of a belief that the "breath of God," already

regarded as a divine hypostasis, was a principle of fecundity. There

was by this time, no doubt, more than one current anecdote regarding

his infancy, conceived for the purpose of showing in his biography the

accomplishment of the Messianic ideal, or rather the prophetic, that

the allegorical exigences of the times reputed to the Messiah. A

generally admitted idea was that the Messiah should be announced by a

star, that messengers from far countries should come soon after his

birth to render him homage, and to bring presents to him. It was

alleged that the oracle was accomplished through the pretended Chaldean

astrologers who should arrive about that time at Jerusalem. At other

times he was connected from his birth with celebrated men, such as John

the Baptist, Herod the Great, and two aged persons, Simeon and Anna,

who had left memories of great sanctity. A rather loose chronology

characterised these combinations, which for the most part were founded

on a travesty of real facts. But a singular spirit of gentleness and

goodness, an intensely popular sentiment, permeated all these fables,

and made them a supplement to his preaching. It was especially after

the death of Jesus that such narratives received their development. We

can, however, believe that they were circulated during his life even,

exciting no more than pious credulity and simple admiration.

That Jesus never dreamt of passing himself for an incarnation of the

true God, there can be no doubt. Such an idea was quite foreign to the

Jewish mind; and there is no trace of it in the three first gospels; we

only find it alluded to in portions of the fourth, which cannot be

accepted as reflecting the thoughts of Jesus. Sometimes Jesus even

seems to take precautions to repress such a doctrine. The accusation

that he made himself God, or the equal of God, is presented, even in

the fourth Gospel, as a calumny of the Jews. In the latter Gospel he

declares himself less than his Father. Elsewhere he avows that the

Father has not revealed everything to him. He believes himself to be

more than an ordinary man, but separated from God by an infinite

distance. He is Son of God, but all men are or may become so, in divers

degrees. Every one each day ought to call God his father; all who are

raised again will be sons of God. The divine son-ship was attributed in

the Old Testament to beings who, it was by no means pretended, were

equal with God. The word "son" has in the Semitic tongues and in the

New Testament the widest meaning. Besides, the idea Jesus had of man

was not that low idea which a cold Deism has introduced. In his poetic

conception of nature, one breath alone pervades the universe: the

breath of man is that of God; God dwells in man, and lives by man, the

same as man dwells in God, and lives by God. The transcendent idealism

of Jesus never permitted him to have a very clear notion of his own

personality. He is his Father, his Father is he. He lives in his

disciples; he is everywhere with them; his disciples are one, as he and

his Father are one. The idea to him is everything; the body, which

makes the distinction of individuals, is nothing.

The title "Son of God," or simply "Son," became thus for Jesus a title

analogous to "Son of man," with the sole difference that he called

himself "Son of man," and does not seem to have made the same use of

the phrase, "Son of God." The title, Son of man, expressed his

character as judge; that of Son of God, participation in the supreme

designs and his power. This power had no limits. His Father had given

him all power. He had the right to alter even the Sabbath. No one could

know the Father but through him. The Father had delegated to him the

right to judge. Nature obeyed him: but she obeys also all who believe

and pray, for faith can do everything.

We must bear in mind that no idea of the laws of nature marked, either

in his own mind or in that of his hearers, the limit of the impossible.

The witnesses of his miracles thanked God "for having given such power

unto men." He pardoned sins; he is superior to David, to Abraham, to

Solomon, to the prophets. We do not know in what form, nor to what

extent, these affirmations of himself were made. Jesus ought not to be

judged by the rule governing our petty conventionalities. The

admiration of his disciples overwhelmed and carried him away. It is

evident that the title of Rabbi, with which he was at first contented,

no longer satisfied him; the title even of prophet or messenger of God

responded no longer to his ideas. The position which he assigned

himself was that of a superhuman being, and he wished to be regarded as

having a higher relationship with God than other men. But it must be

observed that these words, "superhuman" and "supernatural," borrowed

from our pitiful theology, had no meaning in the exalted religious

consciousness of Jesus. To him nature and the development of humanity

were not limited kingdoms outside of God--paltry realities subject to

the laws of a desperate rigorism. There was no supernatural for him,

for the reason that there was no nature. Intoxicated with infinite

love, he forgot the heavy chain which holds the spirit captive; he

cleared at one bound the abyss, impossible to most, which the weakness

of the human faculties has formed between God and man.

We cannot mistake in these affirmations of Jesus the germ of the

doctrine which was, later on, to make of him a divine hypostasis, in

identifying him with the Word, or "second God," or eldest Son of God,

or Angel Metathronas, which Jewish theology created apart from him. A

sort of necessity produced this theology, in order to correct the

extreme rigour of the old Monotheism, to place near God a vicegerent,

to whom the eternal Father is supposed to delegate the government of

the universe. The belief that certain men are incarnations of divine

faculties or "powers" was wide-spread; the Samaritans possessed about

the same time a thaumaturgus, which they identified with the "great

power of God." For nearly two centuries, the speculative minds of

Judaism had yielded to the tendency of personifying the divine

attributes, and certain expressions which were connected with the

Divinity. Thus, the "breath of God," which is often referred to in the

Old Testament, is considered as a separate being, the "Holy Spirit" In

like manner, the "Wisdom of God" and the "Word of God" became distinct

existing entities. This was the germ of the process which has

engendered the Sephiroth of the Cabbala, the �ons of Gnosticism, the

hypostasis of Christianity, and all that dry mythology, consisting of

personified abstractions, to which Monotheism is obliged to resort when

it wishes to pluralise the Deity.

Jesus appears to have remained a stranger to these hair-splittings of

theology, which were soon to fill the world with barren disputes. The

meta-physical theory of the Word, such as we find it in the writings of

his contemporary Philo, in the Chald�an Targums, and even in the book

of "Wisdom," is neither seen in the Logia of Matthew, nor in general in

the synoptics, the most authentic interpreters of the words of Jesus.

The doctrine of the Word, in fact, had nothing in common with

Messianism. The "Word" of Philo, and of the Targums, is in no sense the

Messiah. It was later that Jesus came to be identified with the Word,

and when, in starting from that principle, there was created quite a

new theology, very different from that of the "kingdom of God." The

essential character of the Word was that of Creator and of Providence.

Now, Jesus never pretended to have created the world, nor to govern it.

His office was to judge it, to renovate it. The position of president

at the final assizes of humanity, was the function which Jesus attached

to himself, and the office which all the first Christians attributed to

him. Until the great day he sits at the right hand of God, as His

Metathronos, His first minister, and His future avenger. The superhuman

Christ of the Byzantine absides, seated as judge of the world, in the

midst of the apostles in the same rank with him, and superior to the

angels who only assist and serve, is the identical representation of

that conception of the "Son of man" of which we find the first features

so strongly indicated in the book of Daniel.

In any case, the rigour of scholastic rejection had no place in such a

world. All the collection of ideas we have just stated formed in the

mind of the disciples a theological system so little settled that the

Son of God, this kind of duplication of the Divinity, is made to act

purely as man. He is tempted--he is ignorant of many things--he

corrects himself--he changes his opinion--he is cast down,

discouraged--he asks his Father to spare him trials--he is submissive

to God as a son. He who must judge the world does not know the date of

the day of judgment. He takes precautions for his safety. Immediately

after his birth he has to be concealed to escape from powerful men who

wish to kill him. All this is simply the work of a messenger of God--of

a man protected and favoured by God. We must not ask here for logic or

sequence. The need Jesus had of obtaining credence, and the enthusiasm

of his disciples, piled up contradictory notions. To those who believed

in the coming of the Messiah, and to the enthusiastic readers of the

books of Daniel and of Enoch, he was the Son of man; to the Jews

holding the common faith, and to the readers of Isaiah and Micah, he

was the Son of David; to the disciples he was the Son of God, or simply

the Son. Others, without being blamed by the disciples, took him for

John the Baptist risen from the dead, for Elias, for Jeremiah,

conformable to the popular belief that the ancient prophets were about

to reappear, in order to prepare the way of the Messiah.

An absolute conviction, or rather the enthusiasm which freed him from

the possibility of doubt, shrouded all this boldness. We, with our cold

and scrupulous natures, little understand how any one can be so

entirely possessed by the idea of which he has made himself the

apostle. To us, the deeply earnest races, conviction signifies to be

sincere with one's self. But sincerity to one's self has not much

meaning to Oriental peoples, little accustomed to the subtleties of the

critical spirit. Honesty and imposture are words which, in our rigid

consciences, are opposed as two irreconcilable terms. In the East they

are connected by a thousand subtle links and windings. The authors of

the Apocryphal books (of "Daniel" and of "Enoch" for instance), men

highly exalted, in order to aid their cause, committed, without a

shadow of scruple, an act which we should term a fraud. The literal

truth has little value to the Oriental; he sees everything through the

medium of his ideas, his interests, and his passions.

History is impossible if we do not fully admit that there are many

standards of sincerity. Faith knows no other law than the interest in

that which it believes to be true. The aim which it pursues being for

it, absolutely holy, it makes no scruple about introducing bad

arguments into a thesis where good ones do not succeed. If such a proof

is not sound, how many others are? If such a prodigy is not real, how

many others have been so? How many pious men, convinced of the truth of

their religion, have sought to conquer the obstinacy of other men, by

the use of means the weakness of which they could clearly apprehend?

How many stigmatics, fanatics, and occupants of convents have been

carried away by the influence of the world in which they lived, and by

their individual beliefs in feigned acts, either for the purpose of not

being considered as beneath others, or to sustain the cause when in

danger! All great things are done through the people; now we can only

lead the people by adapting ourselves to their ideas. The philosopher

who, knowing this, isolates and intrenches himself in his nobleness, is

highly praiseworthy. But he who takes humanity with its illusions, and

seeks to act with it and upon it, cannot be blamed. C�sar knew well

that he was not the son of Venus; France would not be what it is if it

had not for a thousand years believed in the Holy Ampulla of Rheims. It

is, of course, easy for us, who are so powerless, to call this

falsehood, and, proud of our feeble honesty, to treat with contempt the

heroes who have accepted the battle of life under other conditions.

When we have effected by our scruples what they accomplished by their

falsehoods, we shall have the right to be severe upon them. At least,

we must make a marked distinction between societies like our own, where

everything takes place in the full light of reflection, and simple and

credulous societies, in which the beliefs that have governed ages have

been born. Nothing great has been established which does not rest on a

legend. The only culprit in such cases is the humanity which is willing

to be deceived.

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CHAPTER XVI.

MIRACLES.

Two means of proof, miracles and the accomplishment of prophecies,

could alone, in the opinion of the contemporaries of Jesus, establish a

supernatural mission. Jesus, and above all his disciples, employed

these two processes of demonstration in perfect good faith. For a long

time Jesus had been convinced that the prophets had written only in

reference to him. He recognised himself in their sacred oracles; he

regarded himself as the mirror in which all the prophetic spirit of

Israel had read the future. The Christian school, perhaps even in the

lifetime of its founder, endeavoured to prove that Jesus answered

perfectly to all that the prophets had predicted of the Messiah. In

many cases these comparisons were quite superficial, and are hardly

appreciable by us. They were most frequently fortuitous or

insignificant circumstances in the life of the master which recalled to

the disciples certain passages of the Psalms and the Prophets, in

which, in consequence of their constant preoccupation, they saw images

of what was passing before their eyes. The exegesis of the time

consisted thus almost entirely in a play upon words, and in quotations

made in an artificial and arbitrary manner. The synagogue had no

officially settled list of the passages which related to the future

reign. The Messianic references were very freely applied, and

constituted artifices of style rather than serious argument.

As to miracles, at that time they were regarded as the indispensable

mark of the divine, and as the sign of the prophetic vocation. The

legends of Elijah and Elisha were full of them. It was understood that

the Messiah would perform many. In Samaria, a few leagues from where

Jesus was, there was a magician named Simon, who acquired an almost

divine character by his illusions. Afterwards, when it was sought to

establish the reputation of Apollonius of Tyana, and to prove that his

life had been the sojourn of a god upon the earth, it was not thought

possible to succeed therein except by inventing a vast cycle of

miracles. The Alexandrian philosophers themselves, Plotinus and others,

were supposed to have performed several. Jesus was, therefore, obliged

to choose between these two alternatives--either to renounce his

mission or to become a thaumaturgist. It must be borne in mind that all

antiquity, with the exception of the great scientific schools of Greece

and their Roman disciples, believed in miracles; and that Jesus not

only believed in them, but also had not the least idea of an order of

nature regulated by laws. His knowledge on this point was not at all

superior to that of his contemporaries. Nay, more, one of his most

deeply rooted opinions was that by faith and prayer man had entire

power over nature. The faculty of performing miracles was held to be a

privilege regularly conferred by God upon men, and there was nothing

surprising in it.

The lapse of time has changed that which constituted the power of the

great founder of Christianity into something offensive to our ideas,

and, if ever the worship of Jesus loses its hold upon humanity, it will

be precisely on account of those acts which originally inspired belief

in him. Criticism experiences no embarrassment in presence of this kind

of historical phenomenon. A thaumaturgist of our days, unless of an

extreme simplicity, like that manifested by certain stigmatics of

Germany, is odious; for he performs miracles without believing in them;

he is a mere charlatan. But, if we take a Francis d'Assisi, the

question becomes altogether different; the cycle of miracles attending

the origin of the order of St. Francis, far from offending us, affords

us real pleasure. The founders of Christianity lived in at least as

complete a state of poetic ignorance as did St. Clair and the tres

socii. The disciples deemed it quite natural that their master should

have interviews with Moses and Elias, that he should command the

elements, and that he should heal the sick. We must remember, besides,

that every idea loses something of its purity as soon as it aspires to

realise itself. Success is never attained without some injury being

done to the sensibility of the soul. Such is the feebleness of the

human mind that the best causes are ordinarily gained only by bad

arguments. The demonstrations of the primitive apologists of

Christianity were based upon very poor reasonings. Moses, Christopher

Columbus, Mahomet, have only triumphed over obstacles by constantly

making allowance for the weakness of men, and by not always giving the

true reasons for the truth. It is probable that those about Jesus were

more struck by his miracles than by his eminently divine discourses.

Let us add that doubtless popular rumour, both before and after the

death of Jesus, enormously exaggerated the number of occurrences of

this kind. The types of the gospel miracles, in fact, do not present

much variety; they are repetitions of each other, and seem fashioned

from a very small number of models, accommodated to the taste of the

country.

It is impossible, amongst the miraculous narratives so tediously

enumerated in the Gospels, to distinguish the miracles attributed by

common consent to Jesus from those in which he consented to play an

active part. It is especially impossible to ascertain whether the

offensive circumstances attending them, the groanings, the strugglings,

and other features savouring of jugglery, are really historical, or

whether they are the fruit of the belief of the compilers, strongly

prepossessed with theurgy, and living, in this connection, in a world

analogous to that of the spiritualists of our days. Popular opinion, in

fact, insisted that the divine virtue was in man thus an epileptic and

convulsive principle. Almost all the miracles that Jesus believed he

performed appear to have been miracles of healing. Medicine was at that

period in Jud�a what it still is in the East, that is to say, far from

being scientific, and absolutely dependent upon individual inspiration.

The scientific school of medicine, founded by Greece five centuries

before, was at the time of Jesus unknown to the Jews of Palestine. In

such a state of knowledge, the presence of a superior man, treating the

sick with gentleness, and giving him by some tangible signs the

assurance of his recovery, is often a decisive remedy. Who would dare

to say that in many cases, excepting, of course, certain peculiar

injuries, the touch of a superior being is not equal to all the

resources of pharmacy? The mere pleasure of seeing such a one, cured.

He gives what he can--a smile, a hope, and these are not in vain.

Jesus had no more idea than the majority of his countrymen of a

rational medical science; he shared the general belief that healing was

to be effected by religious practices, and such a belief was perfectly

consistent. From the moment that disease was regarded as the punishment

of sin, or as the act of a demon, and in no way as the result of

physical causes, the best physician was the holy man who had power in

the supernatural world. Healing was regarded as a moral act; Jesus, who

was conscious of moral power, would believe himself specially gifted to

heal. Convinced that the touching of his robe, the imposition of his

hands, the application of his saliva, benefited the sick, he would have

been hard-hearted if he had refused to those who suffered, a solace

which it was in his power to bestow. The healing of the sick was

considered as one of the signs of the kingdom of God, and was always

associated with the emancipation of the poor. Both were the signs of

the great revolution that was to culminate in the relief of all

infirmities. The Essenians, who had so many ties of relationship with

Jesus, passed also for very powerful spiritual physicians.

One of the species of cure which Jesus most frequently performed was

exorcism, or the casting out of devils. A strange disposition to

believe in demons pervaded all minds. It was a universal opinion, not

only in Jud�a, but everywhere, that demons took possession of the

bodies of certain persons and made them act contrary to their will. A

Persian div, often named in the Avesta, Aeschmada�va, the "div of

concupiscence," adopted by the Jews under the name of Asmodeus, became

the cause of all the hysterical afflictions of women. Epilepsy, in

mental and nervous maladies, when the patient seems no longer to belong

to himself, and in infirmities the cause of which is not apparent, such

as deafness and dumbness, were explained in the same manner. The

admirable treatise, "On Sacred Disease," by Hippocrates, which set

forth the true principles of medicine on this subject, four centuries

and a half before Jesus, had not banished from the world so great an

error. It was supposed that there were processes more or less

efficacious for driving away the demons; and the occupation of exorcist

was a regular profession like that of physician. There is no doubt that

Jesus had in his lifetime the reputation of possessing the greatest

secrets of this art. There were then many lunatics in Jud�a, doubtless

the result of the great mental excitement. These fools, who were

permitted to roam about, as they still are in the same districts,

inhabited the abandoned sepulchral caves, which were the ordinary

retreat of vagrants. Jesus had much control over these unfortunates. A

thousand singular stories are related in connexion with his cures, in

which the credulity of the time had full scope. Nevertheless these

difficulties must not be exaggerated. The disorders which were regarded

as "possessions" were often very slight. In our times, in Syria, people

are regarded as mad or possessed by a demon (these two ideas were

expressed by the same word, medjnoun) who are only somewhat eccentric.

A gentle word often suffices in such cases to drive away the demon.

Such were doubtless the means employed by Jesus. Who knows if his

celebrity as an exorcist was not spread almost without his own

knowledge? Persons who reside in the East are occasionally surprised to

find themselves, after some time, in possession of a great reputation,

as doctors, sorcerers, or discoverers of treasures, without being able

to account to themselves for the facts which have given rise to these

fancies.

Many circumstances, moreover, seem to indicate that Jesus only became a

thaumaturgist late in life and against his inclination. He often

performs his miracles only after he has been besought to do so, and

with a degree of reluctance, reproaching those who asked them for their

hardness of heart. One singularity, apparently inexplicable, is the

care he takes to perform his miracles in secret, and the request he

addresses to those whom he heals to tell no one. When the demons wish

to proclaim him the Son of God, he forbids them to open their mouths;

but they recognise him in spite of himself. These traits are especially

prominent in Mark, who is pre-eminently the evangelist of miracles and

exorcisms. It seems that the disciple, who has furnished the

fundamental teachings of this Gospel, importuned Jesus with his

admiration for prodigies, and that the master, wearied of a reputation

which weighed upon him, had often said to him, "See thou say nothing to

any man." Once this discordance evoked a singular outburst, a fit of

impatience, in which the annoyance of these perpetual demands of weak

minds caused Jesus to break forth. One would say, at times, that the

character of thaumaturgist was disagreeable to him, and that he sought

to give as little publicity as possible to the marvels which, in a

manner, grew under his feet. When his enemies asked a miracle of him,

especially a celestial miracle, a "sign from heaven," he obstinately

refused. It is, therefore, permissible to believe that his reputation

of thaumaturgist was imposed upon him, that he did not resist it much,

but also that he did nothing to aid it, and that, at all events, he

felt the vanity of public opinion on this point.

We should be lacking in historical method if we listened here too much

to our repugnances. The essential condition of the true critic is to

comprehend the diversity of times, and to divest himself of instinctive

habits, which are the results of a purely rational education. In order

to meet the objections which might be raised against the character of

Jesus, we must not suppress facts which, in the eyes of his

contemporaries, were considered of the greatest importance, It would be

convenient to say that these are the additions of disciples much

inferior to their Master, who, not being able to conceive his true

grandeur, have sought to magnify him by illusions unworthy of him. But

the four narrators of the life of Jesus are unanimous in extolling his

miracles; one of them, Mark, interpreter of the Apostle Peter, insists

so much on this point that, if we trace the character of Christ only

according to this Gospel, we should represent Jesus as an exorcist in

possession of charms of rare efficacy, as a very potent sorcerer, who

inspired fear, and whom the people wished to get rid of. We will admit,

then, without hesitation, that acts which would now be considered as

acts of illusion or folly held a large place in the life of Jesus. Must

we sacrifice to these uninviting features the sublimity of such a life?

God forbid. A mere sorcerer would not have brought about a moral

revolution like that effected by Jesus. If the thaumaturgist had

effaced in Jesus the moralist and the religious reformer, there would

have proceeded from him a school of theurgy, and not Christianity.

The problem, moreover, presents itself in the same manner with respect

to all saints and religious founders. Things now considered morbid,

such as epileptic visions, were formerly principles of power and

greatness. Physicians know the name of the disease which made the

fortune of Mahomet. Almost in our own day, the men who have done the

most for their kind (the excellent Vincent de Paul himself!) were,

whether they wished it or not, thaumaturgists. If we set out with the

principle that every historical personage to whom acts have been

attributed, which we in the nineteenth century hold to be irrational or

savouring of quackery, was either a madman or a charlatan, all

criticism is falsified. The school of Alexandria was a noble school,

but, nevertheless, it gave itself up to the practices of an extravagant

theurgy. Socrates and Pascal were not exempt from hallucinations. Facts

ought to explain themselves by proportionate causes. The weaknesses of

the human mind only engender weakness; great things have always great

causes in the nature of man, although they are often produced amidst a

crowd of littlenesses which, to superficial minds, eclipse their

grandeur.

In a general sense, it is therefore true to say that Jesus was only

thaumaturgist and exorcist in spite of himself. Miracles are ordinarily

the work of the public much more than of him to whom they are

attributed. Jesus persistently shunned the performance of the prodigies

which the multitude would have created for him; the greatest miracle

would have been his refusal to perform any; never would the laws of

history and popular psychology have suffered so great a derogation. He

was no more able than St. Bernard, or Francis d'Assisi, to moderate the

avidity of the multitude and of his own disciples for the marvellous.

The miracles of Jesus were a violence done to him by his age, a

concession forced from him by a passing necessity. The exorcist and the

thaumaturgist have alike passed away; but the religious reformer will

live eternally.

Even those who did not believe in him were struck with these acts, and

sought to be witnesses of them. The Pagans, and persons unacquainted

with him, experienced a sentiment of fear, and sought to remove him

from their district. Many thought perhaps to abuse his name by

connecting it with seditious movements. But the purely moral and in no

respect political tendency of the character of Jesus saved him from

these entanglements. His kingdom was in the circle of disciples, whom a

like freshness of imagination and the same foretaste of heaven had

grouped and retained around him.

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CHAPTER XVII.

DEFINITE FORM OF THE IDEAS OF JESUS IN RESPECT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

We suppose that this last phase of the activity of Jesus continued

about eighteen months, reckoning from the time of his return from the

Passover of the year 31 to his journey to the feast of tabernacles of

the year 32. During that interval the mind of Jesus does not appear to

have been enriched by any new element; but all that was in him

developed and grew with ever-increasing power and boldness.

The fundamental idea of Jesus from the first was the establishment of

the kingdom of God. But this kingdom of God, as we have already said,

appears to have been understood by Jesus in very different senses. At

times he might be taken for a democratic leader desiring only the reign

of the poor and the disinherited. At other times the kingdom of God is

the literal accomplishment of the apocalyptic visions of Daniel and

Enoch. Finally, the kingdom of God is often a spiritual kingdom, and

the near deliverance is a deliverance of the spirit. The revolution

then desired by Jesus was that which has actually taken place; the

establishment of a new worship, purer than that of Moses. All these

thoughts appear to have been coexistent in the mind of Jesus. The

first, however--that of a temporal revolution--does not appear to have

had much hold on him; Jesus never regarded the earth or the riches of

the earth, or material power as a thing worth caring for. He had no

exterior ambition. Sometimes, by a natural consequence, his great

religious importance was on the point of being changed into mere social

importance. Men came requesting him to judge and arbitrate on questions

which affected their interests. Jesus rejected these proposals with

scorn, treating them as insults. Full of his heavenly ideal, he never

abandoned his disdainful poverty. As to the other two conceptions of

the kingdom of God, Jesus appears always to have held them

simultaneously. If he had been only an enthusiast, led away by the

apocalypses on which the popular imagination fed, he would have

remained an obscure sectary, inferior to those whose ideas he followed.

If he had been only a puritan, a sort of Channing or "Savoyard vicar,"

he would undoubtedly have been unsuccessful. The two parts of his

system, or, rather, his two conceptions of the kingdom of God, rest one

on the other, and this reciprocal support has been the cause of his

incomparable success. The first Christians were visionaries living in a

circle of ideas which we should term reveries; but, at the same time,

they were the heroes of that social war which has resulted in the

enfranchisement of the conscience, and in the establishment of a

religion from which the pure worship, proclaimed by the founder, will

eventually proceed.

The apocalyptic ideas of Jesus, in their most complete form, may thus

be summed up:

The existing order of humanity is approaching its termination. This

termination will be an immense revolution, "an anguish" similar to the

pains of child-birth; a palingenesis, or, in the words of Jesus

himself, a "new birth," preceded by dark calamities and heralded by

strange phenomena. In the great day there will appear in the heavens

the sign of the Son of man; it will be a startling and luminous vision

like that of Sinai, a great storm rending the clouds, a fiery meteor

flashing rapidly from east to west. The Messiah will appear in the

clouds, clothed in glory and majesty, to the sound of trumpets and

surrounded by angels. His disciples will sit by his side upon thrones.

The dead will then arise, and the Messiah will proceed to judgment.

At this judgment men will be divided into two classes according to

their works. The angels will be the executors of the sentences. The

elect will enter into a delightful abode which has been prepared for

them from the foundation of the world; there they will be seated,

clothed with light, at a feast presided over by Abraham, the

patriarchs, and the prophets. They will be the smaller number. The rest

will depart into Gehenna. Gehenna was the western valley of Jerusalem.

There the worship of fire had been practised at various times, and the

place had become a kind of sewer. Gehenna was, therefore, in the mind

of Jesus a gloomy, filthy valley, full of fire. Those excluded from the

kingdom will there be burnt and eaten by the never-dying worm, in

company with Satan and his rebel angels. There, there will be wailing

and gnashing of teeth. The kingdom of heaven will be as a closed room,

lighted from within, in the midst of a world of darkness and torments.

This new order of things will be eternal. Paradise and Gehenna will

have no end. An impassable abyss separates the one from the other. The

Son of man, seated on the right hand of God, will preside over this

final condition of the world and of humanity.

That all this was taken literally by the disciples and by the master

himself at certain moments appears clearly evident from the writings of

the time. If the first Christian generation had one profound and

constant belief, it was that the world was near its end, and that the

great "revelation" of Christ was soon to take place. The startling

proclamation, "The time is at hand," which commences and closes the

Apocalypse; the incessantly reiterated appeal, "He that hath ears to

hear let him hear!" were the cries of hope and encouragement for the

whole apostolic age. A Syrian expression, Maranatha, "Our Lord cometh!"

became a sort of password, which the believers used amongst themselves

in order to strengthen their faith and their hope. The Apocalypse,

written in the year 68 of our era, fixed the end at three years and a

half. The "Ascension of Isaiah" adopts a calculation closely

approaching this.

Jesus never indulged in such precision. When he was interrogated as to

the time of his advent he always refused to reply; once even he

declared that the date of this great day was known only by the Father,

who had revealed it neither to the angels nor to the Son. He said that

the time when the kingdom of God was most anxiously expected was just

that in which it would not appear. He constantly repeated that it would

be a surprise, as in the times of Noah and of Lot; that we must be on

our guard, always ready to depart; that each one must watch and keep

his lamp trimmed as for a wedding procession, which arrives unforeseen;

that the Son of man would come like a thief, at an hour when he would

not be expected; that he would appear as a flash of lightning, running

from one end of the heavens to the other. But his declarations as to

the proximity of the catastrophe leave no room for any equivocation.

"This generation," said he, "shall not pass till all these things be

fulfilled. There be some standing here which shall not taste of death

till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." He reproaches

those who do not believe in him for not being able to read the signs of

the future kingdom. "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair

weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul

weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye

can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of

the times?" By an illusion common to all great reformers, Jesus

imagined the end to be much nearer than it really was; he did not take

into account the slowness of the movements of humanity; he thought to

realise in one day that which, eighteen centuries later, has still to

be accomplished.

These formal declarations preoccupied the Christian family for nearly

seventy years. It was believed that some of the disciples would see the

day of the final revelation before dying. John, in particular, was

considered as being of this number; many believed that he would never

die. Perhaps this was a later opinion suggested towards the end of the

first century, by the advanced age which John seems to have reached;

this age having given occasion to the belief that God wished to prolong

his life indefinitely until the great day, in order to realise the

words of Jesus. When he died in turn, the faith of many was shaken, and

his disciples attached to the prediction of Christ a more subdued

meaning.

At the same time that Jesus fully admitted the Apocalyptic beliefs,

such as we find them in the apocryphal Jewish books, he admitted the

dogma which is the complement, or rather the condition of them all,

namely, the resurrection of the dead. This doctrine, as we have already

said, was still somewhat new in Israel; a number of people either did

not know it, or did not believe in it. It was the faith of the

Pharisees, and of the fervent adherents of the Messianic beliefs. Jesus

accepted it unreservedly, but always in the most idealistic sense. Many

imagined that in the resuscitated world they would eat, drink, and

marry. Jesus, indeed, admits into his kingdom a new passover, a table,

and a new wine; but he expressly excludes marriage from it. The

Sadducees had on this subject an apparently gross argument, but at

bottom quite conformable with the old theology. It will be remembered

that, according to the ancient sages, man survived only in his

children. The Mosaic code had consecrated this patriarchal theory by a

strange institution, the levitical law. The Sadducees drew thence

subtle deductions against the resurrection. Jesus escaped them by

formally declaring that in the life eternal there would no longer exist

differences of sex, and that men would be like the angels. Sometimes he

seems to promise resurrection only to the just, the punishment of the

wicked consisting in complete annihilation. Oftener, however, Jesus

declares that the resurrection shall bring eternal confusion to the

wicked.

It will be seen that nothing in all these theories was absolutely new.

The Gospels and the writings of the apostles scarcely contain anything

as regards apocalyptics but what might be found already in "Daniel,"

"Enoch," the "Sibylline Oracles," and the assumption of Moses, which

are of Jewish origin. Jesus accepted these ideas, which were generally

received among his contemporaries. He made them his basis of action, or

rather one of his bases; for he had too profound an idea of his true

work to establish it solely upon such fragile principles, so liable to

receive from facts a crushing refutation.

It is evident, indeed, that such a doctrine, taken by itself in a

literal manner, had no future. The world, in continuing to endure,

entirely disproves it. One generation of man at the most, was reserved

for it. The faith of the first Christian generation is intelligible,

but the faith of the second generation is no longer so. After the death

of John, or of the last survivor, whoever he might be, of the group

which had seen the master, the word of Jesus was convicted of

falsehood. If the doctrine of Jesus had been simply belief in an

approaching end of the world, it would certainly now be sleeping in

oblivion. What is it, then, that has saved it? The great breadth of the

Gospel conceptions, which has permitted doctrines suited to very

different intellectual conditions to be found under the same creed. The

world has not ended, as Jesus announced, and as his disciples believed.

But it has been renewed, and in one sense renewed as Jesus desired. It

is because his thought was two-sided that it has been fruitful. His

chimera has not had the fate of so many others which have crossed the

human mind, because it concealed a germ of life which having been

introduced, thanks to a covering of fable, into the bosom of humanity,

has thus brought forth eternal fruits.

And let us not say that this is a benevolent interpretation, imagined

in order to clear the honour of our great master from the cruel

contradiction inflicted on his dreams by reality. No, no; this true

kingdom of God, this kingdom of the spirit, which makes each one, king

and priest; this kingdom which, like the grain of mustard-seed, has

become a tree which overshadows the world, and under whose branches the

birds have their nests, was understood, wished for, and founded by

Jesus. By the side of the false, cold, and impossible idea of an

ostentatious advent, he conceived the real city of God, the true

"renaissance," the Sermon on the Mount, the apotheosis of the weak, the

love of the people, regard for the poor, and the re-establishment of

all that is humble, true, and simple. This rehabilitation he has

depicted as an incomparable artist, by features which will last

eternally. Each of us owes that which is best in himself to him. Let us

pardon him his hope of a vain apocalypse, of a second coming in great

triumph upon the clouds of heaven. Perhaps these were the errors of

others rather than his own; and if it be true that he himself shared

the general illusion, what matters it, since his dream rendered him

strong against death, and sustained him in a struggle to which he might

otherwise have been unequal? We must, then, attach several meanings to

the divine city conceived by Jesus. If his only thought had been that

the end of time was near, and that we must prepare for it, he would not

have surpassed John the Baptist. To renounce a world ready to crumble,

to detach one's self gradually from the present life, and to aspire to

the kingdom about to come; such would have been the essence of his

preaching. The teaching of Jesus had always a much larger scope. He

proposed to himself to create a new state of humanity, and not merely

to prepare the end of that which did exist. Elias or Jeremiah,

reappearing in order to prepare men for the supreme crisis, would not

have preached as he did. This is so true that this morality, attributed

to the latter days, is found to be the eternal morality, that which has

saved humanity. Jesus himself in many cases makes use of modes of

speech which do not enter at all into a material kingdom. He often

declares that the kingdom of God has already begun; that every man

bears it within himself, and can, if he be worthy, enjoy it; that each

one silently creates this kingdom by the true conversion of the heart.

The kingdom of God at such times is only the highest form of good; a

better order of things than that which exists, the reign of justice,

which the faithful, according to their ability, ought to help in

establishing; or, again, the liberty of the soul, something analogous

to the Buddhist "deliverance," the result of isolation. These truths,

which to us are pure abstractions, were living realities to Jesus.

Everything in his mind was concrete and substantial. Jesus was the man

who believed most thoroughly in the reality of the ideal.

In accepting the Utopias of his time and his race, Jesus, thanks to the

fruitful misconceptions of their import, thus knew how to elevate them

into great truths. His kingdom of God was no doubt the approaching

apocalypse, which was about to be unfolded in the heavens. But it was

still, and probably above all, the kingdom of the soul, founded on

liberty and on the filial sentiment which the virtuous man feels when

resting on the bosom of his Father. It was a pure religion, without

forms, without temple and without priest; it was the moral judgment of

the world, delegated to the conscience of the just man, and to the arm

of the people. This is what was destined to live; this is what has

lived. When, at the end of a century of vain expectation, the

materialistic hope of a near end of the world was exhausted, the true

kingdom of God became apparent. Complaisant explanations drew a veil

over the real kingdom, which did not come. The Apocalypse of John, the

first book, properly speaking, of the New Testament, being too formally

tied to the idea of an immediate catastrophe, was rejected by the

second plan, held to be unintelligible, and tortured in a thousand

ways. At least, its accomplishment was adjourned to an indefinite

future. Some poor benighted ones who, in a fully enlightened age, still

preserved the hopes of the first disciples, became heretics (Ebionites,

Millenarians) lost in the shallows of Christianity. Mankind had passed

to another kingdom of God. The degree of truth contained in the thought

of Jesus had prevailed over the chimera which obscured it.

Let us not, however, despise this chimera, which has been the thick

rind of the sacred fruit on which we live. This fantastic kingdom of

heaven, this endless pursuit after a city of God, which has constantly

preoccupied Christianity during its long career, has been the principle

of that great instinct of futurity which has animated all reformers,

persistent believers in the Apocalypse, from Joachim of Flora down to

the Protestant sectary of our days. This impotent effort to establish a

perfect society has been the source of the extraordinary tension which

has always made the true Christian an athlete struggling against the

present. The idea of the "kingdom of God," and the Apocalypse, which is

the complete image of it, are thus, in a sense, the highest and most

poetic expressions of human progress. No doubt they must also have

given rise to great errors. The end of the world, suspended as a

perpetual menace over mankind, was, by the periodical panics which it

caused during centuries, a great hindrance to all secular development.

Society, being no longer certain of its existence, contracted therefrom

a degree of trepidation, and those habits of servile humility which

rendered the Middle Ages so inferior to ancient and modern times. A

profound change had also taken place in the mode of regarding the

coming of Christ. When it was first announced to mankind that the end

of the world was at hand, like the infant which receives death with a

smile, it experienced the greatest access of joy that it has ever felt.

But in growing old, the world became attached to life. The day of

grace, so long expected by the simple souls of Galilee, became to these

iron ages a day of wrath: Dies ir�, dies illa! But even in the midst of

barbarism, the idea of the kingdom of God continued fruitful. "At the

approach of the end of the world . . . "are the charters of

enfranchisement. In spite of the feudal church, of sects, and of

religious orders, holy persons continued to protest, in the name of the

Gospel, against the iniquity of the world. Even in our days, troubled

days, in which Jesus has no more authentic followers than those who

seem to deny him, the dreams of an ideal organisation of society, which

have so much analogy with the aspirations of the primitive Christian

sects, are only in one sense the blossoming of the same idea, one of

the branches of that immense tree in which germinates all thought of a

future, and of which the "kingdom of God" will be eternally the root

and stem. All the social revolutions of humanity will be grafted on

this phrase. But, tainted by a coarse materialism, and aspiring to the

impossible, that is to say, to found universal happiness upon political

and economical measures, the "socialist" attempts of our time will

remain unfruitful, until they take as their rule the true spirit of

Jesus; I mean absolute idealism--the principle that in order to possess

the world we must renounce it.

The phrase "kingdom of God," on the other hand, expresses also very

happily the want which the soul experiences of a supplementary destiny,

of a compensation for the present life. Those who do not accept the

definition of man as a compound of two substances, and who regard the

deistical dogma of the immortality of the soul as in contradiction with

physiology, love to fall back upon the hope of a final reparation,

which under an unknown form shall satisfy the wants of the heart of

man. Who knows if the highest term of progress after millions of ages

may not evoke the absolute conscience of the universe, and in this

conscience the awakening of all that has lived? A sleep of a million of

years is not longer than the sleep of an hour. St. Paul, on this

hypothesis, was right in saying, In ictu oculi! It is certain that

moral and virtuous humanity will have its reward, that one day the

ideas of the poor but honest man will judge the world, and that on that

day the ideal figure of Jesus will be the confusion of the frivolous

man who has not believed in virtue and of the egotist who has not been

able to attain to it. The favourite phrase of Jesus continues,

therefore, full of an eternal beauty. A sort of grandiose divinity

seems in this to have guided the incomparable master, and to have held

him in a vague sublimity, embracing at the same time various orders of

truths.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

INSTITUTIONS OF JESUS.

That which proves, moreover, that Jesus was never entirely absorbed in

his apocalyptic ideas is that, at the very time he was most preoccupied

with them, he laid with rare foresight the basis of a church destined

to endure. It is scarcely possible to doubt that he himself only chose

from among his disciples those who were pre-eminently called the

"apostles," or the "twelve," since on the day after his death we find

them forming a distinct body, and filling up by election the vacancies

that had been produced in their midst. They were the two sons of Jonas;

the two sons of Zebedee; James, son of Alph�us; Philip; Nathaniel

bar-Tolmai; Thomas; Matthew; Simon Zelotes; Thaddeus or Lebb�us; and

Judas of Kerioth. It is probable that the idea of the twelve tribes of

Israel had had something to do with the choice of this number. The

"twelve," at all events, formed a group of privileged disciples, among

whom Peter maintained a fraternal priority, and to them Jesus confided

the propagation of his work. There was nothing, however, which

suggested a regularly organised sacerdotal school. The lists of the

"twelve," which have been preserved, present many uncertainties and

contradictions; two or three of those who figure in them have remained

completely obscure. Two, at least, Peter and Philip, were married and

had children.

Jesus evidently confided secrets to the twelve, which he forbade them

to communicate to the world. It seems sometimes as if his intentions

had been to surround his person with some mystery, to postpone the most

important testimony till after his death, and to reveal himself clearly

only to his disciples, confiding to them the care of demonstrating him

afterwards to the world. "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in

light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops."

He was thus spared the necessity of too precise declarations, and

created a kind of medium between the public and himself. What is

certain is that there were teachings reserved to the apostles, and that

he explained many parables to them, the meaning of which was ambiguous

to the multitude. An enigmatical form and a degree of oddness in

connecting ideas were customary in the teachings of the doctors, as may

be seen in the sentences of the Pirk� Aboth. Jesus explained to his

disciples whatever was peculiar in his apothegms or in his apologues,

and showed them his meaning stripped of the wealth of illustration

which sometimes obscured it. Many of these explanations appear to have

been carefully preserved.

During the lifetime of Jesus the apostles preached, but without ever

departing far from him. Their preaching, moreover, was confined to the

announcement of the speedy coming of the kingdom of God. They went from

town to town, receiving hospitality, or rather taking it themselves,

according to custom. The guest in the East has much authority; he is

superior to the master of the house; the latter places the greatest

confidence in him. This fireside preaching is well suited to the

propagation of new doctrines. The hidden treasure is communicated, and

payment is thus made for what is received; politeness and good feeling

lend their aid; the household is touched and converted. Remove Oriental

hospitality, and it would be impossible to explain the propagation of

Christianity. Jesus, who adhered strongly to the good old customs,

encouraged his disciples to make no scruple of profiting by this

ancient public right, probably abolished already in the great towns

where there were hostelries. "The labourer," said he, "is worthy of his

hire!" Once installed in the house of any one they were to remain

there, eating and drinking what was offered them as long as their

mission lasted.

Jesus desired that, by imitating his example, the messengers of the

glad tidings should render their preaching agreeable by kindly and

polished manners. He directed that, on entering a house, they should

give the host the salaam--wish him happiness. Some hesitated; the

salaam being then, as now, in the East, a sign of religious communion,

which is not risked with persons of a doubtful faith. "Fear nothing,"

said Jesus; "if no one in the house is worthy of your salute, it will

return unto you." Sometimes, in fact, the apostles of the kingdom of

God were badly received, and came to complain to Jesus, who generally

sought to conciliate them. Some of them, persuaded of the omnipotence

of their master, were hurt at this forbearance. The sons of Zebedee

wanted him to call down fire from heaven upon the inhospitable towns.

Jesus answered these outbursts with a fine irony, and stopped them by

saying, " The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to

save them."

He sought in every way to establish as a principle that his apostles

were as himself. It was believed that he had communicated his

marvellous virtues to them. They cast out demons, prophesied, and

formed a school of renowned exorcists, although certain cases were

beyond their power. They also made cures, either by the imposition of

hands or by the unction of oil, one of the fundamental processes of

Oriental medicine. Lastly, like the Psylli, they could handle serpents

and drink with impunity deadly potions. The further we get from Jesus

this theurgy becomes more and more offensive. But there is no doubt

that it was a common practice in the primitive Church, and that it held

a chief place in the estimation of the world around. Charlatans, as

generally happens, exploited this movement of popular credulity. Even

in the lifetime of Jesus many, without being his disciples, cast out

demons in his name. The true disciples were much hurt at this, and

sought to prevent them. Jesus, who saw in this a homage to his renown,

did not manifest much severity towards them. It must be observed,

moreover, that these supernatural gifts had, if I may say so, become a

trade. Carrying the logic of absurdity to the extreme, certain men cast

out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. They imagined that this

sovereign of the infernal regions must have entire authority over his

subordinates, and that in acting through him they were certain to make

the intruding spirit depart. Some even sought to buy from the disciples

of Jesus the secret of the miraculous powers which had been conferred

upon them.

The germ of a church began from this time to appear. This fertile idea

of the power of men in association (ecclesia) seemed indeed an idea of

Jesus. Full of the purely idealistic doctrine that it is the union of

love which brings souls together, he declared that whenever men

assembled in his name, he would be in their midst. He confided to the

Church the right to bind and to unbind (that is to say, to render

certain things lawful or unlawful), to remit sins, to reprimand, to

warn with authority, and to pray with the certainty of being heard. It

is possible that many of these sayings may have been attributed to the

master, so as to give a foundation to the collective authority by which

subsequently it was sought to replace that of Jesus. At all events, it

was only after his death that particular churches were seen to be

constituted, and even this first constitution was made purely and

simply on the model of the synagogues. Many personages who had loved

Jesus much, and had founded great hopes upon him, such as Joseph of

Arimathea, Lazarus, Mary Magdalen, and Nicodemus, did not, it seems,

enter these churches, but clung to the tender or respectful memory

which they had preserved of him.

Moreover, there is no trace, in the teaching of Jesus, of an applied

morality or of a canonical law, ever so slightly defined. Once only,

respecting marriage, he spoke with decision, and forbade divorce.

Neither was there any theology or creed. There were hardly any opinions

respecting the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, from which, afterwards,

were drawn the Trinity and the Incarnation, but they still remained in

a state of indeterminate imagery. The later books of the Jewish canon

recognised already in the Holy Spirit a sort of divine hypostasis,

sometimes identified with Wisdom or the Word. Jesus insisted upon this

point, and pretended to give to his disciples a baptism by fire and by

the Spirit, as much preferable to that of John. For Jesus, this Holy

Spirit, was not distinct from the inspiration emanating from God the

Father in a continuous manner. People then speculated. It was pretended

that Jesus had promised his disciples to send them after his death, to

replace him, a Spirit who should teach them all things and bear witness

to the truths he himself had promulgated. One day the apostles believed

they had received the baptism of this spirit in the form of a great

wind and tongues of fire. In order to designate this Spirit, people

made use of the word Paraklit, which the Syro-Chaldaic had borrowed

from the Greek (parakletos), and which appears to have had in this case

the meaning of "advocate," "counsellor," and sometimes that of

"interpreter of celestial truths," and of "teacher charged to reveal to

men the hitherto hidden mysteries." It is very doubtful whether Jesus

made use of this word. It was in this case an application of the

process which the Jewish and Christian theologies would follow during

centuries, and which was to produce a whole series of divine assessors,

the Metathronos, the sunadelphos or Syndelphon, and all the

personifications of the Cabala. Still, in Judaism, these creations were

to remain free and individual speculations, whilst in Christianity,

commencing with the fourth century, they were to form the very essence

of orthodoxy and of the universal dogma.

It is needless to remark how remote from the thought of Jesus was the

idea of a religious book, containing a code and articles of faith. Not

only did he not write, but it was contrary to the spirit of the nascent

sect to produce sacred books. They believed themselves on the eve of

the great final catastrophe. The Messiah came to put the seal upon the

Law and the Prophets, not to promulgate new texts. Further, with the

exception of the Apocalypse, which was in one sense the only revealed

book of the primitive Christianity, the writings of the apostolic age

were works arising from circumstances, making no pretentions to furnish

a completely dogmatic whole. The Gospels had at first an entirely

personal character, and much less authority than tradition.

Had not the sect, however, some sacrament, some rite, some rallying

point? It had the one which all tradition ascribes to Jesus. One of the

favourite notions of the master was that he was the new bread, a bread

very superior to manna, and on which mankind was to live. This notion,

the germ of the Eucharist, took in his mouth at times singularly

concrete forms. On one occasion especially, in the synagogue of

Capernaum, he took a bold step, which cost him several of his

disciples. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that

bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from

heaven." And he added, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me

shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

These words excited deep murmurings. The Jews then murmured at him

because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they

said, is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we

know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?" But

Jesus, insisting with still more force, said, "I am that bread of life;

your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the

bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not

die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat

of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give

is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The

ill-feeling was now at its height: "How can this man give us his flesh

to eat?" Jesus, going still further, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto

you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye

have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath

eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is

meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and

drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father

has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he

shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not

as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this

bread shall live for ever." Such paradoxical obstinacy offended several

of his disciples, who ceased to follow him. Jesus did not retract; he

only added: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth

nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are

life." The twelve remained faithful, despite this odd preaching. It

gave to Cephas, in particular, an opportunity of showing his absolute

devotion and of proclaiming once more, "Thou art that Christ, the Son

of the living God."

It is probable that henceforward in the common repasts of the sect,

there was established some custom which from the discourse was badly

received by the men of Capernaum. But the apostolic traditions on this

subject are very divergent and probably intentionally incomplete. The

synoptical gospels, whose account is confirmed by St. Paul, suppose

that a unique sacramental act served as basis to the mysterious rite,

and refer it to "the last supper." The fourth gospel, which has

accurately preserved to us the incident at the synagogue of Capernaum,

does not speak of such an act, although it describes the last supper at

great length. Elsewhere we see Jesus recognised in the breaking of

bread, as if this act had been to those who associated with him the

most characteristic of his person. When he was dead, the form under

which he appeared to the pious memory of his disciples was that of

chairman of a mysterious banquet, taking the bread, blessing it,

breaking and giving it to those present. It is probable that this was

one of his habits, and that at such times he was particularly amiable

and tender. One material circumstance, the presence of fish upon the

table (a striking indication, which proves that the rite was instituted

on the shore of Lake Tiberias), was itself almost sacramental, and

became a necessary part of the conceptions of the sacred feast.

Their repasts had become the sweetest moments of the infant community.

At these times they all assembled; the master spoke to each one, and

kept up a charming and lively conversation. Jesus loved these seasons,

and was pleased to see his spiritual family thus grouped around him.

The participation of the same bread was considered as a kind of

communion, a reciprocal bond. The master used, in this respect,

extremely strong terms, which were afterwards taken in a very literal

sense. Jesus was, at once, very idealistic in his conceptions and very

materialistic in his expression of them. Wishing to express the thought

that the believer lives only by him, that altogether (body, blood, and

soul) he was the life of the truly faithful, he said to his disciples,

"I am your nourishment,"--a phrase which, turned in figurative style,

became, "My flesh is your bread, my blood your drink." Then the modes

of speech employed by Jesus, always strongly subjective, carried him

yet further. At table, pointing to the food, he said, "I am here,"

holding the bread; "this is my body; holding up the wine, "This is my

blood,"--all modes of speech which were equivalent to, "I am your

nourishment."

This mysterious rite obtained in the lifetime of Jesus great

importance. It was probably established some time before the last

journey to Jerusalem, and it was the result of a general doctrine much

more than a determinate act. After the death of Jesus, it became the

great symbol of Christian communion, and it is to the most solemn

moment of the life of the Saviour that its establishment is referred.

It was wished to be shown in the consecration of bread and wine, a

farewell memorial which Jesus, at the moment of quitting life, had left

to his disciples. They recognised Jesus himself in this sacrament. The

wholly spiritual idea of the presence of souls, which was one of the

most familiar to the master, which made him say, for instance, that he

was personally with his disciples when they were assembled in his name,

rendered this easily admissible. Jesus, we have already said, never had

a very clear idea of that which constitutes individuality. In the

degree of exaltation to which he had attained, the ideal surpassed

everything to such an extent that the body counted for nothing. We are

one when we love one another, when we live in dependence on each other;

it was thus that he and his disciples were one. His disciples adopted

the same language. Those who for years had lived with him had seen him

constantly take the bread and the cup "between his holy and venerable

hands," and thus offer himself to them. It was he whom they ate and

drank; he became the true passover, the former one having been

abrogated by his blood. It is impossible to translate into our

essentially hard and fast tongue, in which a rigorous distinction

between the material and the metaphorical must always be observed,

habits of style whose essential character is to attribute to metaphor,

or rather to the idea it represents, a complete reality.

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CHAPTER XIX.

INCREASING PROGRESSION OF ENTHUSIASM AND OF EXALTATION.

It is clear that such a religious society, founded exclusively on the

expectation of the kingdom of God, must be in itself very incomplete.

The first Christian generation lived almost entirely upon expectations

and dreams. On the eve of seeing the world come to an end, it regarded

as useless everything which served but to prolong the world. The desire

to possess property was regarded as reprehensible. Everything which

attaches man to earth, everything which draws him aside from heaven,

was to be avoided. Although several of the disciples were married,

there was, it seems, to be no more marriage after one became a member

of the sect. The celibate was greatly preferred. At one time the master

seems to approve of those who should mutilate themselves in view of the

kingdom of God. In this he acted up to his precept. "If thy hand or thy

foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee; it is better

for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two

hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye

offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee

to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast

into hell-fire." The cessation of generation was often considered as

the symbol and condition of the kingdom of God.

We can perceive that this primitive Church never could have formed a

durable society but for the great variety of germs embraced in the

teaching of Jesus. It required more than another century for the true

Christian Church--that which has converted the world--to disengage

itself from this small sect of "latter-day saints," and to become a

framework applicable to the whole of human society. The same thing,

moreover, took place in Buddhism, which at first was founded only for

monks. The same thing would have happened in the order of St. Francis,

if that order had succeeded in its attempt to become the rule of the

whole of human society. Being Utopian in their origin, and succeeding

by their very exaggeration, the great systems of which we have just

been speaking have only spread over the world after being profoundly

modified, and after abandoning their excesses. Jesus did not overstep

this first and entirely monachal period, in which it was believed that

the impossible could be attempted with impunity. He did not make any

concession to necessity. He boldly preached war against nature and a

total rupture with the ties of blood. "Verily I say unto you," said he,

"there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or

wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive

manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life

everlasting."

The instruction which Jesus is alleged to have given to his disciples

breathes the same exaltation. He who was so lenient with the outside

world, he who contented himself sometimes with formal adhesions,

exercised towards his own an extreme rigour. He would have no "all

buts." We should call it an "order," founded upon the most austere

rules. Wrapped up in his idea that the cares of life trouble and debase

man, Jesus required of his companions a complete detachment from the

earth, an absolute devotion to his work. They ought not to carry with

them either money or provisions for the way, not even a scrip, or a

change of raiment. They ought to practise absolute poverty, live on

alms and hospitality. "Freely ye have received, freely give," said he,

in his beautiful language. Arrested and arraigned before the judges,

they were not to prepare their defence; the heavenly advocate would

inspire them as to what they should say. The Father would confer upon

them His spirit from on high. This spirit would regulate all their

acts, direct their thoughts, and guide them through the world. If

chased from one town, they were to cast at it the dust from their

shoes, and that none might plead ignorance, declaring always the

proximity of the religion of God. "Ye shall not have gone over the

cities of Israel," added he, "till the Son of man shall have appeared."

A strange ardour animates all these discourses, which may in part be

the creation of the enthusiasm of his disciples, but which even in that

case came indirectly from Jesus, since such enthusiasm was his work.

Jesus informed those who wanted to follow him that they would be

subjected to severe persecutions and the hatred of mankind. He sent

them forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. They would be scourged in

the synagogues, and dragged to prison. Brother should deliver up

brother to death, the father the son. When they were persecuted in one

country, they were to flee to another. "The disciple," said he, "is not

above his master, nor the servant above his lord. Fear not them which

kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Are not two sparrows

sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground

without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

"Whosoever, therefore," continued he, "shall confess me before men, him

will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever

shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which

is in heaven."

In these fits of severity he went the length of suppressing the desires

of the flesh. His requirements had no longer any bounds. Despising the

healthy limits of man's nature, he demanded that the latter should

exist only for him, that he should love him alone. "If any man come to

me," said he, "and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and

children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot

be my disciple. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not

all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." There was something

strange and more than human thus mixed up in his speech; it was like a

fire consuming light to its root, and reducing everything to a

frightful wilderness. The harsh and gloomy sentiment of distaste for

the world, and of the excessive self-abnegation which characterises

Christian perfection, was for the founders not the refined and cheerful

moralist of his earlier days, but the sombre giant whom a kind of

presentiment was withdrawing, more and more without the pale of

humanity. We should even say that, in these moments, when warring

against the most legitimate cravings of the heart, Jesus had forgotten

the pleasure of living, of loving, of seeing, and of feeling. Employing

more unmeasured language, he dared to say, "If any man will come after

me, let him deny himself and follow me. He that loveth father or mother

more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter

more than me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose

it, and he that loseth his life for my sake and the Gospel's shall find

it. What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose

his own soul?" Two anecdotes of the kind we cannot accept as

historical, which were intended to be an exaggeration of a trait of

character, clearly illustrating this defiance of nature. He said to one

man, "Follow me!"-- But he said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury

my father." Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou

and preach the kingdom of God." Another said to him, "Lord I will

follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home

at my house." Jesus replied, "No man, having put his hand to the plough

and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." An extraordinary

assurance, and at times accents of singular sweetness, reversing all

our ideas of him, made these exaggerations acceptable. "Come unto me,"

cried he, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly

in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy,

and my burden is light."

A great danger might result in the future from this exalted memory,

which was expressed in hyperbolical language and with a terrible

energy. By thus detaching man from earth, the ties of life were

severed. The Christian would be praised for being a bad son, or a bad

patriot, if it was for Christ that he resisted his father and fought

against his country. The ancient city, the parent republic, the state,

or the law common to all, were thus placed in hostility with the

kingdom of God. A fatal germ of theocracy was introduced into the

world.

From this point another consequence may be perceived. This morality,

invented for a time of crisis, being transported into a peaceful

country, into the bosom of a society assured of its own duration, must

seem impossible. The Gospel was thus destined to become for Christians

a Utopia, which very few would give themselves the trouble to inquire

into. These terrible maxims, for the greater number sunk into profound

oblivion, were encouraged by the clergy itself; the Gospel man was a

dangerous man. The most selfish, proud, hard, and worldly of all human

beings, a Louis XIV., for instance, found priests to persuade him, in

spite of the Gospel, that he was a Christian. But, on the other hand,

there have always been holy men who accepted the sublime paradoxes of

Jesus literally. Perfection being placed beyond the ordinary conditions

of society, a complete Gospel life could only be led away from the

world, and thus the principle of asceticism and of monasticism was

established. Christian societies would have two moral rules; the one

moderately heroic for common men, the other exalted in the extreme for

the perfect man; and the perfect man would be the monk, subjected to

rules which professed to realise the Gospel ideal. It is certain that

this ideal, were it only on account of the celibacy and poverty it

imposed, could not become the common law. The monk would thus, in some

respects, be the only true Christian. Ordinary common sense revolts at

these excesses; and to believe in the latter is to believe that the

impossible is a mark of weakness and error. But ordinary common sense

is a bad judge where the question at issue has reference to great

things. To obtain little from humanity, we must ask much. The immense

moral progress due the Gospel is the result of its exaggerations. It is

thus that it has been, like stoicism, but with infinitely greater

fulness, a living argument for the divine powers, which are, in man, an

exalted monument of the potency of the will.

We may readily imagine that to Jesus, at this period of his life,

everything which did not belong to the kingdom of God had absolutely

disappeared. He was, if we may say so, totally outside nature: family,

friendship, country, had no longer any meaning for him. He, no doubt,

from this moment, had already sacrificed his life. At times, we are

tempted to believe that, seeing in his own death a means of founding

his kingdom, he conceived the purpose of allowing himself to be killed.

At other times, although such a thought was only afterwards erected

into a doctrine, death presented itself to him as a sacrifice, destined

to appease his Father and to save mankind. A singular taste for

persecution and torments possessed him. His blood appeared to him as

the water of a second baptism with which he ought to be saturated, and

he seemed possessed by a strange haste to anticipate this baptism,

which alone could quench his thirst.

The grandeur of his views upon the future was at times surprising. He

did not deceive himself as to the terrible storm he was about to cause

in the world. "Think not," said he, boldly and beautifully, "that I am

come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

There shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two

against three. I am come to set a man at variance against his father,

and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against

her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own

household." "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if

it be already kindled?" "They shall put you out of the synagogues," he

continued; "yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think

that he doeth God service." "If the world hate you, ye know that it

hated me before it hated you. Remember the word that I said unto you:

The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me,

they will also persecute you."

Carried away by this fearfully increasing enthusiasm, and governed by

the necessities of a preaching more and more exalted, Jesus was no

longer free; he belonged to his mission, and, in one sense, to mankind.

Sometimes it might have been averred that his reason was disturbed. He

suffered great mental anguish and agitation. The great vision of the

kingdom of God, dangling constantly before his eyes, bewildered him. It

must be remembered that, at times, those about him believed him to be

mad, while his enemies declared him to be possessed. His excessively

impassioned temperament carried him incessantly beyond the bounds of

human nature. His work not being a work of the reason, jeering at all

the laws of the human mind, that which he most imperiously required was

"faith." This was the word most frequently repeated in the little

guest-chamber. It is the watchword of all popular movements. It is

clear that none of these movements would take place, if it were

necessary that their author should gain his disciples one by one by

force of logic. Reflection leads only to doubt, and if the authors of

the French Revolution, for instance, had had to be previously convinced

by lengthened meditations, they would all have become old without

accomplishing anything. Jesus, in like manner, aimed less at convincing

his hearers than at exciting their enthusiasm. Urgent and imperative,

he suffered no opposition: men must be converted, nothing less would

satisfy him. His natural gentleness seemed to have abandoned him; he

was sometimes harsh and capricious. His disciples at times did not

understand him, and experienced in his presence a feeling akin to fear.

Sometimes his displeasure at the slightest opposition led him to commit

inexplicable and apparently absurd acts.

It was not that his virtue deteriorated; but his struggle in the cause

of the ideal against the reality became insupportable. Contact with the

world pained and revolted him. Obstacles irritated him. His notion of

the Son of God became disturbed and exaggerated. One is such at certain

times, through sudden illuminations, and is lost in the midst of long

obscurities. Divinity has its intermittencies; one is not the Son of

God all his life and in consecutive manner. The fatal law which

condemns an idea to decay as soon as it seeks to convert men, was

applicable to Jesus. Contact with men degraded him to their level. The

tone he had adopted could not be sustained beyond a few months; it was

time that death came to liberate him from an endurance strained to the

utmost, to remove him from the impossibilities of an interminable path,

and by delivering him from a trial in danger of being too prolonged,

introduce him henceforth sinless into celestial peace.

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CHAPTER XX.

OPPOSITION TO JESUS.

During the early period of his career, Jesus does not appear to have

encountered any serious opposition. His preaching, thanks to the

extreme liberty which was enjoyed in Galilee, and to the great number

of teachers who arose on all sides, made no noise outside a somewhat

restricted circle of persons. But when Jesus entered upon a career

brilliant with prodigies and public successes, the storm began to howl.

More than once he was obliged to conceal himself and fly. Antipas,

however, never interfered with him, although Jesus expressed himself

sometimes very severely respecting him. At Tiberias, his usual

residence, the Tetrarch was only one or two leagues distant from the

district chosen by Jesus for the field of his activity; he was told of

his miracles, which he doubtless took to be clever tricks, and desired

to see them. The incredulous were at that time very curious about this

sort of illusions. With his ordinary tact, Jesus refused to gratify

him. He took care not to be led astray by an irreligious world, which

wished to extort from him some idle amusement; he aspired only to gain

the people; he reserved for the simple, means suitable to them alone.

Once the report was spread that Jesus was no other than John the

Baptist risen from the dead. Antipas became anxious and uneasy; he

employed artifice to rid his dominions of the new prophet. Certain

Pharisees, under the pretence of being interested in Jesus, came to

tell him that Antipas was seeking to kill him. Jesus, despite his great

simplicity, saw the snare, and did not depart. His wholly pacific

attractions, and his remoteness from popular agitation, ultimately

reassured the Tetrarch and dissipated the danger.

The new doctrine was by no means received with equal favour in all the

towns of Galilee. Not only did incredulous Nazareth continue to reject

him who was to become her glory; not only did his brothers persist in

not believing in him, but also the cities of the lake themselves, in

general well-disposed, were not wholly converted. Jesus often

complained of the incredulity and hardness of heart which he

encountered, and although it is natural in such reproaches to make

allowance for a certain kind of exaggeration of the preacher, although

we are sensible of that kind of convicium seculi which Jesus affected

in imitation of John the Baptist, it is clear that the country was far

from yielding itself entirely to the kingdom of God. "Woe unto thee,

Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" cried he; "for if the mighty

works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they

would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto

you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of

judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto

heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works, which

have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained

until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for

the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." "The queen of

the south," added he, "shall rise up in the judgment against the men of

this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost

parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater

than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with

this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the

preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here." His

roaming life, at first so full of charm, now began to weigh upon him.

"The foxes," said he, "have holes, and the birds of the air have nests;

but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He accused

unbelievers of not yielding to evidence.

Jesus, in fact, could not withstand opposition with the coolness of the

philosopher, who, understanding the reason of the various opinions

which divide the world, finds it quite natural that all should not be

of his opinion. One of the principal defects of the Jewish race is its

harshness in controversy, and the abusive tone which it almost always

infuses into it. There never were in the world such bitter quarrels as

those of the Jews among themselves. It is the sentiment of nice

discernment which makes the polished and moderate man. Now, the lack of

this feeling is one of the most constant features of the Semitic mind.

Refined works, such as the dialogues of Plato, for example, are

altogether foreign to these nations. Jesus, who was exempt from almost

all the defects of his race, and whose dominant quality was precisely

an infinite delicacy, was led in spite of himself to make use of the

general style in polemics. Like John the Baptist, he employed very

harsh terms against his adversaries. Of an exquisite gentleness with

the simple, he was irritated in presence of incredulity, however little

aggressive. He was no longer the mild teacher who delivered the "Sermon

on the Mount," who as yet had met with neither resistance nor

difficulty. The passion that underlay his character led him to make use

of the keenest invectives. This singular mixture ought not to surprise

us. A man of our own times, M. de Lamennais, has forcibly presented the

same contrast. In his beautiful book, "The Words of a Believer," the

most immoderate anger and the sweetest relentings alternate, as in a

mirage. This man, who was extremely kind in the intercourse of life,

became foolishly intractable toward those who did not think as he did.

Jesus, in like manner, applied to himself, not without reason, the

passage from Isaiah: "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any

man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break,

and smoking flax shall he not quench." And yet many of the

recommendations which he addressed to his disciples contain the germs

of a real fanaticism, germs which the Middle Ages were to develop in a

cruel manner. Must we reproach him for this? No revolution can be

effected without some harshness. If Luther, or the actors in the French

Revolution, had had to observe the rules of politeness, neither the

Reformation nor the Revolution would have taken place. Let us

congratulate ourselves in like manner that Jesus encountered no law

which punished the outrageous denunciation of one class of citizens.

The Pharisees in such a case would have been inviolate. All the great

things of humanity have been accomplished in the name of absolute

principles. A critical philosopher would have said to his disciples:

Respect the opinion of others, and believe that no one is so completely

right that his adversary is completely wrong. But the action of Jesus

has nothing in common with the disinterested speculation of the

philosopher. To say that we have touched the ideal for a moment, and

have been deterred by the wickedness of a few, is a thought

insupportable to an ardent soul. What must it have been for the founder

of a new world?

The invincible obstacle to the designs of Jesus came in particular from

orthodox Judaism, represented by the Pharisees. Jesus drifted away more

and more from the ancient Law. Now, the Pharisees were the backbone of

Judaism. Although this party had its centre at Jerusalem, it had,

nevertheless, adherents either established in Galilee or who often came

to the North. They were, in general, men of a narrow mind, giving much

attention to externals; with a devoutness that was haughty, formal, and

self-satisfied. Their manners were ridiculous, and excited the smiles

of even those who respected them. The epithets which the people gave

them, and which savour of caricature, prove this. There was the

"bandy-legged Pharisee" (Nikfi), who walked in the streets dragging his

feet and knocking them against the stones; the "bloody-browed Pharisee"

(Kizai), who went with his eyes shut in order not to see the women, and

dashed his head so much against the walls that it was always bloody;

the "pestle Pharisee" (Medoukia), who kept himself bent double like the

handle of a pestle; the "Pharisee of strong shoulders" (Schikmi), who

walked with his back bent as if he carried on his shoulders the whole

burden of the Law; the "What-is-there-to-do?-I-do-it Pharisee," always

on the outlook for a precept to fulfil. To these we must add the "dyed

Pharisee," whose whole outward devotion was but a varnish of hypocrisy.

This rigourism was, in fact, often only apparent, and concealed in

reality great moral laxity. The people, nevertheless, were duped by it.

The people, whose instinct is always right, even when it goes furthest

astray on the question of individuals, is very easily deceived by false

devotees. That which it loves in them is good and worthy of being

loved; but it has not sufficient penetration to distinguish the

appearance from the reality.

The antipathy which, in such an impassioned state of society, would

necessarily break out between Jesus and persons of this character is

easy to understand. Jesus sought only the religion of the heart; the

religion of the Pharisees consisted almost exclusively in observances.

Jesus sought after the humble and all kinds of outcasts; the Pharisees

saw in this an insult to their religion of respectability. The Pharisee

was an infallible and impeccable man, a pedant always certain of being

in the right, taking the first place in the synagogue, praying in the

street, giving alms to the sound of a trumpet, and watching to see

whether people saluted him. Jesus maintained that each one ought to

await the judgment of God with fear and trembling. The bad religious

tendency represented by Pharisaism by no means reigned without

opposition. Many men before or during the time of Jesus, such as Jesus,

son of Sirach (one of the real ancestors of Jesus of Nazareth),

Gamaliel, Antigonus of Soco, and especially the gentle and noble

Hillel, had taught much more elevated and almost Gospel doctrines. But

these good seeds had been choked. The beautiful maxims of Hillel,

summing up the whole Law as equity, and those of Jesus, son of Sirach,

making worship consist in the pursuit of the good, were forgotten or

anathematised. Shammai, with his narrow and exclusive mind, had

prevailed. An enormous mass of "traditions" had stifled the Law, under

the pretext of protecting and interpreting it. No doubt these

conservative measures had their useful side; it is well that the Jewish

people loved its Law even to madness, inasmuch as this frantic love in

saving Mosaism under Antiochus Epiphanes and under Herod, preserved the

leaven necessary for the production of Christianity. But taken by

themselves, these obsolete precautions we speak of were only puerile.

The synagogue, which was the depository of them, was no more than a

parent of error. Its reign was ended; and yet to ask for its abdication

was to ask for that which an established power has never done or been

able to do.

The conflicts of Jesus with official hypocrisy were continual. The

ordinary tactics of the reformers who appeared in the religious state

which we have just described, and which might be called "traditional

formalism," were to oppose the "text" of the sacred books to

"traditions." Religious zeal is always an innovator, even when it

pretends to be in the highest degree conservative. Just as the

neo-Catholics of our days are getting further and further away from the

Gospel, so the Pharisees, at each step, got further away from the

Bible. This is why the Puritan reformer is as a rule essentially

"biblical," setting out with the unchangeable text in order to

criticise the current theology, which has changed from generation to

generation. Thus acted later the Karaites and the Protestants. Jesus

applied the axe to the root of the tree much more energetically. True,

we see him sometimes quoting texts against the false masores or

traditions of the Pharisees. But, in general, he set little store by

exegesis; it was the conscience to which he appealed. With the same

stroke he cut through both text and commentaries. He showed indeed to

the Pharisees that by their traditions they seriously perverted

Mosaism, but he by no means pretended himself to return to Mosaism. His

goal was the future, not the past. Jesus was more than the reformer of

an obsolete religion; he was the founder of the eternal religion of

humanity.

Disputes broke out, especially in regard to a number of external

practices introduced by tradition, a tradition which neither Jesus nor

his disciples observed. The Pharisees reproached him sharply for this.

When he dined with them he scandalised them greatly by not going

through the customary ablutions. "Give alms," said he, "of such things

as ye have; and behold, all things are clean unto you." That which in

the highest degree wounded his sensitive nature was the air of

assurance which the Pharisees carried into religious matters; their

contemptible devotion which ended in a vain seeking after precedents

and titles, and not the improvement of their hearts. An admirable

parable expressed this thought with infinite charm and justice. "Two

men," said he, "went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee,

and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with

himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,

extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast

twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the

publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto

heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a

sinner. I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather

than the other."

A hatred which death alone could assuage was the consequence of these

struggles. John the Baptist had previously provoked enmities of the

same kind. But the aristocrats of Jerusalem, who despised him, had

allowed simple men to regard him as a prophet. In this case, however,

the war was to the death. It was a new spirit that had appeared in the

world, which shattered all that had preceded it. John the Baptist was a

thorough Jew: Jesus was scarcely one at all. Jesus always addressed

himself to refined moral sentiment. He was only a disputant when he

argued against the Pharisees, his opponents forcing him, as almost

always happens, to adopt their tone. His exquisite irony, his stinging

remarks, always went to the heart. They were everlasting stings, and

have remained festering in the wound. This Nessus-shirt of ridicule

which the Jew, son of the Pharisees, has dragged in tatters after him

during eighteen centuries, was woven by Jesus with a divine skill.

Masterpieces of fine raillery, their features are written in lines of

fire upon the flesh of the hypocrite and the false devotee.

Incomparable traits worthy of a Son of God! A god alone knows how to

kill in this way. Socrates and Moli�re only grazed the skin. The former

carried fire and rage to the very marrow.

But it was also just that this great master of irony should pay for his

triumph with his life. Even in Galilee the Pharisees sought to kill

him, and employed against him the manoeuvre which ultimately succeeded

at Jerusalem. They endeavoured to interest in their quarrel the

partisans of the new political order which was established. The

facilities Jesus found for escaping into Galilee, and the weakness of

the government of Antipas, baffled these attempts. He exposed himself

to danger of his own free will. He saw clearly that his action, if he

remained interned in Galilee, was necessarily limited. Judea attracted

him as by a charm; he wished to put forth a last effort to gain over

the rebellious city, and seemed anxious to undertake the task of

fulfilling the proverb--that a prophet must not die outside Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER XXI.

LAST JOURNEY OF JESUS TO JERUSALEM.

For a long time Jesus had been conscious of the dangers which

surrounded him. During a period which we may estimate at eighteen

months, he avoided going on a pilgrimage to the holy city. At the feast

of Tabernacles of the year 32 (according to the hypothesis we have

adopted), his relations, always malevolent and incredulous, persuaded

him to go there. The evangelist seems to insinuate that there was some

hidden project to ruin him in this invitation. "Depart hence, and go

into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself

seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to

the world." Jesus, suspecting some treachery, at first refused; but

when the caravan of pilgrims had set out, he started on the journey,

unknown to every one, and almost alone. It was the last farewell which

he bade to Galilee. The feast of Tabernacles fell at the autumnal

equinox. Six months had still to run before the fatal denouement. But,

during this interval, Jesus did not again see his beloved provinces of

the north. The pleasant days are passed; he must now traverse, step by

step, the sorrowful path which will terminate in the anguish of death.

His disciples and the pious women who ministered to him found him again

in Judea. But how much everything else was changed for him! Jesus was a

stranger at Jerusalem. He felt that there was a wall of resistance he

could not pierce. Surrounded by snares and obstacles, he was

unceasingly pursued by the ill-will of the Pharisees. In place of that

illimitable faculty of belief, the happy gift of youthful natures,

which he found in Galilee--instead of those good and gentle people,

amongst whom opposition (always the fruit to some extent of ill-will

and indocility) had no existence, he encountered there at each step an

obstinate incredulity, upon which the policy that had succeeded so well

in the north had little effect. His disciples were despised as being

Galileans. Nicodemus, who, on one of his former journeys, had had a

conversation with him by night, almost compromised himself with the

Sanhedrim, by having sought to defend him. "Art thou also of Galilee

they said to him. "Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no

prophet."

The city, as we have already said, was disliked by Jesus. Until then he

had always eschewed great centres, preferring to pursue his avocation

in the country and the towns of small importance. Many of the precepts

which he had given to his apostles were absolutely inapplicable outside

a simple society of humble men. Having no idea of the world, and

accustomed to the amiable communism of Galilee, remarks continually

escaped him, the simplicity of which at Jerusalem would appear very

singular. His imagination and his love of nature found themselves

restrained within these walls. True religion does not proceed from the

tumult of towns, but from the tranquil serenity of the fields.

The arrogance of the priests rendered the precincts of the temple

disagreeable to him. One day some of his disciples, who were better

acquainted with Jerusalem than he, wished to draw his attention to the

beauty of the buildings of the temple, the admirable choice of

materials, and the richness of the votive offerings that covered the

walls. "Seest thou these buildings?" said he; "there shall not be left

one stone upon another." He refused to admire anything, unless it was a

poor widow who passed at that moment, and threw a small coin into the

box. "She has cast in more than they all," said he; "for all these have

of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her

penury hath cast in all the living that she had." This manner of

regarding critically all that was going on at Jerusalem, of extolling

the poor who gave little, of slighting the rich who gave much, and of

blaming the opulent priesthood who did nothing for the good of the

people, naturally exasperated the sacerdotal caste. The seat of a

conservative aristocracy, the temple, like the Mussulman karam which

succeeded it, was the last place in the world whence revolution could

succeed. Imagine for a moment an innovator in our days going to preach

the overturning of Islamism round the mosque of Omar! Jerusalem,

however, was the centre of the Jewish life, the point where it was

necessary to conquer or die. On this Calvary, where Jesus certainly

suffered more than at Golgotha, his days passed away in disputation and

bitterness, in the midst of tedious controversies as to canonical law

and exegesis, for which his great moral elevation served him to little

purpose--nay, placed him rather at a disadvantage.

In the midst of this troubled life, the sensitive and kindly heart of

Jesus succeeded in creating a refuge, where he enjoyed much soft

contentment. After having passed the day disputing in the temple,

towards evening Jesus descended into the valley of Kedron, and took a

little repose in the orchard of a farming establishment (probably for

the making of oil) named Gethsemane (which was used as a pleasure

resort by the inhabitants), after which he proceeded to pass the night

upon the Mount of Olives, which limits on the east the horizon of the

city. This side is the only one, in the environs of Jerusalem, which

presents an aspect somewhat pleasing and verdant. The plantations of

olives, figs, and palms were numerous around the villages, farms, or

enclosures of Bethphage, Gethsemane, and Bethany. There were upon the

Mount of Olives two great cedars, the recollection of which was long

preserved amongst the dispersed Jews; their branches served as an

asylum to clouds of doves, and under their shade were established small

bazaars. All this precinct was in a manner the abode of Jesus and his

disciples; we can see that they knew it almost field by field and house

by house.

The village of Bethany, in particular, situated at the summit of the

hill, upon the incline which commands the Dead Sea and the Jordan, at a

journey of an hour and a half from Jerusalem, was the place preferred

by Jesus. He made there the acquaintance of a family consisting of

three persons, two sisters and a third member, whose friendship had a

great charm for him. Of the two sisters, the one, named Martha, was an

obliging, kind, and bustling person; the other, named Mary, on the

contrary, pleased Jesus by a sort of languor, and by her

strongly-developed speculative instincts. Often, when seated at the

feet of Jesus, she forgot, in listening to him, the duties of real

life. Her sister, upon whom fell all the duty at such times, gently

complained. "Martha, Martha," said Jesus to her, "thou art troubled,

and carest about many things; now, one thing only is needful. Mary has

chosen the better part, which will not be taken away." A certain Simon,

the leper, who was the owner of the house, appears to have been the

brother of Martha and Mary, or, at least, to have formed part of the

family. It was there, in the midst of a pious friendship, that Jesus

forgot the vexations of public life. In this tranquil abode he consoled

himself for the bickerings with which the Pharisees and the scribes

unceasingly irritated him. He often sat on the Mount of Olives, facing

Mount Moriah, having beneath his view the splendid perspective of the

terraces of the temple, and its roofs covered with glittering plates of

metal. This view struck strangers with admiration. At the rising of the

sun, especially, the sacred mountain dazzled the eyes, and appeared

like a mass of snow and of gold. But a profound feeling of sadness

poisoned for Jesus the spectacle that filled all other Israelites with

joy and pride. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets,

and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have

gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens

under her wings, and ye would not."

It was not that many good people here, as in Galilee, were not touched.

But such was the power of the dominant orthodoxy that very few dared to

confess it. They feared to discredit themselves in the eyes of the

Jerusalemites by placing themselves in the school of a Galilean. They

would have risked being driven from the synagogue, which, in a mean and

bigoted society, was the greatest affront. Excommunication, besides,

carried with it the confiscation of all possessions. By ceasing to be a

Jew a man did not become a Roman; he remained without protection in the

power of a theocratic legislation of the most atrocious severity. One

day the inferior officers of the temple, who had assisted at one of the

discourses of Jesus, and had been enchanted with it, came to confide

their doubts to the priests. "Have any of the rulers or of the

Pharisees believed on him?" was the reply to them; " but this people

who knoweth not the Law are cursed." Jesus remained thus at Jerusalem,

a provincial, admired by provincials like himself, but spurned by all

the aristocracy of the nation. The chiefs of the school were too

numerous for any one to be stirred by seeing one more appear. His voice

made little noise in Jerusalem. The prejudices of race and of sect, the

direct enemies of the spirit of the Gospel, were too deeply rooted

there.

The teaching of Jesus in this new world necessarily became much

modified. His beautiful discourses, the effect of which was always

calculated upon when addressed to youthful imaginations and consciences

morally pure, here fell upon stone. He who was so much at his ease on

the shores of his charming little lake felt constrained and not at home

in the company of pedants. His perpetual self-assertion appeared

somewhat fastidious. He was obliged to become controversialist, jurist,

exegetist, and theologian. His conversations, generally so full of

charm, became a rolling fire of disputes, an interminable train of

scholastic battles. His harmonious genius was wasted in insipid

argumentations upon the Law and the prophets, in which case we should

have preferred not seeing him sometimes play the part of aggressor. He

lent himself with a condescension which wounds us to the captious

criticisms to which the merciless cavillers subjected him. In general,

he extricated himself from difficulties with much finesse. His

reasonings, it is true, were often subtle (simplicity of mind and

subtlety touch each other; when simplicity reasons, it is often a

little sophistical); we find that sometimes he courted misconceptions,

and prolonged them intentionally; his argumentation, judged according

to the rules of Aristotelian logic, was very feeble. But when the

unequalled charm of his mind could be displayed, he was triumphant. One

day it was intended to embarrass him by presenting to him an adulteress

and asking him what was to be done to her. We know the admirable answer

of Jesus. The fine raillery of a man of the world, tempered by a divine

goodness, could not be expressed in a more exquisite manner. But the

wit which is allied to moral grandeur is that which fools forgive the

least. In pronouncing this sentence of so just and pure a taste, "He

that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,"

Jesus pierced hypocrisy to the heart, and with the same stroke sealed

his own death-warrant.

It is probable, in fact, that but for the exasperation caused by so

many bitter retorts, Jesus might long have remained unnoticed, and have

been lost in the dreadful storm which was soon about to overwhelm the

whole Jewish nation. The high priesthood and Sadducees treated him

rather with disdain than hatred. The great sacerdotal families, the

Boethusim, the family of Hanan, were only fanatical in their

conservatism. The Sadducees, like Jesus, rejected the "traditions" of

the Pharisees. By a very strange singularity, it was these unbelievers

who, denying the resurrection, the oral Law, and the existence of

angels, were the true Jews. Or rather, as the old Law in its simplicity

no longer satisfied the religious wants of the time, those who strictly

adhered to it, and rejected modern inventions, were regarded by the

devotees as impious, just as an evangelical Protestant of the present

day is regarded as an unbeliever in orthodox countries. At all events,

from such a party no very strong reaction against Jesus could proceed.

The official priesthood, with its eyes turned towards political power,

and intimately connected with it, did not comprehend these enthusiastic

movements. It was the middle-class Pharisees, the innumerable soferim,

or scribes, living on the science of "traditions," who took the alarm,

and whose prejudices and interests were in reality threatened by the

doctrine of the new teacher.

One of the most constant efforts of the Pharisees was to draw Jesus

into the discussion of political questions, and to compromise him as

being connected with the party of Judas the Gaulonite. Their tactics

were clever; for it required all the great ingenuity of Jesus to avoid

conflict with the Roman authority, whilst he was proclaiming the

kingdom of God. They sought to break through this ambiguity, and compel

him to explain himself. One day, a group of Pharisees, and of those

politicians named "Herodians" (probably some of the Boethusim),

approached him, and, under pretence of pious zeal, said unto him,

"Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in

truth, neither carest thou for any man. Tell us, therefore, what

thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto C�sar, or not?" They

hoped for an answer, which would give them a pretext for delivering him

up to Pilate. The reply of Jesus was admirable. He made them show him

the image of the coin. "Render," said he, "unto C�sar the things which

are C�sar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Sage words, which

have decided the future of Christianity! Words of a perfected

spiritualism, and of marvellous justness, which have established the

separation between the spiritual and the temporal, and laid the basis

of true liberalism and true civilisation!

His gentle and penetrating genius inspired him when he was alone with

his disciples, with accents full of tenderness! "Verily, verily, I say

unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but

climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he

that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The sheep

hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them

out. He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his

voice. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to

destroy. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own

the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and

fleeth. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of

mine; and I lay down my life for the sheep." The idea that the crisis

of humanity was close at hand frequently recurred to him. "Now," said

he, "learn a parable of the fig-tree: When his branch is yet tender,

and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. Lift up your

eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

His powerful eloquence found expression always when contending with

hypocrisy. "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All,

therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do

not ye after their works: for they say and do not. For they bind heavy

burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but

they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

"But all their works they do to be seen of men; they make broad their

phylacteries, enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the

uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and

greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. Woe

unto them! . . . . . .

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye have taken

away the key of knowledge, shut up the kingdom of heaven against men!

For ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are

entering to go in. Woe unto you, for ye devour widows' houses, and for

a pretence, make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater

damnation. Woe unto you, for ye compass sea and land to make one

proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of

hell than yourselves! Woe unto you, for ye are as graves which appear

not; and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

"Ye fools, and blind! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin,

and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and

faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel! Woe unto

you!

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the

outside of the cup and of the platter; but within they are full of

extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is

within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto

whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are

within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleannesss. Even so ye

also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of

hypocrisy and iniquity.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the

tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and

say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been

partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Wherefore, ye be

witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which

killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Therefore, also,' said the Wisdom of God, I will send unto you

prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and

crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and

persecute them from city to city. That upon you may come all the

righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel

unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Bacharias, whom ye slew between the

temple and the altar.' Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall

come upon this generation."

His terrible dogma of the substitution of the Gentiles,--the idea that

the kingdom of God was going to be transferred to others, because those

for whom it was destined would not receive it, is used as a fearful

menace against the aristocracy, and his title "Son of God," which he

openly assumed in striking parables, wherein his enemies appeared as

murderers of the heavenly messengers, was an open defiance of legal

Judaism. The bold appeal he addressed to the poor was still more

seditious. He declared that he had "come that they which see not might

see, and that they which see might be made blind." One day, his dislike

of the temple forced from him an imprudent speech: "I will destroy this

temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build

another made without hands." We do not know what meaning Jesus attached

to this phrase, in which his disciples sought for allegories. But as

only a pretext was wanted, this sentence was quickly laid hold of. It

reappeared in the preamble of his death-warrant, and rang in the ears

amidst his last agonies of Golgotha. These irritating discussions

always ended in tumult. The Pharisees threw stones at him; in doing

which they only fulfilled an article of the Law, which commanded that

every prophet, even a thaumaturgist, who should turn the people from

the ancient worship, be stoned without a hearing. At other times they

called him mad, possessed, Samaritan, or even sought to kill him. These

words were taken note of in order to invoke against him the laws of an

intolerant theocracy, which the Roman government had not yet abrogated.

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CHAPTER XXII.

MACHINATIONS OF THE ENEMIES OF JESUS.

Jesus passed the autumn and a part of the winter at Jerusalem. This

season is there rather cold. The portico of Solomon, with its covered

aisles, was the place where he habitually walked. This portico, the

only portion of the ancient temple which remained, consisted of two

galleries, formed by two rows of columns, by the wall which overlooked

the valley of Kedron, which was doubtless less covered with debris than

it is at the present time. The depth of the ravine could not be

measured from the height of the portico; and it seemed, in consequence

of the angle of the slopes, as if an abyss opened immediately beneath

the wall. The other side of the valley even at that time was adorned

with sumptuous tombs. Some of the monuments, which may be seen at the

present day, were perhaps those cenotaphs in honour of ancient prophets

which Jesus pointed out, when, seated under the portico, he denounced

the official classes, who covered their hypocrisy or their vanity by

these colossal piles.

At the end of the month of December he celebrated at Jerusalem the

feast established by Judas Maccabeus in memory of the purification of

the temple after the sacrileges of Antiochus Epiphanes. It was also

called the "Feast of Lights," because, during the eight days of the

feast, lamps were kept lighted in the houses. Jesus soon after

undertook a journey into Perea and to the banks of the Jordan, --that

is to say, into the same country he had visited some years previously,

when he belonged to the school of John, and where he himself had

administered baptism. He seems to have reaped some consolation from

this journey, specially at Jericho. This city, either as the terminus

of several important routes, or on account of its gardens of spices and

its rich cultivation, was a customs station of some importance. The

chief receiver, Zaccheus, a rich man, desired to see Jesus. As he was

of small stature, he mounted a sycamore tree near the road which the

procession had to pass. Jesus was touched with this condescension in a

person of consideration, and at the risk of giving offence he went to

the house of Zaccheus. There was much murmuring at his thus honouring

the house of a sinner by a visit. In parting, Jesus described his host

as a good son of Abraham; and, as if to add to the vexation of the

orthodox, Zaccheus became a Christian; he gave, it is said, the half of

his goods to the poor, and restored fourfold to those whom he might

have wronged. Further, this was not the only pleasure Jesus experienced

there. On leaving the town, the beggar Bartimeus pleased him much by

persistently calling him "son of David," although he was enjoined to be

silent. The cycle of Galilean miracles appeared for a time to

recommence in this country, a country similar in many respects to the

provinces of the north. The delightful oasis of Jericho, at that time

well watered, must have been one of the most beautiful places in Syria.

Josephus speaks of it with the same admiration as of Galilee, and calls

it, like the latter province, a "divine country."

After Jesus had completed this kind of pilgrimage to the scenes of his

earliest prophetic activity, he returned to his beloved abode in

Bethany. That which most pained the faithful Galileans at Jerusalem was

that he had not done any miracles there. Grieved at the cold reception

which the kingdom of God found in the capital, the friends of Jesus

wished, it seems, for a great miracle which should strike powerfully

the incredulity of the Jerusalemites. A resurrection of a man known at

Jerusalem appeared to them the most likely to carry conviction. It is

to be supposed that Martha and Mary had spoken to Jesus on the subject.

We must bear in mind that the essential condition of true criticism is

to understand the diversity of times, and to rid ourselves of the

instinctive repugnances which are the fruit of a purely rational

education. We must also remember that in this dull and impure city of

Jerusalem Jesus was no longer himself. Not by any fault of his own, but

by that of others, his conscience had lost something of its originate

purity. Desperate, and driven to extremity, he was no longer his own

master. His mission overwhelmed him, and he yielded to the torrent. As

always happens in the lives of great and inspired men, he suffered the

miracles opinion demanded of him rather than performed them. At this

distance of time, and with only a single text, bearing evident traces

of artifices of composition, it is impossible to decide whether in this

instance the whole is fiction, or whether a real fact which happened at

Bethany has served as basis to the rumours which were spread about it.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the way John narrates the

incident differs widely from those descriptions of miracles, the

offspring of the popular imagination, which fill the synoptics. Let us

add that John is the only evangelist who has a precise knowledge of the

relations of Jesus with the family of Bethany, and that it is

impossible to believe that a mere creation of the popular mind could

exist in a collection of remembrances so entirely personal. "If one was

raised from the dead, perhaps the living would repent," was no doubt

the remark made by the pious sisters. "No," was the response of Jesus;

"even though one rose from the dead, they would not be persuaded;"

recalling next a story which was familiar to him--that of the pious

beggar, covered with sores, who died and was carried by angels to

Abraham's bosom. "Even should Lazarus return," he might have added,

"they would not be persuaded." Later on this subject was treated with

singular levity. The hypothesis became a fact. People spoke of the

resurrected Lazarus, and of the unpardonable obstinacy which could

resist such testimony. The "sores" of Lazarus and the "leprosy" of

Simon the leper were confounded, and it was admitted in one part of the

tradition that Mary and Martha had a brother named Lazarus, whom Jesus

had raised from the dead. When we know that such inaccuracies, such

cock-and-bull stories, form the gossip of an Eastern city, we cannot

regard it as impossible that a rumour of that kind had spread to

Jerusalem of the life of Jesus, and the consequences of which were

fatal to him.

Certain notable indications, in fact, lead us to the belief that some

of the reports received from Bethany had the effect of hastening the

death of Jesus. At times we are led to suppose that the family of

Bethany were guilty of some indiscretions or plunged into an excess of

zeal. It was probably the ardent desire of closing the mouth of those

who vigorously denied the divine mission of their friend which carried

these passionate persons beyond all reasonable limits. It must be

remembered that in this impure and inanimate city of Jerusalem Jesus

was not quite himself His conscience, through a fault of the people and

not his own, had lost something of his primordial sincerity. Desperate

and pressed to extremes, he no longer was master of himself. His

mission had been imposed on him, and he pursued it fearlessly. Death

would in a few days restore him his divine liberty, and wrench him away

from the fatal necessities of a position which each day was becoming

more exacting and more difficult to sustain.

The contrast between his always increasing exaltation and the

indifference of the Jews became more and more marked. The power of the

State, at the same time, became more bitter against him. From the

beginning of February to the commencement of March a council had been

assembled by the chief priests, and in that council the question had

been pointedly put, "Can Jesus and Judaism exist together?" To raise

the question was to reserve it; and, without being a prophet, as

thought by the evangelist, the high priest could easily pronounce his

cruel axiom, "It is expedient that one man should die for the people."

"The high priest of that same year," to use an expression of the fourth

Gospel, which shows clearly the state of abasement to which the

sovereign pontificate was reduced, was Joseph Ka�apha, appointed by

Valerius Gratus, and entirely devoted to the Romans. From the time that

Jerusalem had been under procurators, the office of high priest had

been a temporary one; removals had taken place nearly every year.

Ka�apha, however, held it longer than any one else. He had assumed his

office in the year 25, and he did not lose it till the year 36. We know

nothing of his character; but many circumstances lead to the belief

that his power was only nominal. Another personage is always seen in

conjunction with him, who appears to have exercised at the decisive

moment we have now reached, a preponderating power.

This personage was Hanan or Annas, son of Seth, and father-in-law of

Ka�pha, who was formerly the high priest, and had in reality preserved

amidst the numerous changes of the pontificate all the authority of the

office. Hanan had received the high priesthood from the legate

Quirinius, in the year 7 of our era. He lost his function in the year

14, on the accession of Tiberius; but he continued to be much

respected. He was still called "high priest," although he was out of

office, and was consulted upon all important matters. During fifty

years the pontificate continued in his family almost uninterruptedly;

five of his sons successively sustained this dignity, without counting

Ka�apha, who was his son-in-law. His was called the "priestly family,"

as if the priesthood had become hereditary in it. The chief offices of

the temple almost all devolved upon them. Another family, that of

Bo�thus, alternated, it is true, with that of Hanan's in the

pontificate. But the Boethusim, whose fortunes were of not very

honourable origin, were much less esteemed by the pious middle class.

Hanan was then in reality the chief of the sacerdotal party. Ka�apha

did nothing without him; it was the custom to associate their names,

and Hanan's was always put first. It will be understood, in fact, that

under this r�gime of an annual pontificate, changed according to the

caprice of the procurators, an old high priest, who had preserved the

secret of the traditions, who had seen many younger than himself

succeed each other, and who had retained sufficient influence to get

the office delegated to persons who were subordinate to him in family

rank, must have been a very important personage. Like all the

aristocracy of the temple, he was a Sadducee, "a sect," says Josephus,

"particularly severe in its judgments." All his sons were moreover

violent persecutors. One of them, named like his father, Hanan, caused

James, the brother of the Lord, to be stoned, under circumstances not

unlike those connected with the death of Jesus. The temper of the

family was haughty, bold, and cruel; it had that particular kind of

proud and sullen wickedness which characterises Jewish politicians.

Thus, upon this Hanan and his family must rest the responsibility of

all the acts which followed. It was Hanan (or if you like the party he

represented) who killed Jesus. Hanan was the principal actor in the

terrible drama, and far more than Ka�apha, far more than Pilate, ought

to bear the weight of the maledictions of mankind.

It is in the mouth of Ka�apha that the evangelist puts the decisive

words which led to the sentence of death being passed on Jesus. It was

supposed that the high priest possessed a certain gift of prophecy; his

words thus became an oracle full of profound meaning to the Christian

community. But such a sentence, whoever he might be that pronounced it,

expressed the feeling of the whole sacerdotal party. This party was

much opposed to popular seditions. It sought to put down religious

enthusiasts, rightly foreseeing that by their excited preachings they

would lead to the total ruin of the nation. Although the excitement

created by Jesus had nothing temporal about it, the priests saw, as an

ultimate consequence of this agitation, an aggravation of the Roman

yoke and the overturning of the temple, the source of their riches and

honours. Certainly the causes which, thirty-seven years after, were to

effect the ruin of Jerusalem, did not proceed from infant Christianity.

We cannot, say, however, that the motive alleged in this circumstance

by the priests was so improbable that we must necessarily regard it as

insincere. In a general sense, Jesus, if he had succeeded, would have

really effected the ruin of the Jewish nation. According to the

principles universally admitted by all ancient polity, Hanan and

Ka�apha were right in saying, "Better the death of one man than the

ruin of a people!" In our opinion this reasoning is detestable. But his

reasoning has been that of conservative parties from the commencement

of all human society. The "party of order" (I use this expression in

its mean and narrow sense) has ever been the same. Deeming the highest

duty of government to be the prevention of popular disturbances, it

believes it performs an act of patriotism in preventing, by judicial

murder, the tumultuous effusion of blood. Little thoughtful of the

future, it does not dream that by declaring war against all

innovations, it incurs the risk of crushing ideas destined one day to

triumph. The death of Jesus was one of the thousand illustrations of

this policy. The movement he directed was entirely spiritual, but it

was still a movement; hence the men of order, persuaded that it was

essential for humanity not to be disturbed, felt themselves bound to

prevent the new movement from extending itself. Never was seen a more

striking example of how much such conduct defeats its own object. Left

alone, Jesus would have exhausted himself in a desperate struggle with

the impossible. The unintelligent hate of his enemies determined the

success of his work, and sealed his divinity.

The death of Jesus was thus resolved upon in the month of February or

March. But he escaped yet for a short time. He withdrew to a town

called Ephraim or Ephron, in the direction of Bethel, a short day's

journey from Jerusalem near the border of the desert. He spent a few

days there with his disciples, allowing the storm to pass over. But the

order to arrest him as soon as he appeared at Jerusalem was given. The

solemnity of the Passover was drawing nigh, and it was thought that

Jesus, according to his custom, would come to celebrate it at

Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

LAST WEEK OF JESUS.

Jesus set out in fact, in the train of his disciples, to see again, and

for the last time, the unbelieving city. The hopes of his followers

were more and more exalted. All believed that in his going up to

Jerusalem, the kingdom of God was about to be manifested there. The

impiety of men was at its height, and this was regarded as a great sign

that the consummation was near. The belief in this was such that they

already disputed for precedence in the kingdom. This was, it is said,

the moment chosen by Salome to demand on behalf of her sons the two

seats on the right and left of the Son of man. The master, for his

part, was beset by grave thoughts. Sometimes he allowed a gloomy

resentment against his enemies to appear; he related the parable of a

nobleman, who went to take possession of a kingdom in a far country;

but hardly had he set out when his fellow-citizens wished to rid

themselves of him. The king returned, and commanded that those who had

conspired against him should be brought before him, and he had them all

put to death. At other times he peremptorily destroyed the illusions of

the disciples. As they walked along the stony roads to the north of

Jerusalem, Jesus pensively preceded the group of his companions. All

regarded him in silence, experiencing a sentiment of fear, and not

daring to interrogate him. He had already spoken to them on various

occasions of his future sufferings, and they had listened reluctantly.

Jesus at length spoke out, and, no longer concealing from them his

presentiments, discoursed on his approaching end. There was great

sadness in the whole band. The disciples were expecting soon to see the

sign appear in the clouds. The inaugural cry of the kingdom of God,

"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," resounded already

in joyous accents through the company of Jesus. The sanguinary prospect

troubled them. At each step of the fatal road, the kingdom of God

became nearer or more remote in the mirage of their dreams. For

himself, he was confirmed in the idea that he was about to die, but

that his death would save the world. The misunderstanding between him

and his disciples became more intense at each moment.

The custom was to go Jerusalem several days before the Passover, in

order to prepare for the feast. Jesus was the last to arrive, and at

one time his enemies believed they were frustrated in the hope that

they had formed of seizing him. The sixth day before the feast

(Saturday, 8th of Nisan, the 28th of March) he at length reached

Bethany. He entered, according to his custom, the house of Lazarus,

Martha, and Mary, or of Simon the leper, thence they gave him a grand

reception. There was a dinner at Simon the leper's, at which many

persons assembled, attracted by the desire of seeing him, and also, it

is said, of seeing Lazarus. Simon the leper, who was seated at the

table, passed already, perhaps, in the eyes of many, as the person who

had been resurrected, and attracted much attention. Martha, as was her

wont, served. It seems that they sought, by an increased show of

respect, to overcome the coolness of the public, and to assert strongly

the high dignity of the guest whom they received. Mary, in order to

give to the feast a greater appearance of festivity, entered during the

dinner, carrying a vase of perfume, which she poured upon the feet of

Jesus. She afterwards broke the vase, following an ancient custom of

breaking the vessel that had been used in the entertainment of a

stranger of distinction. Finally, pushing the evidences of her cult to

a point hitherto unheard of, she prostrated herself, and wiped with her

long hair the feet of the master. The house was filled with the odour

of the perfume, to the great delight of every one except the avaricious

Judas of Kerioth. If we consider the economical habits of the

community, this was certainly prodigality. The greedy treasurer

reckoned up immediately how much the perfume might have been sold for,

and what it would have realised for the poor-box. This not very

affectionate feeling, which seemed to place something above him,

dissatisfied Jesus. He loved honours, for honours furthered his aim and

established his title of Son of David. So, when they spoke to him of

the poor, he replied somewhat sharply, "Ye have the poor always with

you; but me ye have not always." And, rising to the occasion, he

promised immortality to the woman who in this critical moment gave him

a token of love.

The next day (Sunday, 9th of Nizan) Jesus descended from Bethany to

Jerusalem. When, at a bend of the road, upon the summit of the Mount of

Olives, he saw the city spread out before him, it is said he wept over

it, and addressed to it a last appeal. At the base of the mountain, a

few steps from the gate, on entering the adjoining portion of the

eastern wall of the city, which was called Bethphage, on account, no

doubt, of the fig-trees with which it was planted, Jesus had once more

a moment of human satisfaction. His arrival was noised abroad. The

Galileans who had came to the feast were highly elated, and prepared a

little triumph for him. An ass was brought to him, followed, according

to custom, by its colt. The Galileans spread their finest garments upon

the back of this humble animal as saddle-cloths, and seated him

thereon. Others, however, spread their garments upon the road, and

strewed it with green branches. The multitude which preceded and

followed him, carrying palms, cried, "Hosanna to the son of David!

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Some persons even

gave him the title of king of Israel. "Master, rebuke thy disciples,"

said the Pharisees to him. "If these should hold their peace, the

stones would immediately cry out," replied Jesus, and he entered into

the city. The Jerusalemites, who hardly knew him, asked who he was. "It

is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, in Galilee," was the reply.

Jerusalem was a city of about 50,000 souls. A trifling event, like the

entrance of a stranger, however little celebrated, or the arrival of a

band of provincials, or a movement of people to the avenues of the

city, could not fail, under ordinary circumstances, to be quickly

noised about. But at the time of the feast the confusion was extreme.

Jerusalem on these occasions was taken possession of by strangers.

Again, it was amongst the latter that the excitement appears to have

been most lively. Some Greek-speaking proselytes, who had come to the

feast, were piqued with curiosity, and wished to see Jesus. They

addressed themselves to his disciples; but we do not know much of the

result of the interview. Jesus, according to his custom, went to pass

the night at his beloved village of Bethany. The three following days

(Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday) he descended regularly to Jerusalem;

after the setting of the sun he reascended either to Bethany or to the

farms on the western side of the Mount of Olives, where he had many

friends.

A deep melancholy appears during these last days to have filled his

soul, which was generally so gay and so serene. All the narratives

agree in attributing to him before his arrest that he had a short

experience of doubt and trouble; a kind of anticipated agony. According

to some, he cried out suddenly, "Now is my soul troubled. O Father,

save me from this hour." It was believed that a voice from heaven was

heard at this moment: others said that an angel came to console him.

According to one widely-spread version this occurred to him in the

garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, it was said, went about a stone's throw

from his sleeping disciples, taking with him only Peter and the two

sons of Zebedee, then fell on his face and prayed. His soul was sad

almost to death; a terrible anguish pressed upon him; but resignation

to the divine will sustained him. This scene, owing to the instinctive

art which regulated the compilation of the synoptics, and often led

them in the arrangement of the narrative to study adaptability and

effect, has been given as occurring on the last night of the life of

Jesus, and at the precise moment of his arrest. If such a version be

the true one, we should scarcely understand why John, who had been the

intimate witness of so touching an episode, should not mention it to

his disciples, and that the compiler of the fourth Gospel should not

allude to it in the very circumstantial narrative which he has

furnished of the evening of the Thursday. That which is certain is

that, during his last days, the enormous weight of the mission he had

undertaken pressed cruelly upon Jesus. Human nature asserted itself for

a time. Perhaps he began to hesitate about his work. Terror and doubt

seized upon him, and threw him into a state of exhaustion worse than

death. The man who sacrifices his repose, and the legitimate rewards of

life, to a great idea, always experiences a moment of sad revulsion

when the image of death presents itself to him for the first time, and

seeks to persuade him that everything is vanity. Perhaps some of those

touching reminiscences which the strongest souls retain, and which at

times pierce like a sword, seized upon him at this moment. Did he

recall the clear fountains of Galilee, where he might have refreshed

himself; the vine and the fig-tree under which he sat down, and the

young maidens who, perhaps, might have consented to love him? Did he

curse the hard destiny which had denied him the joys conceded to all

others? Did he regret his too lofty nature, and (a victim of his

greatness) did he grieve that he had not remained a simple artizan of

Nazareth? We do not know, for all these internal troubles were

evidently to his disciples a sealed letter. They understood nothing of

them, supplying by simple conjectures that which, in the great soul of

their Master, was obscure to them. It is certain, at least, that his

divine nature soon regained its supremacy. He might still have avoided

death; but he would not. Love for his work prevailed. He elected to

drink the cup even to the dregs. Henceforth in fact we find Jesus

entirely himself, wholly unclouded. The subtleties of the polemic, the

credulity of the thaumaturgist and of the exorcist, are forgotten.

There remains only the incomparable hero of the Passion, the founder of

the rights of free conscience, and the perfect model which all

suffering souls will contemplate in order to fortify and console

themselves.

The triumph of Bethphage, that audacious act of the provincials in

celebrating at the very gates of Jerusalem the advent of their

Messiah-King, completed the exasperation of the Pharisees and the

aristocracy of the temple. A new council was held on the Wednesday

(12th of Nisan) at the house of Joseph Ka�apha. The immediate arrest of

Jesus was resolved upon. A great idea of order and of conservative

policy presided over all their plans. The question was how to avoid a

scene. As the feast of the Passover, which commenced that year on the

Friday evening, was a time of bustle and excitement, it was resolved to

anticipate it. Jesus was popular; they feared an outbreak. Although it

was customary to relieve the solemnities in which the whole nation

joined by the execution of individual rebels to the priestly

authorities--a species of religious murder designed to inculcate on the

people a religious terror--it was, however, arranged that such

executions should not fall upon the holy days. The arrest was therefore

fixed for the next day, Thursday. It was resolved, further, not to

seize him in the temple, where he came every day, but to observe his

habits, in order to capture him in some retired place. The agents of

the priests sounded his disciples, hoping to obtain some information by

playing upon their weakness or their simplicity. They found what they

sought in Judas of Kerioth. This wretched creature, from motives

impossible to explain, betrayed his Master, gave all the particulars

necessary, and even undertook himself (although such an excess of

baseness is hardly credible) to conduct the force which was to make the

arrest. The recollection of horror which the folly or the wickedness of

this man has left in the Christian tradition must have been the cause

of some exaggeration on this point. Judas up to this time had been a

disciple like the others; he had even the title of apostle; he had

driven out demons. Legend, which always employs highly coloured

language, will not admit in the supper-room more than eleven saints and

one reprobate. Reality does not proceed by such absolute categories.

Avarice, which the synoptics give as the motive of the crime in

question, does not suffice to explain it. It would be singular if a man

who kept the purse, and who knew what he would lose by the death of his

chief, were to exchange the profits of his occupation for a very small

sum of money. Had the self-love of Judas been wounded by the rebuff he

received at the dinner at Bethany? Even that would not suffice to

explain his conduct. The fourth evangelist would like to make him out a

thief, an unbeliever from the beginning, for which, however, there is

no justification. We would prefer to attribute it to some feeling of

jealousy, or to some intestine dissension. The peculiar hatred which is

manifested towards Judas in the gospel attributed to John confirms this

hypothesis. Less pure in heart than the others, Judas had imbibed,

without knowing it, the narrow-mindedness of his office. By a caprice

very common in active life he had come to regard the interests of the

purse as superior even to those of the work for which it was destined.

The administrator had overcome the apostle. The murmurings which

escaped him at Bethany seem to suggest that sometimes he considered

that the Master cost his spiritual family too much. No doubt this mean

economy had been the occasion of many other collisions in the little

society.

Without denying that Judas of Kerioth may have contributed to the

arrest of his Master, we yet believe that the curses with which he is

loaded are somewhat unjust. There was, perhaps, in what he did more

awkwardness than perversity. The moral conscience of the man of the

people is quick and correct, but unstable and inconsequent. It cannot

resist the impulse of the moment. The secret societies of the

republican party were characterised by much earnestness and sincerity,

and yet their denouncers were very numerous. A trifling spite sufficed

to convert a partisan into a traitor. But, if the foolish desire for a

few pieces of silver turned the head of poor Judas, he does not seem to

have lost the moral sentiment completely, since, on seeing the

consequences of his fault, he repented, and, it is said, killed

himself.

Each minute, at this crisis, was solemn, and counted more than whole

ages in the history of humanity. We have reached Thursday, 13th of

Nisan (2nd April). The evening of the next day was the beginning of the

festival of the Passover, begun by the feast at which the Paschal lamb

was eaten. The feast continued for seven days, during which unleavened

bread was eaten. The first and the last of these seven days were of a

peculiarly solemn character. The disciples were already occupied with

preparations for the feast. As for Jesus, we are led to believe that he

was cognisant of the treachery of Judas, and that he was suspicious of

the fate that awaited him. In the evening he took with his disciples

his last repast. It was not the ritual feast of the Passover, as was

afterwards supposed, owing to an error of a day in reckoning; but for

the primitive church this supper of the Thursday was the true Passover,

the seal of the new covenant. Each disciple connected with it his most

cherished recollections, and a multitude of touching traits of the

Master which each one preserved were associated with this repast, which

became the cornerstone of Christian piety, and the starting-point of

the most important institutions.

Doubtless the tender love which filled the heart of Jesus for the

little church which surrounded him overflowed at this moment. His

serene and strong soul became gay under the weight of the gloomy

preoccupations that beset him. He had a word for each of his friends;

John and Peter especially were the objects of tender marks of

attachment. John reclined on the divan, by the side of Jesus, with his

head resting upon the breast of the Master. Towards the end of the

repast, the secret which weighed upon the heart of Jesus nearly escaped

him: he said, "Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me."

This was for these simple men a moment of anguish; they looked at each

other, and each questioned himself. Judas was present; perhaps Jesus,

who had had for some time reasons to distrust him, sought by this

remark to draw from his looks or from his embarrassed manner the avowal

of his fault. But the unfaithful disciple did not lose countenance; he

even dared, it is said, to ask with the others, "Master, is it I ?"

Meanwhile, the good and upright soul of Peter was in torture. He made a

sign to John to endeavour to ascertain of whom the Master was speaking.

John, who could converse with Jesus without being heard, asked him the

meaning of this enigma. Jesus, having only suspicions, did not wish to

give any name: he only told John to observe him to whom he was going to

offer the unleavened bread. At the same time he soaked a mouthful and

offered it to Judas. John and Peter alone were cognisant of the fact.

Jesus addressed to Judas some words containing a bitter reproach, which

were not understood by those present. They thought that Jesus was

simply giving him orders for the morrow's feast, and he left the room.

At the time this repast struck no one; and apart from the apprehensions

which the Master confided to his disciples, who only half understood

them, nothing extraordinary took place. But after the death of Jesus

they attached to this evening a singularly solemn meaning, and the

imagination of believers spread over it a colouring of sweet mysticism.

The last hours of a dear friend are those we best remember. By an

inevitable illusion, we attribute to the conversations we have then had

with him a sense that death only gives to them; we concentrate into a

few hours the memories of many years. The majority of the disciples did

not after the supper of which we have just spoken see their Master

again. It was the farewell banquet. In this repast, as well as in many

others, Jesus practised his mysterious rite of the breaking of bread.

As it was believed from the earliest years of the Church that the

repast in question took place on the day of the Passover, and was the

Paschal feast, the idea naturally arose that the Eucharistic

institution was established at this supreme moment. Starting from the

hypothesis that Jesus knew in advance the precise moment of his death,

the disciples were led to suppose that he reserved for his last hours a

number of important acts. As, moreover, one of the fundamental ideas of

the first Christians was that the death of Jesus had been a sacrifice,

replacing all those of the ancient Law, the "Last Supper," which was

supposed to have taken place, once for all, on the eve of the Passion,

became the chief sacrifice, the act which constituted the new alliance,

the sign of the blood shed for the salvation of all. The bread and

wine, placed in juxtaposition with death itself, were thus the image of

the new testament that Jesus had sealed with his sufferings, the

commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ until his advent.

Very early this mystery was incorporated into a small sacramental

narrative, which we possess under four forms, very similar to one

another. The fourth Evangelist, preoccupied with the Eucharistic ideas,

and who narrates the Last Supper with so much prolixity, connecting it

with so many circumstances and discourses, does not mention this

narrative. This is a proof that he did not regard the Eucharist as a

peculiarity of the Lord's Supper. To the fourth Evangelist the rite of

the Last Supper was the washing of feet. It is probable that in certain

primitive Christian families this latter rite obtained an importance

which it has since lost. No doubt Jesus, on some occasions, had

practised it to give his disciples an example of brotherly humility. It

was connected with the eve of his death, in consequence of the tendency

to group around the Last Supper all the great moral and ritual

recommendations of Jesus.

A high sentiment of love, of concord, of charity, and of mutual

deference, animated, moreover, the remembrances which were believed to

surround the last hours of Jesus. It is always the unity of his Church,

constituted by him or by his Spirit, which is the essence of the

symbols and of the discourses which Christian tradition referred to

this sacred moment. "A new commandment I give unto you," said he, "

that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one

another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye

have love one to another. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the

servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends;

for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto

you. These things I command you, that ye love one another." At this

last sacred moment several rivalries and struggles for precedence again

took place. Jesus remarked that if he, the Master, had been in the

midst of his disciples as their servant, how much more ought they to

submit themselves to one another. According to some, in drinking the

wine, he said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine

until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

According to others, he promised them soon a celestial feast, at which

they would be seated on thrones at his side.

It seems that, towards the close of the evening, the presentiments of

Jesus took hold of the disciples. All felt that a very serious danger

threatened the Master, and that they were verging on a crisis. At one

time Jesus thought of precautions, and spoke of swords. There were two

in the company. "It is enough," said he. He did not, however, follow

out this idea; he saw clearly that timid provincials could not stand up

before the armed force of the great powers of Jerusalem. Cephas, full

of zeal and self-confidence, swore that he would go with him to prison

and to death. Jesus, with his usual astuteness, expressed doubts

concerning him. According to a tradition, which probably originated

with Peter himself, Jesus gave him till cock-crowing. Like Peter, they

all swore that they would not yield.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

ARREST AND TRIAL OF JESUS.

It was quite dark when they left the room. Jesus, as was his wont,

passed through the valley of Kedron; and, accompanied by his disciples,

went to the garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

He sat down there. Overawing his friends by his great superiority, he

watched and prayed. They were sleeping near him, when suddenly an armed

troop appeared bearing lighted torches. It was the guards of the

temple, armed with staves, a kind of brigade of police under the

control of the priests; they were supported by a detachment of Roman

soldiers with their swords; the order for the arrest emanated from the

high priest and the Sanhedrim. Judas, knowing the habits of Jesus, had

indicated this place as that where he might most easily be surprised.

According to the unanimous tradition of the earliest times, Judas

accompanied the detachment himself; according to some, he carried his

hateful conduct even to the length of betraying him with a kiss. Be

that as it may, certain it is that there was some show of resistance on

the part of the disciples. One of them (Peter, according to

eye-witnesses) drew his sword, and wounded one of the servants of the

high priest, named Malchus, on the ear. Jesus put a stop to this

resistance, and surrendered himself to the soldiers. Weak and incapable

of acting with effect, especially against authorities with so much

prestige, the disciples took to flight and became dispersed. Peter and

John alone did not lose sight of their Master. Another unknown young

man (probably Mark), wrapped in a light garment, followed him. The

authorities sought to arrest him, but the young man fled, leaving his

tunic in the hands of the guards.

The course which the priests had resolved to pursue in regard to Jesus

was quite in conformity with the established law. The procedure against

the "corrupter" (m�sith), who sought to attaint the purity of religion,

is explained in the Talmud, with details the na�ve impudence of which

provokes a smile. A judicial ambush is therein erected into an

essential part of the examination of criminals. When a man was accused

of being a "corrupter," two witnesses were suborned who were concealed

behind a partition. It was arranged to bring the accused into a

contiguous room, where he could be heard by these two witnesses without

his perceiving them. Two candles were lighted near him, in order that

it might be satisfactorily proved that the witnesses "saw him." He was

then made to repeat his blasphemy; next, urged to retract it. If he

persisted, the witnesses who had heard him conducted him to the

tribunal, and he was stoned to death. The Talmud adds that this was the

manner in which they treated Jesus; that he was condemned on the faith

of two witnesses who had been suborned, and that the crime of

"corruption" is, moreover, the only one for which the witnesses are

thus prepared.

In fact, the disciples of Jesus inform us that the crime with which

their Master was charged was that of "corruption;" and, apart from some

minuti�, the offspring of the rabbinical imagination, the narrative of

the Gospels corresponds exactly with the procedure described by the

Talmud. The plan of the enemies of Jesus was to convict him, by the

testimony of witnesses and by his own avowals, of blasphemy and of

outrage against the Mosaic religion, to condemn him to death according

to law, and then to get the condemnation sanctioned by Pilate. The

priestly authority, as we have already seen, was in reality entirely in

the hands of Hanan. The order for the arrest in all probability

emanated from him. It was to the residence of this powerful personage

that Jesus was first taken. Hanan questioned him in regard to his

doctrine and his disciples. Jesus, with justifiable pride, declined to

enter into long explanations. He referred Hanan to his teachings, which

had been public; he maintained that he had never held any secret

doctrine; and requested the ex high priest to interrogate those who had

listened to him. This was a perfectly natural response; but the

idolatrous respect which surrounded the old priest made it appear

audacious; and one of those present replied to it, it is said, by a

blow.

Peter and John had followed their Master to the residence of Hanan.

John, who was known in the house, was admitted without difficulty; but

Peter was stopped at the entrance, and John was obliged to beg the

porter to let him pass. The night was cold. Peter remained in the

antechamber, and approached a brazier, around which the servants were

warming themselves. He was soon recognised as a disciple of the

accused. The unfortunate man, betrayed by his Galilean accent, and

pursued by questions from the servants, one of whom was a kinsman of

Malchus and had seen him at Gethsemane, denied thrice that he had ever

had the slightest connection with Jesus. He imagined that Jesus could

not hear him, and never dreamt that this dissimulated cowardice was

exceedingly dishonourable. But his better nature soon revealed to him

the fault he had committed. A fortuitous circumstance, the crowing of

the cock, recalled to him a remark that Jesus had made. Touched to the

heart, he went out and wept bitterly.

Hanan, although the real author of the judicial murder about to be

committed, had not power to pronounce sentence upon Jesus, so he sent

him to his son-in-law, Ka�apha, who bore the official title. This man,

the blind instrument of his father-in-law, naturally ratified

everything required of him by Hanan. The Sanhedrim was assembled at his

house. The inquiry commenced; and several witnesses, well instructed

beforehand, according to the inquisitorial process described in the

Talmud, appeared before the tribunal. The fatal sentence which Jesus

had really uttered, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to

build it in three days," was cited by two witnesses. To blaspheme the

temple of God was, according to the Jewish law, equivalent to

blaspheming God Himself. Jesus remained silent, and refused to explain

the incriminating speech. If we may believe one version, the high

priest then adjured him to say if he were the Messiah; Jesus confessed

it, and proclaimed before the assembly the near approach of his

heavenly reign. The courage of Jesus, who had resolved to die, did not

require this. It is more probable that here, as when before Hanan, he

remained silent. This was in general, during his last moments, his rule

of conduct. The sentence was determined on; and they only sought for

pretexts. Jesus perceived this, and did not undertake a useless

defence. From the orthodox Judaism point of view, he was truly a

blasphemer, a destroyer of the established worship, and these crimes

were punishable by the law with death. With one voice, the assembly

declared him guilty of a capital crime. The members of the council, who

had a secret penchant for him, were absent or did not vote. The usual

frivolity of old-established aristocracies did not permit the judges to

reflect long upon the consequences of the sentence they had rendered.

Human life was at that time very lightly sacrificed; the members of the

Sanhedrim could not, of course, dream that their sons would have to

render account to an angry posterity for the sentence pronounced with

such flippant disdain.

The Sanhedrim had not the right to execute a sentence of death. But in

the confusion of powers which then prevailed in Jud�a, Jesus was, from

that moment, none the less condemned. He remained the rest of the night

exposed to the wicked treatment of an infamous pack of servants, who

spared him no affront.

In the morning the chief priests and the elders again assembled. The

question was, how to get Pilate to ratify the condemnation pronounced

by the Sanhedrim, whose powers, since the occupation of the Romans,

were no longer sufficient. The procurator was not invested, like the

imperial legate, with the power of life and death. But Jesus was not a

Roman citizen: it only required the authorisation of the governor in

order that the sentence pronounced against him should take its course.

As always happens when a political people subjects a nation amongst

which the civil and the religious laws are confounded, the Romans had

been led to give to the Jewish law a sort of official support. The

Roman law was not applicable to Jews. The latter remained under the

canonical law which we find recorded in the Talmud, just as the Arabs

in Algeria are still governed by the code of Islamism. Although neutral

in religion, the Romans thus very often sanctioned penalties inflicted

for religious faults. The situation was nearly that of the sacred

cities of India under the English dominion, or rather that which would

be the state of Damascus if to-morrow Syria were conquered by a

European nation. Josephus pretends, though the assertion may be

doubted, that if a Roman ventured beyond the pillars which bore

inscriptions forbidding Pagans to advance, the Romans themselves would

have delivered him to the Jews to be put to death.

The agents of the priests therefore bound Jesus and led him to the

judgment-hall, which was the former palace of Herod, adjoining the

Tower of Antonia. It was the morning of the day on which the Paschal

lamb was to be eaten (Friday the 14th of Nisan, our 3rd of April). The

Jews would have been defiled by entering the judgment-hall, and would

not have been able to share in the sacred feast, and therefore remained

without. Pilate, apprised of their presence, ascended the bima or

tribunal, situated in the open air, at the place named Gabbatha, or in

Greek, Lithostrotos, on account of the pavement which covered the

ground.

Hardly had he been informed of the accusation before he manifested his

annoyance at being mixed up in the affair. He then shut himself up in

the judgment-hall with Jesus. There a conversation took place, the

precise details of which are lost, no witness having been able to

repeat it to the disciples, but the tenor of which appears to have been

happily conjectured by the fourth Evangelist. His narrative, at least,

is in perfect accord with what history teaches us of the respective

positions of the two interlocutors.

The procurator, Pontius, surnamed Pilate, doubtless on account of the

pilum or javelin of honour with which he or one of his ancestors was

decorated, had hitherto had no relation with the new sect. Indifferent

to the internal quarrels of the Jews, he only saw in all these

sectarian movements the effects of a diseased imagination and

disordered brain. In general, he did not like the Jews. The Jews, on

their part, detested him still more. They considered him harsh,

scornful, and passionate, and accused him of improbable crimes.

Jerusalem, the centre of a great national fermentation, was a very

seditious city, and an insupportable abode for a foreigner. The

enthusiasts pretended that it was a fixed design of the new procurator

to abolish the Jewish law. Their narrow fanaticism, their religious

hatreds, shocked that broad sentiment of justice and of civil

government which the humblest Roman carried everywhere with him. All

the acts of Pilate which are known to us attest him to have been a good

administrator. In the earlier period of the exercise of his charge, he

had had difficulties with those subject to him which he had solved in a

very brutal manner; but it seems that on the whole he was right. The

Jews must have appeared to him a very backward people; he doubtless

judged them as a liberal prefect formerly judged the Bas-Bretons, who

rebelled for such a simple matter as a new road, or the establishment

of a school. In his best projects for the good of the country, notably

in those relating to public works, he had encountered an impassable

obstacle in the Law. The Law narrowed life to such a point that it was

opposed to all change and to all amelioration. The Roman structures,

even the most useful ones, were, on the part of zealous Jews, objects

of great antipathy. Two votive escutcheons with inscriptions, which

Pilate had set up at his residence, which was near the sacred

precincts, provoked a still more violent storm. Pilate at first cared

little for these susceptibilities; and he thus was soon seen engaged in

sanguinary repressions, which afterwards culminated in his removal. The

experience of so many conflicts had rendered him very prudent in his

relations with an intractable people, who avenged themselves upon their

governors by compelling the latter to use towards them rigorous

severities. The procurator, with extreme displeasure, saw himself led

to play a cruel part in this new affair, by a law he hated. He knew

that religious fanaticism, when it has obtained some power from civil

governments, is afterwards the first to throw the responsibility upon

the latter, almost accusing them of being the author of their own

excesses. What could be more unjust? for the true culprit is, in such

cases, the instigator!

Pilate, then, would have liked to save Jesus. Perhaps the calm and

dignified attitude of the accused made an impression upon him.

According to a tradition, Jesus found a supporter in the procurator's

own wife. She may have seen the gentle Galilean from some window of the

palace, which overlooked the courts of the temple. Perhaps she had seen

him again in her dreams; and the blood of this beautiful young man,

which was about to be spilt, had given her nightmare. Certain it is

that Jesus found Pilate prepossessed in his favour. The governor

questioned him kindly, with the desire of finding out by what means he

could send him away pardoned.

The title of "King of the Jews," which Jesus had never taken upon

himself, but which his enemies represented as the sum and substance of

his acts and pretensions, was naturally that by which they might be

able to excite the suspicions of the Roman authority. He was accused of

sedition, and of being guilty of treason against the government.

Nothing could be more unjust; for Jesus had always recognised the Roman

empire as the established power. But conservative religious bodies are

not accustomed to shrink from calumny. In spite of all his explanations

they drew certain conclusions from his teaching; they made him out to

be a disciple of Judas the Gaulonite; they pretended that he forbade

the payment of tribute to C�sar. Pilate asked him if he was really the

King of the Jews. Jesus did not dissimulate his belief. But the great

ambiguity of speech which had been the source of his strength, and

which, after his death, was to establish his kingship, did not serve

him on this occasion. An idealist, that is to say, not distinguishing

the spirit from the substance, Jesus, whose words, to use the image of

the Apocalypse, were as a two-edged sword, never completely satisfied

the powers of earth. If we may believe John, he did avow his royalty,

but coupled it with this profound sentence: "My kingdom is not of this

world." Then he explained the nature of his kingdom, which consisted

entirely in the possession and proclamation of truth. Pilate knew

nothing of this grand idealism. Jesus doubtless appeared to him as

being an inoffensive dreamer. The total absence of religious and

philosophical proselytism among the Romans of this epoch made them

regard devotion to truth as a chimera. Such discussions annoyed them,

and appeared to them devoid of meaning. Not perceiving the element of

danger to the empire that lay hidden in these new speculations, they

had no reason to employ violence against them. All their displeasure

fell upon those who asked them to inflict punishment for vain

subtleties. Twenty years after, Gallio still followed the same course

towards the Jews. Until the fall of Jerusalem, the rule which the

Romans adopted in administration was to remain completely indifferent

to the quarrels those sectarians had among themselves.

An expedient suggested itself to the mind of the governor by which he

could reconcile his own feelings with the demands of the fanatical

people, whose resentment he had already so often felt. It was the

custom to deliver a prisoner to the people at the time of the Passover.

Pilate, knowing that Jesus had only been arrested in consequence of the

jealousy of the priests, tried to obtain for him the benefit of this

custom. He appeared again upon the bima, and proposed to the multitude

to release the "King of the Jews." The proposition, made in these

terms, though ironical, was characterised by a degree of liberality.

The priests saw the danger of it. They acted promptly, and, in order to

combat the proposition of Pilate, they suggested to the crowd the name

of a prisoner who enjoyed great popularity in Jerusalem. By a singular

coincidence he also was called Jesus, and bore the surname of Bar-Abba,

or Bar-Rabban. He was a well-known personage, and had been arrested for

being mixed up in a disturbance which had been accompanied by murder. A

general clamour was raised, "Not this man; but Jesus Bar-Rabban;" and

Pilate was obliged to release Jesus Bar-Rabban.

His embarrassment increased. He feared that too much indulgence to a

prisoner, to whom was given the title of "King of the Jews," might

compromise him. Fanaticism, moreover, constrains all powers to make

terms with it. Pilate felt himself obliged to make some concession; but

still hesitating to shed blood, in order to satisfy men whom he

detested, wished to turn the thing into a jest. Affecting to laugh at

the pompous title they had given to Jesus, he caused him to be

scourged. Flagellation was the usual preliminary of crucifixion.

Perhaps Pilate wished it to be believed that this sentence had already

been pronounced, hoping that the preliminary would suffice. Then took

place, according to all the narratives, a revolting scene. The soldiers

put a scarlet robe on the back of Jesus, a crown of thorny branches

upon his head, and a reed in his hand. Thus attired, he was led to the

tribunal in front of the people. The soldiers defiled before him,

striking him in turn, and knelt to him, saying, "Hail! King of the

Jews," Others, it is said, spit upon him, and bruised his head with the

reed. It is difficult to understand that Roman dignity could lend

itself to acts so shameful. True, Pilate, in the capacity of

procurator, had scarcely any but auxiliary troops under his command.

Roman citizens, as the legionaries were, would not have stooped to such

indignities.

Did Pilate think by this display to shield himself from responsibility?

Did he hope to turn aside the blow which threatened Jesus by conceding

something to the hatred of the Jews, and by substituting for the tragic

denouement a grotesque termination, whence would seem to follow that

the affair merited no other issue? If such were his idea, it did not

succeed. The tumult increased, and became an actual riot. The cry

"Crucify him! Crucify him!" resounded on all sides. The priests,

assuming a tone of more and more urgency, declared the law to be in

peril if the corrupter were not punished with death. Pilate saw clearly

that in order to save Jesus he would have to put down a furious riot.

He still tried, however, to gain time. He returned to the

judgment-hall, and ascertained from what country Jesus came, seeking a

pretext to free him from adjudicating. According to one tradition, he

even sent Jesus to Antipas, who it is said was then at Jerusalem. Jesus

encouraged but little these benevolent efforts; he maintained, as he

had done at the house of Ka�apha, a grave and dignified silence which

astonished Pilate. The cries from without became more and more

menacing. The people had already begun to denounce the lack of zeal of

the functionary who shielded an enemy of C�sar. The greatest

adversaries of the Roman rule were found to be transformed into loyal

subjects of Tiberius, so as to have the right of accusing the too

tolerant procurator of treason. "We have no king," said they, "but

C�sar. If thou let this man go thou art not C�sar's friend: whosoever

maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar." The feeble Pilate

yielded; he foresaw the report that his enemies would send to Rome, in

which they would accuse him of having favoured a rival of Tiberius.

Already the Jews, in the matter of the votive escutcheons, had written

to the emperor, and their action had been approved. He feared for his

office. By a condescension, which was to hold up his name to the lash

of history, he yielded, throwing, it is said, all the responsibility of

what was about to happen upon the Jews. The latter, according to the

Christians, fully accepted it by exclaiming, "His blood be on us and on

our children!"

Were these words really uttered? It is open to doubt. They nevertheless

are the expression of a profound historical truth. Considering the

attitude which the Romans had taken up in Jud�a, Pilate could scarcely

have acted otherwise than he did. How many sentences of death dictated

by religious intolerance have forced the hand of the civil power! The

king of Spain, who, in order to please a fanatical clergy, delivered

hundreds of his subjects to the stake, was more blamable than Pilate,

for he was the representative of a more absolute power than were the

Romans at Jerusalem. When the civil power becomes persecuting or

meddlesome at the solicitation of the priesthood, it demonstrates its

weakness. But let the government that is without sin in this respect

throw the first stone at Pilate. The "secular arm," behind which

clerical cruelty shelters itself, is not the culprit. No one is

justified in saying that he has a horror of blood when he causes it to

be shed by his servants.

It was, then, neither Tiberius nor Pilate who condemned Jesus. It was

the old Jewish party; it was the Mosaic Law. According to our modern

ideas, there is no transmission of moral demerit from father to son;

each one has to account to human or divine justice for that which he

himself has done. Consequently, every Jew who suffers to-day for the

murder of Jesus has a right to complain, for he might have been a Simon

the Cyrenean, or at least not have been one of those who cried "Crucify

him!" But nations, like individuals, have their responsibilities. Now,

if ever a crime was the crime of a nation, it was the death of Jesus.

This death was "legal" in the sense that it was primarily caused by a

law which was the very soul of the nation. The Mosaic Law, it is true,

in its modern yet accepted form, pronounced the penalty of death

against all attempts to change the established worship. Now, there is

no doubt that Jesus attacked this worship, and hoped to destroy it. The

Jews expressed this to Pilate with truthful simplicity: "We have a law,

and by our law he ought to die; because he has made himself the Son of

God." The law was detestable, but it was the law of ancient ferocity;

and the hero who attempted to abrogate it had first of all to endure

its penalty.

Alas! it has taken more than eighteen hundred years for the blood that

he shed to bear its fruits. For ages tortures and death have been

inflicted in the name of Jesus on thinkers as noble as himself. Even

to-day, in countries which call themselves Christian, penalties are

pronounced for religious derelictions. Jesus is not responsible for

these errors. He could not foresee that people with mistaken ideas

would one day imagine him to be a frightful Moloch, greedy of burnt

victims. Christianity has been intolerant, but intolerance is not

essentially a Christian monopoly. It is Jewish, in the sense that it

was Judaism which first raised the theory of the absolute in religion,

and laid down the principle that every innovator, even if he brings

miracles in support of his doctrine, ought without trial to be stoned.

The Pagan world has as undoubtedly also had its religious violences.

But if it had had this law, how would it have become Christian? The

Pentateuch has thus been in the world the first code of religious

terrorism. Judaism has given the example of an immutable dogma armed

with the sword. If, instead of pursuing the Jews with a blind hatred,

Christianity had abolished the order of things which killed its

founder, how much more consistent would it not have been--how much

better would it not have deserved of the human race!

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CHAPTER XXV.

DEATH OF JESUS.

Although the real motive for the death of Jesus was entirely religious,

his enemies had succeeded, in the judgment-hall, in representing him as

guilty of treason against the state; they could not have obtained from

the sceptical Pilate a condemnation simply on the ground of heterodoxy.

Following up this idea, the priests demanded, through the people, the

crucifixion of Jesus. This mode of punishment was not of Jewish origin.

If the condemnation of Jesus had been purely Mosaic, he would have been

stoned. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment. reserved for slaves, and

for cases in which it was wished to add to death the aggravation of

ignominy. In applying it to Jesus, they treated him as they treated

highway robbers, brigands, bandits, or those enemies of inferior rank

to whom the Romans did not grant the honour of death by the sword. It

was the chimerical "King of the Jews," not the heterodox dogmatist, who

was punished. Following out the same idea, the execution was left to

the Romans. At this epoch we know that, amongst the Romans, the

soldiers performed, at least in cases of political condemnations, the

office of executioners. Jesus was therefore delivered to a cohort of

auxiliary troops commanded by a centurion, and all the odious

accessories connected with executions, introduced by the cruel customs

of the new conquerors, were practised upon him. It was about noon. They

re-clothed him with the garments which they had removed on arraigning

him before the tribunal, and, as the cohort had already in reserve two

thieves who were to be executed, the three convicts were placed

together, and the procession set out for the place of execution.

This was a locality called Golgotha, situated outside Jerusalem, but

near the walls of the city. The name Golgotha signifies a skull; it

seems to correspond to our word Chaumont, and probably designated a

bare hill, having the form of a bald skulL Where this hill was situated

is not exactly known. Certainly it was on the north or north-west of

the city, on the high irregular plain which extends between the walls

and the two valleys of Kedron and Hinnom--a rather unattractive region,

and rendered still more repulsive by the objectionable circumstances

that always characterise the neighbourhood of a great city. It is

difficult to identify Golgotha with the spot that, since Constantine,

has been venerated by all Christendom. This spot is too near the

interior of the city, and we are led to believe that, in the time of

Jesus, it was comprised within the circuit of the walls.

Any one condemned to the cross was forced himself to carry the

instrument of his execution. But Jesus, physically weaker than his two

companions, was not able to carry his. The troop met a certain Simon of

Cyrene, who was returning from the country, and the soldiers, with the

offhand procedure of foreign garrisons, compelled him to carry the

fatal tree. In so doing they perhaps exercised a recognised right to

enforce labour, the Romans not being allowed to carry the infamous

wood. It seems that Simon was afterwards of the Christian community.

His two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were well known in it. He related

perhaps more than one circumstance of which he had been witness. No

disciple was at this moment near Jesus.

The place of execution was at length reached. According to Jewish

usage, the victims were offered a strong aromatic wine, an intoxicating

drink, which, from a feeling of pity, was given to the condemned to

stupefy him. It appears that the women of Jerusalem often brought this

kind of stupefying wine to the unfortunates who were being led to

execution; when there was none presented by the latter, it was

purchased at the expense of the public treasury. Jesus, after having

touched the rim of the cup with his lips, refused to drink. This sad

consolation of common sufferers did not accord with his exalted nature.

He preferred to quit life with perfect clearness of mind, and to await

in full consciousness the death he had willed and brought upon himself.

He was then divested of his garments, and fastened to the cross. The

cross was composed of two beams, tied in the form of the letter T. It

was so little raised that the feet of the condemned almost touched the

earth. They commenced by securing it; they next fastened the sufferer

to it by driving nails into his hands; the feet were often nailed,

occasionally only bound with cords. A piece of wood was fastened to the

shaft of the cross, near the centre, and passed between the legs of the

condemned, who rested on it. Failing this, the hands would have been

torn, and the body would have sunk down. At other times a small

horizontal rest was fixed at the elevation of the feet, and supported

them.

Jesus experienced these horrors in all their atrocity. A burning

thirst, one of the tortures of crucifixion, consumed him. He asked to

drink. Near him there was a cup full of the ordinary drink of the Roman

soldiers, a mixture of vinegar and water, called posca. The soldiers

had to carry with them their posca on all their expeditions, amongst

which executions were reckoned. A soldier dipped a sponge in this

mixture, put it on the end of a reed, and raised it to the lips of

Jesus, who sucked it. Two thieves were crucified, one on each side. The

executioners, to whom were usually left the small effects of the

victims, drew lots for his garments, and, sitting at the foot of the

cross, guarded him. According to one tradition, Jesus uttered this

sentence, which was in his heart, if not upon his lips: "Father,

forgive them, for they know not what they do."

According to the Roman custom, a writing was affixed to the head of the

cross, bearing in three languages -- Hebrew, Greek, and Latin -- the

words: "THE KING OF THE JEWS." There was in this inscription something

painful and insulting to the nation. Those who passed by and read it

were offended. The priests complained to Pilate that he ought to have

made use of an inscription which implied simply that Jesus had called

himself King of the Jews. But Pilate, already tired of the whole

affair, refused to change what had been written.

The disciples of Jesus had fled. John, nevertheless, declares himself

to have been present, and to have remained standing at the foot of the

cross during the whole time. It may be affirmed, with more certainty,

that the devoted women of Galilee, who had followed Jesus to Jerusalem

and continued to tend him, did not abandon him. Mary Cleophas, Mary

Magdalen, Joanna, wife of Khouza, Salome, and others, stood off at a

certain distance, never losing sight of him. If we must believe John,

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also at the foot of the cross, and

Jesus, seeing his mother and his beloved disciple together, said to the

one, "Behold my mother!" and to the other, "Behold thy son!" But we do

not understand how the synoptics, who name the other women, should have

omitted her whose presence was so striking a feature. Perhaps even the

extreme elevation of the character of Jesus does not render such

personal emotion probable, at the moment when, solely preoccupied by

his work, he no longer existed except for humanity.

Apart from this small group of women, whose presence consoled him,

Jesus had before him only the spectacle of the baseness or stupidity of

humanity. The passers-by insulted him. He heard around him foolish

scoffs, and his greatest cries of pain turned into odious jests: "He

trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he

said, I am the Son of God." "He saved others," they said again;

"himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come

down from the cross, and we will believe him! Ah, thou that destroyest

the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." Some, vaguely

acquainted with his apocalyptic ideas, thought they heard him call

Elias, and said, "Let us see whether Elias will come to save him." It

appears that the two crucified thieves at his side also insulted him.

The sky was dark; and the earth, as in all the environs of Jerusalem,

dry and gloomy. For a moment, according to certain narratives, his

heart failed him; a cloud hid from him the face of his Father; he

experienced an agony of despair a thousand times more acute than all

his tortures. He saw only the ingratitude of men. Repenting perhaps in

suffering for a vile race, he exclaimed: "My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?" But his divine instinct still sustained him. In

proportion as the life of the body eked out, his soul became clear,

returning by degrees to its celestial origin. The object of his mission

returned: he saw in his death the salvation of the world; he lost sight

of the hideous spectacle spread at his feet, and, irrevocably united to

his Father, he began upon the gibbet the divine life which was to enter

into the heart of humanity for all eternity.

The peculiar atrocity of crucifixion was that one could live three or

four days in this horrible state upon the instrument of torture. The

bleeding from the hands soon stopped, and was not fatal. The real cause

of death was the unnatural position of the body, which brought on a

frightful disturbance of the circulation, terrible pains in the head

and heart, and, finally, rigidity of the limbs. Victims with strong

constitutions died simply of hunger. The original idea of this cruel

punishment was not directly to kill the culprit by positive injuries,

but to expose the slave, nailed by the hand of which he had neglected

to make good use, and to let him rot on the wood. The delicate

organisation of Jesus preserved him from this slow agony. Everything

tends to show that the instantaneous rupture of a vessel in the heart

killed him, at the end of three hours. A few moments before giving up

the ghost his voice was still strong. Suddenly he uttered a terrible

cry, which some heard as, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

but which others, more intent on the accomplishment of prophecies,

render, "It is finished!" His head fell upon his breast, and he

expired.

Rest now in thy glory, noble founder. Thy work is completed; thy

divinity is established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thy efforts

crumble through a flaw. Henceforth, stripped of all frailty, thou shalt

aid, by the exaltation of thy divine peace, the infinite fruits of thy

acts. At the cost of a few hours of suffering, which have not even

tinged thy great soul, thou hast purchased the most complete

immortality. During thousands of years, the world will extol thee.

Ensign of our contradictions, thou wilt be the standard around which

will be fought the fiercest battles. A thousand times more living, a

thousand times more loved, since thy death than during the days of thy

pilgrimage here below, thou wilt become so completely the corner-stone

of humanity that to tear thy name from this world would be to shake it

to its foundations. Between thee and God, men will no longer

distinguish. Complete vanquisher of death, take possession of thy

kingdom, whither shall follow thee, by the royal road thou hast traced,

ages of adorers.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

JESUS IN THE TOMB.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, according to our custom of

reckoning, when Jesus expired. A Jewish law forbade a corpse suspended

on the cross to be left beyond the evening of the day of the execution.

It is not probable that in the executions performed by the Romans this

rule was observed. But as the next day was the Sabbath, and a Sabbath

of peculiar solemnity, the Jews expressed to the Roman authorities

their desire that this holy day should not be profaned by such a

spectacle. Their request was granted; orders were given to hasten the

death of the three condemned ones, and to remove them from the cross.

The soldiers executed this order by applying to the two thieves a

second punishment much more speedy than that of the cross, the

crurifragium, breaking of the legs, the usual punishment of slaves and

of prisoners of war. As to Jesus, they found him dead, and did not

think it necessary to break his legs. But one of them, to remove all

doubt as to the real death of the third victim, and to complete it, if

any breath remained in him, pierced his side with a spear. They thought

they saw water and blood flow, which was regarded as a sign of the

cessation of life.

The fourth Evangelist, who here represents the Apostle John as having

been an eye-witness, insists strongly on this detail. It is evident, in

fact, that doubts arose as to the reality of the death of Jesus. A few

hours of suspension on the cross appeared to persons accustomed to see

crucifixions as entirely insufficient to lead to such a result. They

cited many instances of persons crucified, who, removed in time, had

been brought to life again by energetic treatment. Origen, later on,

thought it needful to invoke miracle in order to explain so sudden an

end. The same astonishment is discovered in the narrative of Mark. To

speak truly, the best guarantee that the historian possesses upon a

point of this nature is the suspicious hatred of the enemies of Jesus.

It is very doubtful whether the Jews were at that time preoccupied with

the fear that Jesus might be thought to be resuscitated; but, in any

case, they must have made sure that he was really dead. Whatever may

have been, at certain periods, the neglect of the ancients in all that

appertained to legal proof and the strict conduct of affairs, we cannot

but believe that for once those interested had taken, on so important a

point to them, some precautions in this respect.

According to the Roman custom, the corpse of Jesus ought to have

remained suspended in order to become the prey of birds. According to

the Jewish law, it would, being removed in the evening, have been

deposited in the place of infamy set apart for the burial of those who

were executed. If Jesus' disciples had consisted only of his poor

Galileans, timid and without influence, the second course would have

been adopted. But we have seen that, in spite of his small success at

Jerusalem, Jesus had gained the sympathy of some people of

consideration who expected the kingdom of God, and who, without avowing

themselves his disciples, had for him a strong attachment. One of

these, Joseph, of the small town of Arimathea (Ha-ramathaim), went in

the evening to ask the body from the procurator. Joseph was a man rich,

honourable, and a member of the Sanhedrim. Roman law, at this period,

commanded, moreover, the delivering up of the body of the person

executed to those who claimed it. Pilate, who was ignorant of the

circumstance of the crurifragium, was astonished that Jesus was so soon

dead, and summoned the centurion who had superintended the execution to

know how this was. Pilate granted to Joseph the object of his request.

The body probably had already been removed from the cross. They

delivered it to Joseph, that he might do with it as he pleased.

Another secret friend, Nicodemus, whom we have already seen employing

his influence more than once in favour of Jesus, came forward at this

moment. He arrived bearing an ample provision of the materials

necessary for embalming. Joseph and Nicodemus interred Jesus according

to the Jewish custom--that is to say, they wrapped him in a sheet with

myrrh and aloes. The Galilean women were present, and no doubt

accompanied the scene with piercing cries and tears.

It was late, and all this was done in great haste. The place had not

yet been chosen where the body would be finally deposited. The carrying

of the body, moreover, might have been delayed to a late hour, and have

involved a violation of the Sabbath; the disciples still

conscientiously observed the prescriptions of the Jewish law. A

temporary interment was hence decided upon. There was near at hand, in

the garden, a tomb recently dug out in the rock, which had never been

used. It belonged, probably, to one of the believers. The funeral

caves, when they were destined for a single body, were composed of a

small chamber, at the bottom of which the place for the body was marked

by a trough or couch let into the wall, and surmounted by an arch. As

these caves were dug out of the sides of sloping rocks, they were

entered by the floor; the door was shut by a stone very difficult to

move. Jesus was deposited in the cave, and the stone was rolled to the

door, as it was intended to return in order to give him a more complete

burial. But, the next day being a solemn Sabbath, the labour was

postponed till the day following.

The women retired after having carefully noticed how the body was laid.

They employed the hours of the evening which remained to them in making

new preparations for the embalming. On the Saturday all rested.

On the Sunday morning, the women, Mary Magdalen the first, came very

early to the tomb. The stone was displaced from the opening, and the

body was no longer in the place where they had put it. At the same

time, the strangest rumours were spread in the Christian community. The

cry, "He is risen!" spread amongst the disciples like lightning. Love

caused it to find ready credence everywhere. What had taken place? In

treating of the history of the apostles we shall have to examine this

point and to investigate the origin of the legends as touching the

resurrection. For the historian, the life of Jesus finishes with his

last sigh. But such was the impression he had left in the hearts of his

disciples and of a few devoted females, that during some weeks more it

was as if he were living and consoling them. Had his body been taken

away? Did enthusiasm, always credulous in certain circumstances, create

afterwards the group of narratives by which it was sought to establish

faith in the resurrection? In the absence of opposing documents this

can never be ascertained. Let us say, however, that the strong

imagination of Mary Magdalen played in this circumstance an important

part. Divine power of love! Sacred moments in which the passion of one

possessed gave to the world a resuscitated God!

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CHAPTER XXVII.

FATE OF THE ENEMIES OF JESUS.

According to the calculation which we have adopted, the death of Jesus

took place in the year 33 of our era. It could not, at all events, be

either anterior to the year 29, the preaching of John and Jesus having

commenced in the year 28, or posterior to the year 35, as in the year

36, and probably before the Passover, Pilate and Ka�apha both lost

their offices. The death of Jesus, moreover, had no connexion whatever

with these two removals. In his retirement., Pilate probably never

dreamt for a moment of the forgotten episode which was to transmit his

pitiful renown to the most distant posterity. As to Ka�apha, he was

succeeded by Jonathan, his brother-in-law, son of the same Hanan who

had played the principal part in the trial of Jesus. The Sadducean

family of Hanan retained the pontificate a long time, and, more

powerful than ever, continued to wage against the disciples and the

family of Jesus the implacable war which they had commenced against the

Founder. Christianity, which owed to him the definitive act of its

foundation, owed to him also its first martyrs. Hanan was looked upon

as one of the happiest men of his age. The actual person guilty of the

death of Jesus ended his life overwhelmed with honours and

consideration, without ever doubting for an instant that he had

rendered a great service to the nation. His sons continued to reign

around the temple, and, kept down with difficulty by the procurators,

they ofttimes dispensed with the consent of the latter in order to

gratify their haughty and violent instincts. Antipas and Herodias soon

disappeared also from the political arena. Herod Agrippa having been

raised to the dignity of king by Caligula, the jealous Herodias swore

that she too would be queen. Pressed incessantly by this ambitious

woman, who treated him as a coward, because he suffered a superior in

his family, Antipas overcame his natural indolence, and went to Rome in

order to solicit the title which his nephew had just obtained (the year

39 of our era). But the affair turned out very badly. Injured in the

eyes of the emperor by Herod Agrippa, Antipas was removed, and spent

the rest of his life in exile at Lyons and in Spain. Herodias followed

him in his misfortunes. A hundred years, at least, were to elapse

before the name of their obscure subject (who had become God) should

appear in these remote countries to inscribe upon their tombs the

murder of John the Baptist.

As to the wretched Judas of Kerioth, terrible legends were current

about his death. It was maintained that he had bought a field in the

neighbourhood of Jerusalem with the price of his perfidy. There was,

indeed, on the south of Mount Zion, a place named Hakeldama (the field

of blood). It was alleged that this was the property acquired by the

traitor. According to one tradition he killed himself. According to

another, he had a fall in his field, which caused his bowels to gush

out. According to others, he died of a kind of dropsy, which, being

accompanied by repulsive circumstances, was regarded as a chastisement

of heaven. The desire of making out Judas to be another Absalom, and of

showing in him the accomplishment of the menaces which the Psalmist

pronounces against the perfidious friend, may have given rise to these

legends. Perhaps, in the retirement of his field of Hakeldama, Judas

led a quiet and obscure life; while his former friends prepared the

conquest of the world, and spread the report of his infamy. Perhaps,

also, the terrible hatred which was concentrated on his head drove him

to violent acts, in which were seen the finger of heaven.

The time of the great Christian revenge was, moreover, far distant. The

new sect had nothing to do with the catastrophe which Judaism was soon

to experience. The synagogue did not understand till much later to what

it exposed itself in practising laws of intolerance. The empire was

certainly still further from suspecting that its future destroyer had

been born. For nearly three hundred years it pursued its path without

suspecting that in its bosom principles were growing which were

destined to subject humanity to a complete transformation. At once

theocratic and democratic, the idea thrown by Jesus into the world was,

together with the invasion of the Germans, the most active cause of the

dissolution of the work of the C�sars. On the one hand, the right of

all men to participate in the kingdom of God was proclaimed. On the

other, religion was henceforth separated in principle from the state.

The rights of conscience, outside of political law, resulted in the

constitution of a new power,--the "spiritual power." This power has

more than once belied its origin. For ages the bishops have been

princes, and the Pope has been a king. The pretended empire of souls

has shown itself at various conjunctures as a frightful tyranny,

employing the rack and the stake in order to maintain itself. But the

day will come when the separation will bear its fruits, when the domain

of things spiritual will cease to be called a "power," and will be

denominated a "liberty." Proceeding from the bold affirmation of a man

of the people, formed in the presence of the people, beloved and

admired first by the people, Christianity was stamped by an original

character which will never be effaced. It was the first triumph of

revolution, the victory of the popular sentiment, the advent of the

simple in heart, the inauguration of the beautiful as understood by the

people. Jesus thus, in the aristocratic societies of antiquity, opened

the breach through which all will pass.

The civil power, in fact, although innocent of the death of Jesus (it

only countersigned the sentence, and even in spite of itself), ought to

bear a great share of the responsibility. In presiding at the scene of

Calvary, the state gave itself a serious blow. A legend full of all

kinds of irreverence prevailed, and became known to everybody--a legend

in which the constituted authorities played a hateful part, in which it

was the accused that was right, and in which the judges and the guards

were leagued against the truth. Seditious in the highest degree, the

history of the Passion, spread by a thousand popular images,

represented the Roman eagles as sanctioning the most iniquitous of

executions, soldiers executing it, and a prefect commanding it. What a

blow for all established powers! They have never entirely recovered

from it. How can they assume infallibility in respect to poor men, when

they have on their conscience the great contumely of Gethsemane?

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OF THE WORK OF JESUS.

Jesus, it is seen, never extended his action beyond the Jewish circle.

Although his sympathy for outcasts of heterodoxy led him to admit

Pagans into the kingdom of God, although he had more than once resided

in a Pagan country, and although once or twice we surprise him in

kindly relations with unbelievers, it may be said that his life was

passed entirely in the small world in which he was born. In Greek or

Roman countries he was never heard of; his name only appears in profane

authors of a hundred years later, and then in an indirect manner, in

connection with seditious movements provoked by his doctrine, or

persecutions of which his disciples were the object. Even on the heart

of Judaism Jesus made no very durable impression. Philo, who died about

the year 50, knew nothing of him Josephus, born in the year 37, and

writing at the close of the century, mentions his execution in a few

lines, as an event of secondary importance, while in the enumeration of

the sects of his time he omits the Christians altogether. Even the

Mishna affords no trace of the new school. The passages in the two

Gemaras in which the founder of Christianity is named, do not carry us

back beyond the fourth or fifth century. The essential work of Jesus

was to form around him a circle of disciples, whom he inspired with

boundless affection, and in whose breasts he deposited the germ of his

doctrine. To have made himself beloved, "to the extent that after his

death they ceased not to love him," was the great work of Jesus, and

that which most struck his contemporaries. His doctrine was a thing so

little dogmatic that he neither thought of writing it nor of having it

written. Men did not become his disciples by believing this or that,

but by attaching themselves to his person and by loving him. A few

sentences easily revoked from the memory, and especially his type of

character, and the impression it had left, were what remained of him.

Jesus was not a founder of dogmas, or a deviser of symbols; he

introduced into the world a new spirit. The least Christianised of men

were, on the one hand, the doctors of the Greek Church, who, from the

fourth century, began to entangle Christianity in a labyrinth of

puerile metaphysical discussions, and, on the other, the scholastics of

the Latin Middle Ages, who wished to draw from the Gospel the thousands

of articles of a colossal system. To adhere to Jesus with the kingdom

of God in prospect was what at first entitled one to be called a

Christian.

It will now be understood why, by an exceptional destiny, pure

Christianity still presents, after eighteen centuries, the character of

a universal and eternal religion. In truth it is because the religion

of Jesus is, in some respects, the final religion. The product of a

perfectly spontaneous movement of souls, disengaged at its birth from

all dogmatic restraints, having struggled three hundred years for

liberty of conscience, Christianity, in spite of the catastrophes which

have followed it, reaps still the fruits of its excellent origin. To

renew itself it has only to return to the Gospel. The kingdom of God,

such as we conceive it, differs materially from the supernatural

apparition that early Christians hoped to see appear in the clouds. But

the sentiment which Jesus introduced into the world is really ours. His

perfect idealism is the highest rule of a pure and virtuous life. He

created a heaven of pure souls, where are to be found what we seek in

vain for on earth,--the perfect nobility of the children of God,

absolute holiness, total abstraction from the pollutions of the world;

in fine, liberty, which society eschews as an impossibility, and which

can only find full scope in the domain of mind. The great Master of

those who take refuge in this ideal kingdom of God is still Jesus. He

was the first to proclaim the sovereignty of the mind; the first to

say, at least through his acts, "My kingdom is not of this world." The

foundation of true religion is verily his work. Since him, it only

remains to fructify and develop it.

"Christianity" has thus become almost synonymous with "religion." All

that one may attempt, outside this grand and noble Christian tradition,

is futile. Jesus founded the religion of humanity, just as Socrates

founded philosophy, and Aristotle science. There was philosophy before

Socrates, and science before Aristotle. But since the times of Socrates

and Aristotle philosophy and science have made immense progress; yet it

has all been reared upon the foundations they laid down. Similarly,

before Jesus religion had passed through many revolutions; since Jesus

it has achieved great conquests; yet we have not advanced, and never

will improve upon the essential principle Jesus created; he fixed for

ever the idea of pure worship. The religion of Jesus in this sense is

not limited. The Church has had its epochs and its phases; it has

enveloped itself in creeds which have lasted and can only last for a

time: Jesus, on the other hand, has founded absolute religion, which

excludes nothing, determines nothing unless it be sentiment. His creeds

are not fixed dogmas, but ideas susceptible of indefinite

interpretations. We should seek in vain for a theological proposition

in the Gospel. All professions of faith are travesties of the idea of

Jesus, just as the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, in proclaiming

Aristotle the only master of a completed science, perverted the

teachings of Aristotle. Aristotle, if he had taken part in the debates

of the schools, would have repudiated this narrow doctrine; he would

have allied himself to the party of progressive science as against the

routine which shielded itself under his authority; he would have

applauded his opponents. Similarly, if Jesus were to return among us,

he would recognise as disciples, not those who pretend to embody his

teachings in a few catechismal phrases, but those who labour as he

laboured. The eternal glory in all great things is to lay the first

stone. It may be that in modern "Physics" and "Meteorology" we may not

discover a word of the treatises of Aristotle which bear these titles;

but Aristotle remains no less the founder of natural science. Whatever

may be the transformations of dogma, Jesus will ever be the creator of

the pure spirit of religion; the Sermon on the Mount will never be

surpassed. No matter what revolution takes place, nothing will prevent

us attaching ourselves in religion to the grand intellectual and moral

line at the head of which is enshrined the name of Jesus. In this sense

we are Christians, even when we separate ourselves on almost all points

from the Christian tradition which has preceded us.

And this great foundation was indeed the personal work of Jesus. To

make himself adored to this degree, he must have been adorable. Love is

only kindled by an object worthy of it, and we should know nothing of

Jesus if it were not for the passion he inspired in those around him,

which obliges us still to affirm that he was great and pure. The faith,

the enthusiasm, the constancy of the first Christian generation is only

explicable on the supposition that at its inception there existed a man

of transcendent greatness. In view of the marvellous creations of the

ages of faith two equally fatal impressions to good historical

criticism spring up in the mind. In one view we are led to regard these

creations as too impersonal; we impute to collective action that which

has often been the work of a single powerful will. In another, we

refuse to see men like ourselves in the authors of these extraordinary

movements which have decided the fate of humanity. Let us take a

broader view of the powers which nature conceals in her bosom. Our

civilisations, governed by minute restrictions, cannot give us any idea

of the power of man at periods in which the originality of each one had

a far freer development. Let us imagine a recluse, dwelling in the

mountains near our capital, coming out from time to time in order to

present himself at the palaces of sovereigns, brushing the sentinels

aside, and, with an imperious tone, announcing to kings the approach of

revolutions of which he had been the promoter. The bare idea provokes a

smile. Yet such was Elisha; Elisha the Tishbite, in our days, would not

be able to pass the gate of the Tuileries. The preaching of Jesus, and

his free activity in Galilee, do not deviate less completely from the

social conditions to which we are accustomed. Free from our polished

conventionalities, exempt from the uniform education which refines us,

but which so greatly dwarfs our individuality, these mighty souls

carried a surprising energy into action. They appear to us like the

giants of a heroic age, who could not have been real. This is a

profound error! These men were our brothers; they were of our stature,

felt and thought as we do. But the breath of God was free in them; with

us, it is restrained by the iron bonds of a mean society, and condemned

to an irremediable mediocrity.

Let us place, then, at the highest summit of human greatness the person

of Jesus. Let us not be led astray by sneers in the presence of a

legend which keeps us always in a superhuman world. The life of Francis

d'Assisi is, too, only a tissue of miracles. Has any one ever doubted,

though, of his existence, and of the part he played? Let us say no more

that the glory of founding Christianity must be attributed to the

multitude of the first Christians, and not to him whom legend has

deified. The inequality of men is much more marked in the East than

with us. It is no rarity to see spring up there, in the midst of a

general atmosphere of wickedness, characters whose greatness astonishes

us. So far from Jesus having been made by his disciples, he appeared in

everything superior to them. The latter, St. Paul and St. John

excepted, were men without invention or genius. St. Paul himself bears

no comparison with Jesus, and as to St. John, he has done little more

in his Apocalypse than to breathe the poetry of Jesus. Hence the

immense superiority of the Gospels among the writings of the New

Testament. Hence the painful lowering of sentiment we experience in

passing from the history of Jesus to that of the apostles. The

evangelists themselves, who have transmitted to us the image of Jesus,

are so much beneath him of whom they speak that they constantly

disfigure him, not being able to attain to his height. Their writings

are full of errors and contradictions. We feel in each line a discourse

of divine beauty, told by narrators who do not understand it, and who

substitute their own ideas for those they have only half grasped. On

the whole, the character of Jesus, far from having been embellished by

his biographers, has been marred by them. Criticism, in order to find

what he was, needs to discard a series of errors, which prove the

mediocre minds of the disciples. The latter painted him as they

understood him, and often, in thinking to exalt him, they have debased

him.

I know that our modern ideas have been offended more than once in this

legend, conceived by another race, under another sky, and in the midst

of other social wants. There are virtues which, in some respects, are

more conformable to our taste. The upright and gentle Marcus Aurelius,

the humble and tender Spinoza, not having believed in miracles, were

exempt from some errors that Jesus shared. Spinoza, in his profound

obscurity, had an advantage which Jesus did not seek. By our extreme

delicacy in the use of means of conviction, by our absolute sincerity

and our disinterested love of the pure idea, we have founded--all we,

who have devoted our lives to science--a new ideal of morality. But the

judgment of general history ought not to be restricted to

considerations of personal merit. Marcus Aurelius and his noble masters

have left no durable impress on the world. Marcus Aurelius left behind

him delightful books, an execrable son, and a decaying nation. Jesus

remains an inexhaustible principle of moral regeneration for humanity.

Philosophy does not suffice for the multitude. They must have sanctity.

An Apollonius of Tyana with his miraculous legend, is therefore more

successful than a Socrates with his cold reason. "Socrates," it was

said, "leaves men on the earth, Apollonius transports them to heaven;

Socrates is but a sage, Apollonius is a god." Religion, so far, has not

existed without a share of asceticism, of piety, and of the marvellous.

When it was wished, after the Antonines, to make a religion of

philosophy, it was requisite to transform the philosophers into saints,

to write the "Edifying Life" of Pythagoras and of Plotinus, to

attribute to them a legend, virtues of abstinence, contemplation and

supernatural powers, without which neither credence nor authority were

found in that age.

Preserve us, then, from mutilating history in order to satisfy our

petty susceptibilities! Which of us, pigmies as we are, could do what

the extravagant Francis d'Assisi, or the hysterical Saint Theresa, has

done? Let medicine have names to express these grand errors of human

nature; let it maintain that genius is a disease of the brain; let it

see in a certain delicacy of morality the commencement of consumption;

let it class enthusiasm and love amongst the nervous accidents--it

matters little. The terms healthy and diseased are entirely relative.

Who would not prefer to be diseased like Pascal, rather than healthy

like the common herd? The narrow ideas which are spread in our times

respecting madness, mislead our historical judgments in the most

serious manner in questions of this kind. A state in which a man says

things of which he is not conscious, in which thought is produced

without the summons and control of the will, exposes him to being

confined as a lunatic. Formerly this was called prophecy and

inspiration. The most beautiful things in the world are done in a state

of fever; every great creation involves a breach of equilibrium;

child-birth is, by a law of nature, a violent process.

We acknowledge, indeed, that Christianity is too complex to have been

the work of a single man. In one sense, entire humanity has co-operated

therein. There is no one so shut in as not to receive some influence

from without. History is full of singular synchronisms, which cause,

without any communication with each other, very remote portions of the

human species to arrive at the same time at almost identical ideas and

imaginations. In the thirteenth century, the Latins, the Greeks, the

Syrians, the Jews, and the Mussulmans adopted scholasticism, and very

nearly the same scholasticism prevailed from York to Samarcand; in the

fourteenth century every one in Italy, Persia, and India yielded to the

taste for mystical allegory; in the sixteenth, art was developed in a

very similar manner in Italy, and at the court of the Great Moguls,

without St. Thomas, Barhebr�us, the Rabbis of Narbonne, or the

Mot�call�min of Bagdad having known each other, without Dante and

Petrarch having seen any sofi, without any pupil of the schools of

Perouse or of Florence having been at Delhi. We should say there are

great moral influences running through the world like epidemics,

without distinction of frontier and of race. The interchange of ideas

in the human species does not take place only by books or by direct

instruction. Jesus was ignorant of the very name of Buddha, of

Zoroaster, and of Plato; he had read no Greek book, no Buddhist Soutra,

nevertheless there was in him more than one element, which, without his

suspecting it, came from Buddhism, Parseeism, or from the Greek wisdom.

All this was done through secret channels and by that kind of sympathy

which exists among the various portions of humanity. The great man, on

the one hand, receives everything from his age; on the other, he

governs his age. To show that the religion founded by Jesus was the

natural consequence of that which had preceded does not diminish its

excellence, but only proves that it had a reason for its existence,

that it was legitimate--that is to say, conformable to the instinct and

wants of the heart in a given age.

Is it more just to say that Jesus was wholly indebted to Judaism, and

that his greatness is only that of the Jewish people? No one is more

disposed than myself to place high this unrivalled people, whose

particular heritage seems to have been to contain amongst them the

extremes of good and evil. Jesus doubtless sprang from Judaism; but he

proceeded from it as Socrates did from the schools of the Sophists, as

Luther proceeded from the Middle Ages, as Lamennais from Catholicism,

as Rousseau from the eighteenth century. A man belongs to his age and

race even when he reacts against his age and race. Far from continuing

Judaism, Jesus represents the rupture with the Jewish spirit. The

supposition that his idea in this respect could lead to equivocation is

disproved by the general direction of Christianity after him. The

general tendency of Christianity has been to separate itself more and

more from Judaism. Its perfection depends on its returning to Jesus,

but certainly not in returning to Judaism. The great originality of the

founder remains then unchallenged; his glory does not admit any

legitimate sharer.

Doubtless, circumstances much aided the success of this marvellous

revolution; but circumstances only second endeavours as to what is just

and true. Each branch of the development of humanity, art, poetry,

religion, encounters, in crossing the ages, a privileged epoch, in

which it attains perfection by a sort of spontaneous instinct, and

without effort. No labour of reflection would succeed in producing

afterwards the masterpieces which nature creates at those moments by

inspired geniuses. What the golden age of Greece was for art and

profane literature, the age of Jesus was for religion. Jewish society

exhibited the most extraordinary moral and intellectual state which the

human species has ever passed through. It was truly one of those divine

hours in which the sublime is produced by combinations of a thousand

hidden forces, in which great souls find a flood of admiration and

sympathy to sustain them. The world, delivered from the very narrow

tyranny of small municipal republics, enjoyed great liberty. Roman

despotism did not make itself felt in a disastrous manner until much

later, and it was, moreover, always less oppressive in those distant

provinces than in the centre of the empire. Our petty preventive

interferences (far more destructive than death to spiritual things) did

not exist. Jesus, during three years, could lead a life which, in our

societies, would have brought him twenty times before the magistrates.

Our laws upon the illegal exercise of medicine would alone have

sufficed to cut short his career. The unbelieving dynasty of the

Herods, on the other hand, occupied itself little with religious

movements; under the Asmoneans, Jesus would probably have been arrested

at his first step. An innovator, in such a state of society, only

risked death, and death is a gain to those who labour for the future.

Imagine Jesus reduced to bear the burden of his divinity until his

sixtieth or seventieth year, losing his celestial fire, wearing out

little by little under the burden of an unparalleled mission!

Everything favours those who have a special destiny; they become

glorious by a sort of invincible impulse and command of fate.

This sublime person, who each day still presides over the destiny of

the world, may be called divine, not in the sense that Jesus has

absorbed all the divine, but in the sense that Jesus is the person who

has impelled his fellow-men to make the greatest step towards the

divine. Humanity in its totality presents an assemblage of low beings,

selfish, superior to the animal only in the single particular that its

selfishness is more reflective. Still, from the midst of this uniform

depravity, pillars rise towards the sky, and testify to a nobler

destiny. Jesus is the highest of these pillars that show to man whence

he comes, and whither he ought to tend. In him was concentrated all

that is good and elevated in our nature. He was not without sin; he had

to conquer the same passions that we have to combat; no angel of God

comforted him, except it was his good conscience; no Satan tempted him,

more than each one bears in his heart. In the same way that many of his

great qualities are lost to us, in consequence of the lack of

intelligence of his disciples, it is also probable that many of his

faults have been concealed. But never has any one made the interests of

humanity predominate to the same extent in his life over the

littlenesses of self-love. Unreservedly devoted to his idea, he

subordinated everything to it to such a degree that, towards the end of

his life, the universe existed no longer for him. It was by this

transport of heroic will that he conquered heaven. There never was a

man--Sakya Mouni alone excepted--who so completely trampled under foot

family, the pleasures of this world, and all temporal care. He lived

only for his Father and the divine mission with which he believed

himself charged.

As to us, eternal children, condemned to impotence, who labour without

reaping, and who will never witness the fruit of that which we have

sown, let us bow before these demi-gods. They did that which we cannot

do--create, affirm, act. Will great originality be borne again, or will

the world henceforth content itself by following the paths opened by

the bold original minds of antiquity? We do not know. In any case,

Jesus will pot be surpassed. His worship will constantly renew itself,

his history will provoke endless pious tears, his sufferings will

subdue the stoutest hearts; all ages will proclaim that, among the sons

of men, no one has been born who is greater than Jesus.

END OF THE LIFE OF JESUS.

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APPENDIX.

OF THE USE IT IS PROPER TO MAKE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL IN WRITING THE LIFE OF

JESUS.

The greatest difficulty which presents itself to the historian of Jesus

is the value of the sources upon which such a history rests. On the one

hand, what is the value of the Gospels called synoptic? On the other,

what use is to be made of the fourth Gospel in writing the life of

Jesus? On the first point all those who occupy themselves with these

studies, according to the critical method, are thoroughly in accord.

The synoptics represent the tradition, often legendary, of the two or

three first Christian generations in regard to the person of Jesus.

This permits of much uncertainty in the application, and necessitates

the continual employment in the narrative of the formulas: "Some have

said this," "Others have related that," &c. But that suffices to inform

us as to the general character of the founder, the charm and the

principal features of his teaching, and even as regards the most

important circumstances of his life. The writers of the life of Jesus,

who confine themselves to the employment of the synoptics, do not

differ more from one another than the narrators of the life of Mahomet

who have made use of the hadith. The biographers of the Arab prophet

may take different views of the value of such and such a document. But,

on the whole, they are all agreed as to the value of the hadith. They

all, according to their manner, class them along with those legendary

and traditional documents, but not as precise documents of history

properly speaking.

Upon the second point, I desire to say, in regard to the employment it

is fitting to make of the fourth Gospel, that there is disagreement. I

have, with many reserves and precautions, made use of this document. In

the opinion of excellent judges, I ought not to have made any use of

it, with the exception of chapters xvii. and xix., which contain the

narrative of the Passion. Almost all the enlightened criticisms which I

have received apropos of my work are in accord on that point. I am not

surprised at this: for I could not be ignorant of the somewhat contrary

opinion as to the historic value of the fourth Gospel which obtains in

the liberal schools of theology. Objections coming from men so eminent

rendered it imperative that I should submit my opinion to the test of a

new examination. Putting to one side the question as to knowing who

wrote the fourth Gospel, I set myself to follow that Gospel through,

paragraph by paragraph, as if it had come to me as a manuscript newly

discovered, without the name of the author. Let us divest ourselves of

every preconceived idea, and let us endeavour to render an account of

the impressions produced on us by that singular writing.

� 1. The opening verses (i. 1-14) raise within us at once the gravest

suspicions. This introduction transports us into the very heart of

apostolic theology, presents no resemblance to the synoptics, puts

forth ideas assuredly very different from those of Jesus and of his

true disciples. At the outset this prologue warns as that the work in

question cannot be a simple history, transparent and impersonal like

the narrative of Mark, for example; that the author has a theology;

that he wishes to prove a thesis, to wit, that Jesus is the divine

logos. We are hence admonished to take great precautions. Is it

necessary, nevertheless, in regard to this first page, to reject the

book in its entirety, and to perceive an imposture in the 14th verse,

in which the author declares he has been a witness of the events which

compose the life of Jesus?

That would be, in my opinion, a premature conclusion. A work full of

theological ideas may embrace valuable historical information. Were not

the synoptics written with the constant preoccupation of demonstrating

that Jesus realised all the Messianic prophecies? Because of this, are

we to give up searching in their accounts for a historical basis? The

theory of the logos, which is so strongly developed in our Gospel, is

not a reason for rejecting it at the middle or close of the second

century. The belief that Jesus was the logos of the Alexandrian

theology must have been early put forward, and that in a most logical

manner. Happily, the founder of Christianity had no idea of that kind.

But, from the year 68, it was already called "The Word of God."

Apollos, who was from Alexandria, and who appears to have resembled

Philo, passes already (about the year 57) for a new preacher, holding

peculiar doctrines. These ideas are in perfect accord with the state of

mind in which the Christian community found itself, when people

despaired of seeing Jesus appear soon in the clouds as the Son of Man.

A change of the same kind appears to have been wrought in the opinions

of St. Paul. We knew the difference there is between the first epistles

of that Apostle and the last. The hope, for example, of the immediate

coming of Christ, which pervades the two epistles to the Thessalonians,

disappears towards the end of the life of St. Paul. The Apostle then

turns his attention towards another order of invention. The doctrine of

the epistle to the Colossians has a great resemblance to that of the

fourth Gospel, Jesus being represented in the said epistle as the image

of the in, visible God, the first-born of every creature, by whom

every-thing has been created, who was before all things, and through

whom everything subsists, in whom the plenitude of the Divinity

corporeally dwells. Is there not here the "Word" of Philo? I know there

are those who reject the authenticity of the epistle to the Colossians,

but for reasons, in my opinion, altogether insufficient. These changes

of theories, or rather of style, amongst the men of those times, men

who were filled with ardent passion, are, within certain limits,

matters quite admissible. Why should not the crisis which was produced

in the soul of St. Paul not be produced in other apostles, men in the

last years of the first century? When the "kingdom of God," as it is

described in the synoptics and the apocalypse, had become a chimera,

people took refuge in metaphysics. The theory of the logos was the

consequence of the disappointment of the first Christian generation.

People carried into the ideal that which they hoped to see realised in

the order of things. Each delay that was put on the coming of Jesus was

one step more towards his deification; and this is so true that it was

exactly at the hour when the last Millenarian dream vanished that the

divinity of Jesus was proclaimed in an absolute manner.

� 2. Let us return to our subject. According to consecrated usage the

evangelist commences his narrative with the mission of John the

Baptist. That which he says of the relations of John with Jesus is

similar in many points to the tradition of the synoptics; in other

points the divergence is considerable. The theory, soon held so dear by

all the Christians, according to which John proclaimed the divine

mission of Jesus, is greatly exaggerated by our author. Things are

better managed in the synoptics, where John entertains to the end

doubts as to the character of Jesus, and sends to him messengers to

question him. The narrative of the fourth Gospel implies a perfectly

prearranged plan, and confirms us in the idea that we have divined the

prologue, to wit, that the author sought rather to prove than to

record. We shall discover presently, however, that the author, though

differing much from the synoptics, possesses many traditions in common

with them. He cites the same prophecies; like them he believes in a

dove which should descend upon the head of Jesus immediately after

baptism. But his narrative is less ingenuous, more advanced, more ripe,

if I may so speak. One single detail staggers me; this is v. 28, which

fixes the place with precision. Admit that the designation Bethania is

inexact (Bethania was not known along those coasts, and the Greek

interpreters have arbitrarily substituted Bethabara for it), what does

it matter? A theologian having nothing Jewish about him, nor possessing

any recollections direct or indirect of Palestine, a pure theorist like

him who composed the prologue, would not have put in that detail. What

did this topographical detail matter to a sectary of Asia Minor or of

Alexandria? If the author inserted it, it was because he had a

substantial reason for so doing, either in the documents he possessed

or in some recollections. Already, then, we are led to think that our

theologian is indeed able to inform us of things in regard to the life

of Jesus of which the synoptics knew nothing. Nothing, certainly,

proves ocular testimony. But it must at least be supposed that the

author had other sources of information from those which we have, and

that to us it may well have the value of an original.

� 3. Beginning with v. 35 we read about a series of conversions of

apostles, associated together in a manner not very natural, and which

do not correspond with the accounts of the synoptics. Can it he

maintained that the accounts of these last have here a historical

superiority? No. The conversions of the apostles recorded in the

synoptics are all cast in the same mould; one perceives that a

legendary and idyllic type is being indistinctly applied to all

narratives of this species. The short narratives of the fourth Gospel

have more character and angles less polished. They much resemble badly

edited recollections of one of the apostles. I know that the narratives

of simple-minded people and of children always enter much into details.

I do not insist upon the minuti� of v. 39. But wherefore that idea of

connecting the first conversion of disciples with the sojourn of Jesus

near John the Baptist? Whence come these so precise particulars about

Philip, about the father of Andrew and Peter, and, above all, about

Nathaniel? This latter personage belongs to our Gospel. I cannot hold

the latter as inventions which were concocted a hundred years after

Jesus and far away from Palestine, together with the so precise details

which are reported of him. If he is a symbolical personage, why are we

troubled with being told that he was of Cana of Galilee, a city that

our evangelist appeared to be particularly well acquainted with? Why

should anyone have invented all this? There is no dogmatic intention

implied, if it be not in v. 51, which is put in the mouth of Jesus.

Above all, there is no symbolical intention. I believe in intentions of

this kind when they are indicated, and, if 1 might say so, underlined

by the author. I do not believe in them when the mystic allusion is not

self-indicative. The allegorical exegete does not speak in half

sentences; he presents his argument and insists upon it with

complacency. I say as much also of the sacramental numbers. The

adversaries of the fourth Gospel have remarked that the miracles it

records are seven in number. If the author himself had selected this

number it would be a serious matter, and would prove his motives. The

author did not count them; he must only have taken them up at random.

The discussion on this point is somewhat favourable to our text. Verses

35 to 51 have a more historic turn than the corresponding passages in

the synoptics. It seems that the fourth evangelist was better

acquainted than the other narrators of the life of Jesus with that

which concerned the vocation of the apostle; I admit that it was the

school of John the Baptist from which Jesus attached to himself the

first disciples, whose names remain celebrated; I opine that the

principal apostles were disciples of John the Baptist before they

became disciples of Jesus, and this affirms the importance which the

whole of the first Christian generation accorded to John the Baptist.

If this importance, as is argued by the learned Hollandic school, was

in part factitious, and conceived almost wholly to sustain the r�le of

Jesus as respects an incontestable authority, why was John the Baptist

chosen, a man who was not held in great repute except by the Christian

family? The truth, in my opinion, is, that John the Baptist was not

only for the disciples of Jesus a simple guarantee, but was also for

them a first master, with whom they indissolubly connected the

recollection of the very beginnings of the mission of Jesus. A fact of

greater importance is that the baptism conserved by Christianity as the

necessary introduction to a new life is a mark of the origin which

still attests, in a visible fashion, that Christianity was at first a

detached branch of the school of John the Baptist.

The fourth Gospel should then be limited to the first chapter, which

must be defined as "a fragment made up of traditions or of

recollections hastily written, and occupied with a theology far removed

from the primitive Christian spirit; a chapter of legendary biography,

in which the author permits the introduction of traditional data, which

he often transforms, but invents nothing." If the question is one of �

priori biography, it is indeed rather in the synoptics that I find a

biography of that sort. It is the synoptics which make Jesus to be born

at Bethlehem, which make him go into Egypt, which lead the Magi to him,

&c., for the necessities of the cause. It is Luke who creates or admits

personages who perhaps never existed. The Messianic prophets, in

particular, prepossessed our author less than the synoptics, and

occasioned in him fewer fabulous recitals. In other terms, we already

reach, in that which concerns the fourth Gospel, the distinction

between the narrative basis and the doctrinal basis. In the first,

Jesus appears to us as a powerful being, superior in certain points to

the Jesus of the synoptics; but the second is a great distance from the

actual discourses of Jesus, such as the synoptics, particularly

Matthew, have preserved to us.

A circumstance, moreover, strikes us from this moment. The author

wishes it to be accepted that the two first disciples of Jesus were

Andrew and another disciple. Andrew very soon attracts Peter, his

brother, who thus finds himself put a little into the shade. The second

disciple is not named. But, in comparing this passage with others we

encounter later on, we are induced to think that the other unnamed

disciple is none other than the author of the Gospel, or at least one

who wishes to pass himself off for the author. In the last chapters of

the book, in fact, we shall see the author speaking with a certain

mystery of himself, and, what is most remarkable, affecting always to

place himself before Peter, even when recognising the hierarchical

superiority of the latter. Let us observe also that in the synoptics

the vocation of John is closely associated with that of Peter; but in

the Acts John is continually represented as the companion of Peter. A

double difficulty is hence presented to us. For, if the unnamed

disciple is really John, the son of Zebedee, one is led to think that

John, the son of Zebedee, is the author of our Gospel. To suppose that

an impostor, in wishing to make believe that the author is John, had

had the intention of not naming John and of designating him in an

enigmatical fashion, would be to impute to him a ridiculous artifice.

On the other hand, are we to understand that, if the real author of our

Gospel commenced by being a disciple of John the Baptist, he speaks of

the latter in a fashion so little historical, that the synoptic Gospels

on this point are superior to his narrative?

� 4. Paragraph ii. 1-12 is a miraculous recital like so many others to

be found in the synoptics. There is in the structure of the narrative a

little more of mise-en-sc�ne, something less ingenuous; nevertheless,

there is nothing in the groundwork which departs from the general

colouring of the tradition. The synoptics do not speak of this miracle;

but it is quite natural that, in the rich marvellous legend which

circulated, some were acquainted with one detail, others with another.

The allegorical explanation, based principally upon verse 10, and

according to which water and wine were to be the old and the new

alliance, imputes to the author, in my opinion, a thought which he did

not possess. Verse 11 proves that, in the eyes of the latter, the whole

narrative has but one aim--to manifest the power of Jesus. The mention

of the little town of Cana, and of the sojourn the mother of Jesus made

there, is not forgotten. If the miracle of the water being changed into

wine had been invented by the author of the fourth Gospel, as is

supposed by the adversaries of the historic value of the said Gospel,

why introduce this detail? Verses 11 and 12 furnish a connected train

of facts. What importance would such topographical circumstances have

to Hellenist Christians of the second century? The apocryphal Gospels

do not proceed in this manner. They are vague, destitute of local

colouring, constructed by people who had no regard for Palestine. Let

us add, moreover, that our evangelist always speaks of Cana of Galilee,

a wholly obscure small town. How was it possible to create with an

after-stroke a celebrity for that small borough, of which assuredly the

semignostic Christians of Asia Minor had but faint recollections?

� 5. That which follows verse 13 is of high interest, and constitutes a

decisive triumph for our Gospel. According to the synoptics, Jesus,

from the commencement of his public life, only made one visit to

Jerusalem. The sojourn of Jesus in that city lasted only a few days, at

the end of which he was put to death. That admits of enormous

difficulties which I do not repeat here, having touched on them in the

"Life of Jesus." A few weeks (if we suppose that the intention of the

synoptics goes the length of attributing this stay to the interval

which supervened between his triumphal entry and his death) would not

have sufficed for all that Jesus ought to do at Jerusalem. Many

circumstances placed by the synoptics in Galilee, above all the

wranglings with the Pharisees, have but little meaning outside of

Jerusalem. All the events which follow the death of Jesus go to prove

that his sect had taken deep root at Jerusalem. If the things took

place there which Matthew and Mark would have us believe did,

Christianity was in an especial manner developed in Galilee. Mere

sojourners for a few days would not have chosen Jerusalem for their

capital. St. Paul entertains not one souvenir of Galilee: for him the

new religion was born at Jerusalem. The fourth Gospel, which admits

that Jesus made many journeys to and long sojourns in the capital,

appears then much nearer the truth. Luke, in this instance, seems to be

in secret harmony with our author, or rather gravitates between the two

opposing systems. This is very important, for we shall reveal soon

other circumstances where Luke sails along with the author of the

fourth Gospel, and seems to have had a knowledge of the same

traditions.

But there is yet something more striking. The first circumstance of the

sojourns of Jesus at Jerusalem reported by our evangelist is likewise

reported by the synoptics, and placed by them almost on the eve of the

death of Jesus; this is the driving of the merchants out of the temple.

Is it to a Galilean that, on the morrow of his arrival at Jerusalem, we

can attribute with any show of likelihood such an act, which, however,

might have had some reality, since it is reported in each of the four

texts ? In the chronological arrangement of the narrative, the

advantage belongs entirely to our author. It is evident that the

synoptics accumulated during the last days circumstances which were

furnished to them by tradition, and that they did not know where to

place them.

We must now touch upon a question which it is time to clear up. We have

already found that our evangelist possessed many traditions in common

with the synoptics (the part played by John the Baptist, the dove at

the baptism, the etymology of the name Cephas, the names of at least

three of the apostles, the merchants who were driven from the temple).

Does our evangelist imbibe this from the synoptics? No: for he presents

these same circumstances with two important differences. Whence, then,

did he get these narratives in common? Evidently from tradition, or

from recollections. But what does this import, except that the author

has sketched for us an original version of the life of Jesus, that this

life ought to be put at the very outset upon the same footing as the

other biographies of Jesus, but afterwards to be decided in detail by

motives of preference? An inventor � priori of a life of Jesus would

have nothing in common with the synoptics, or would paraphrase them as

is done in the apocrypha. The symbolical and dogmatic intention would

have been in that case much more sensible. In the whole of his writings

there would then have been reason and intention. There would not have

been that sort of indifferent and disinterested circumstances which

abound in our narrative. There is nothing which resembles the biography

of an �on; it is not thus that the Hindoo writes his lives of Krishna,

or recounts the incarnations of Vishnu. An example of this species of

composition, in the first centuries of our era, is the Pista Sophia

attributed to Valentinus. In the latter there is nothing real: all is

truly symbolical and ideal. The same remark applies to "The Gospel of

Nicodemus," which is an artificial composition, founded entirely on

metaphors. In our text, which possesses similar amplification, there is

a lacuna, and, if it were imperative to find analogous amplifications

amongst the canonical Gospels, it would be in the synoptics rather than

in our Gospel that we should have to seek for them.

� 6. There follows another incident, the relation of which to the

synoptics is no less remarkable. The latter, or at least Matthew and

Mark, report, apropos of the proceedings of Jesus and of his agony on

Golgotha, a phrase that Jesus would have given expression to, and which

would have been one of the principal causes of his condemnation:

"Destroy this temple and I will build it up again in three days." The

synoptics do not say that Jesus had uttered these words: on the

contrary, they treat that as false testimony. Our evangelist records

that Jesus did in fact give utterance to this incriminating expression.

Did he take this sentence from the synoptics? It is hardly probable:

for he gives a different version of it, and even an allegorical

explanation of which the synoptics are not cognisant. It seems, then,

that here he adhered to an original tradition, one more original even

than that of the synoptics, since the latter do not cite directly the

expression of Jesus, and only report an echo of it. True it is that, in

placing this sentence two years before the death of Jesus, the compiler

of the fourth Gospel yields to an idea which does not seem to be the

most happy.

Observe the Jewish historical characteristic in v. 20; it is a good

enough counterfeit and accords sufficiently well with Josephus.

� 7. The verses ii. 23-25 are rather unfavourable to our text; they are

sluggish, cold and tiresome; they smell of the apologist and the

polemic. They prove a premeditated compilation, and are much posterior

to that of the synoptics.

� 8. Let us look now at the episode of Nicodemus (iii. 1-21). I

naturally sacrifice the whole of the conversation of Jesus with that

Pharisee. It is a fragment of apostolic, not evangelic, theology. Such

a conversation could only have been reported by Jesus or Nicodemus.

Both hypotheses are equally improbable. Moreover, on leaving v. 12 the

author forgets the personage he has introduced into the scene, and

launches into a general explanation which is addressed exclusively to

the Jews. It is here that we detect one of the essential

characteristics of our author: his liking for theological

conversations, his tendency to attach to such conversations, incidents

more or less historic. Fragments of this sort teach us nothing more

regarding the doctrine of Jesus than the dialogues of Plato do

regarding the thoughts of Socrates. They are imaginary, not traditional

compositions. We can only compare them with the harangues that the

ancient historians make no scruple of imputing to their heroes. These

discourses are far removed both from the style and the ideas of Jesus;

on the contrary, they present a similitude corresponding exactly with

the theology of the prologue (i. 1-14), where the author speaks in his

own name. Is the circumstance to which the author attaches this

conversation historical, or is it his own invention? It is difficult to

say. I incline, however, to the former; for the fact is reported

further on (xix. 39), and Nicodemus is mentioned elsewhere (vii. 50 and

following). I am constrained to believe that Jesus in reality had

relations with a person of consideration of that name, and that the

author of our Gospel, who knew that, has chosen Nicodemus, like as

Plato has chosen Phaeton or Alcibiades as interlocutors in one of his

great theoretical dialogues.

� 9. The v. 22 and following up to v. 2 of chapter iv., transport us,

in my opinion, into real history. They show us anew Jesus near John the

Baptist, but on this occasion surrounded with a group of disciples.

Jesus, like John, baptizes, attracts the multitude more than the

latter, and has greater success than he. The disciples, like their

master, baptize, and a jealousy, to which the chiefs of the sect rise

superior, is kindled between the two schools. This is most remarkable;

for the synoptics contain nothing of the kind. As for me, I regard this

episode as exceedingly probable. What in certain details it possesses

of the inexplicable is far from invalidating the historical value of

the ensemble. It contains things which we can only half understand, but

which fit in well with the hypothesis of writings of personal

recollections, intended for a limited circle. Such obscurities, on the

contrary, are not to be explained in a work composed with the single

aim of making certain ideas prevail. Those ideas enter everywhere.

There could not have been so many singular incidents and without

apparent signification. The topography, moreover, is here most precise

(v. 22, 23). We do not know, it is true, where Latim was, but Linon is

a significant hint. It is the word �nawan, the Chaldean plural of A�n

or �n, "fountain." How can you account for some Hellenic sectaries

being able to divine this? They could not be the name of any locality,

or they would have stood for one which was well known, or they would

have coined an impossible word in its relationship to the Semitic

etymology.

The sentiment of v. 24 has likewise justness and precision. The

connection between v. 25 and that which precedes and follows, which is

not very apparent, dispels the idea of a fictitious composition. We

should say that here we have notes which have been badly edited, old

recollsctions loosely put together, yet at times possessing great

lucidity. What could be more artless than the thought at v. 26, and

repeated at v. 1 of chapter iv.? Verses 27-36 are quite of another

character. The author trips again in his discourse, to which it is

impossible to attribute any claim to authenticity. But verse 1 of

chapter iv. possesses anew rare transparency, while as to verse v. 2 it

is important. The author, in a sort of repenting himself of what he has

written, and believing that no evil consequences will be deduced from

his narrative, instead of erasing it, inserts a parenthesis which is in

flagrant contradiction with that which precedes. He no longer assumes

that Jesus has baptized; he pretends that it was only his disciples who

baptized. We hold that v. 2 was added later. The fact will always

remain that the passage iii. 22 and following is in no wise a fragment

of � priori theology, since, on the contrary, the � priori theologian

takes up the pen at v. 2 to contradict this passage and to free it from

that which might have proved embarrassing.

� 10. We now come to the interview of Jesus with the Samaritan woman

and the mission to the Samaritans (iv. 1-42). Luke knew of this

mission, which probably was real. Here, however, the theory of those

who do see in out Gospel only a series of fictions is destined to lead

to an exposition of principles worthy of being studied. The details of

the dialogue are evidently fictitious. On the other hand, the

topography of v. 3-6 is satisfactory. Only a Palestine Jew who had

often passed the entrance to the Valley of Sichem could have written

that. Verses 5, 6 are not exact, but the tradition which is there

mentioned may have come from Gen. xxxiii. 19; xlviii. 22; Josh. xxiv.

32. The author seems to make a play on words (Sichar for Sichem), by

which the Jews believed they cast bitter raillery upon the Samaritans.

I do not think that people were so very solicitous at Ephesus about the

hatred which divided the Jews from the Samaritans, and of the mutual

interdict which existed between them (v. 9). The allusions which people

pretend to see in the verses 16-18 to the religious history of Samaria

appears to me to be forced, and v. 22 is important. It cuts asunder the

admirable sentence, "Woman, believe me, the time is come . . ." and

expresses a wholly opposed sentiment. It would seem that there is here

an analogous correction at v. 2 of the same chapter, where either the

author or one of his disciples corrects an idea which he found

dangerous or too bold. In any case, this verse is profoundly imbued

with Jewish prejudices. It is beyond my comprehension, if it was

written about the year 130 or 150 in the circle of Christianity the

most removed from Judaism. V. 35 is exactly in the style of the

synoptics and is the actual words of Jesus. The sentence is a splendid

relic (v. 21-23, when 22 is omitted). There is no rigorous authenticity

for such sentences. How is it to be admitted that Jesus or the

Samaritan woman related the conversation they had had together? The

Oriental manner of narration is essentially anecdotic, everything with

them resolves itself into precise and palpable facts. General phrases,

with us expressing a tendency or general state, are to them unknown.

There is thus here an anecdote which we can no more admit than all the

other anecdotes of history. But the anecdote often contains a truth. If

Jesus never pronounced that Divine sentence, the sentence is none the

less his--the sentence would not have existed apart from him. I am

aware that in the synoptics there often occur principles wholly opposed

to one another, circumstances in which Jesus treats the Jews with great

severity. But there are likewise some others in which the broad spirit

that pervades this chapter of John is to be found. Discrimination is

imperative. It is in these last passages that I discover the true

thought of Jesus. The others are, in my opinion, blemishes and lapses,

proceeding from disciples only moderately capable of comprehending

their master and of extracting his thought.

� 11. Verses 43-45 of chapter iv. contain something which astonishes.

The author pretends that it was at Jerusalem, at the time of the

feasts, that Jesus made his great demonstrations. It seems that there,

this was a habit of his. But that which proves that such a habit,

although erroneous, was connected with recollections is that it is

supported (v. 44) by a saying of Jesus which is also reported in the

synoptics and which has a high character of authenticity.

� 12. Ver. 46 of ch. iv., which recalls the small town of Cana, is not

to be explained in a composition fictitious and uniquely dogmatic. Thus

(v. 46-54) there is a miracle of healing, strongly resembling those

which abound in the synoptics and which with some variations respond to

the one which is recorded at Matt. viii. 5 and following, and at Luke

vii. 1 and following. This is very remarkable, for it proves that the

author does not invent his miracles to please, and that in recounting

them he follows a tradition. To sum up, in regard to the seven miracles

mentioned there are only two the marriage feast at Cana and the

resurrection of Lazarus) of which there is no trace in the synoptics.

The five others are to be found there with some differences of detail.

� 13. Chapter v. constitutes a fragment apart. Here the processes of

the author are nakedly exhibited. He recounts a miracle which is

attested to have taken place at Jerusalem with some dramatic details

calculated to render the prodigy more striking, and he seizes this

occasion for making a long and dogmatic discourse against the Jews.

Does the author invent the miracle or does he take it from tradition?

If he invents it, we must admit that he had lived at Jerusalem, for he

knows the city well (v. 2 and following). It is not a question of

Bethesda; yet, to have invented this name and the circumstances

relating to it, the author of the fourth Gospel must have known Hebrew,

which is a thing the adversaries of our Gospel do not admit. It is more

probable that he made the tradition the basis of his account. This

account presents, in fact, notable parallelisms to Mark. A part of the

Christian community then attributed miracles to Jesus which were

attested to have taken place at Jerusalem. This is a very serious

matter. That Jesus had acquired great renown in thaumaturgy in a

country simple, rustic, and favourably disposed like Galilee, is quite

natural. Even had he not in a single instance connived at the execution

of marvellous acts, these acts would have taken place in spite of him.

His thaumaturgic reputation would have spread independently of all

co-operation on his part and of his knowledge. The miracle explains

itself before a benevolent public; in such a case it is in reality the

public which creates it. But before an evil-disposed public the matter

is wholly different. The latter has been clearly seen in the

recrudescence of miracles which took place in Italy five or six years

ago. The miracles which were produced in the Roman States succeeded;

those, on the other hand, which ventured to make their appearance in

the Italian provinces were immediately subjected to an inquest and

quickly arrested. Those whom it was pretended had been cured avowed

that they had never been sick. The thaumaturgists themselves, on being

interrogated, declared that they knew nothing of them, but, seeing that

the rumours of their miracles were so widespread, they believed they

were able to work them. In other words, for a miracle to succeed there

is need of a little complaisance. The bystanders not assisting in them,

it was necessary for the participants to lend a hand. In like manner,

if Jesus performed miracles at Jerusalem we arrive at suppositions

which are to us very shocking. Let us reserve our judgment, for we

shall soon have to treat of a Jerusalemitish miracle, in other respects

more important than the one now in question, and much more intimately

connected with the essential events in the life of Jesus

� 14. Chapter vi. 1-14. The Galilean miracle, moreover, is still

nevertheless identical with one of those which are reported by the

synoptics; we refer to the multiplication of loaves. It is clear that

this is one of those miracles which was attributed to him in his

lifetime. It is a miracle to which a real circumstance gives colour.

There is nothing more easy than to instil such an illusion into

consciences at once credulous, artless, and sympathetic. "While we were

with him, we had neither hunger nor thirst:" this very simple utterance

becomes a marvellous fact, which is retold with all sorts of additions.

The narrative in our text, as always, aims at a little more effect than

in the synoptics. In this sense it is of an inferior quality. But the

part which the Apostle Philip plays in it is to be noted. Philip is

particularly acquainted with the author of our Gospel (compare i. 43

and following: xii. 21, and following). Now, Philip resided at

Hierapolis, in Asia Minor, where Papias knew his sons. All this may be

readily enough reconciled. We can assume that the author took this

miracle from the synoptics, or from an analogous source, and

appropriated it in his own way. But why does the detail which he has

added to it harmonise so well with that which we have from other

sources, if this detail did not come from a direct tradition?

� 15. By means of evidently artificial connections, which prove clearly

that all these recollections (if recollection it be) were written

afterwards, the author introduces a strange series of miracles and

visions (vi. 16, and following). During a tempest, Jesus appeared on

the waves, seeming to be walking on the sea: the barque itself is

miraculously transported. This miracle is also found in the synoptics.

Here, then, we are yet dealing with tradition, and not with individual

fantasy. Verse 23 fixes the localities, establishes a connection

between this miracle and that of the multiplication of the loaves, and

seems to prove that these miraculous accounts ought to be put in the

class of miracles which have a historical basis. The prodigy which we

are now discussing probably corresponds with some hallucination which

the companions of Jesus entertained in regard to the lake, and in

virtue of which they, in a moment of danger, believed they saw their

master come to their rescue. The idea into which they had easily

drifted, that his body was impalpable like that of a spirit, gave

credence to this. We shall soon find (chap. xxi.) another tradition

which is founded on analogous fancies.

� 16. The two miracles which precede serve to lead up to a most

important sermon, which Jesus is alleged to have delivered in the

synagogue of Capemaum. This sermon was evidently related to a

collection of symbols which were very familiar to the oldest Christian

community--symbols in which Christ was presented as the bread of

believers. I have already said that, in our Gospel, the discourses of

Christ are almost all fictitious works, and the one in question may

certainly be one of the number. I would, if put to it, own that this

fragment possesses more importance in regard to the history of the

eucharistic ideas of the first century than the statement even of the

sentiments of Jesus. Nevertheless, I believe that our Gospel furnishes

us here again with a gleam of light. According to the synoptics, the

institution of the eucharist does not ascend beyond the last soiree of

Jesus. It is clear that very far back this was believed in, whilst it

was the doctrine of St. Paul. But to admit this to be true, it is

necessary to suppose that Jesus knew absolutely the day when he would

die, a supposition which we cannot accept. The usages which gave rise

to the eucharist ascend, then, beyond the last supper, and I believe

that our Gospel is completely within the truth, in omitting the

sacramental account of the soiree of the Friday, and in disseminating

eucharistic ideas in the course even of the life of Jesus. That which

is essential in the eucharistic account is at bottom only the

reproduction of what took place at every Jewish repast. It was not

once, but a hundred times, that Jesus had blessed the bread, broken and

distributed it, and also blessed the cup. I by no means pretend that

the words which are attributed to Jesus are textual. But the precise

details furnished by verses 60, and following, 68, 70-71, have an

original character. Later on we will again take notice of the personal

hatred entertained by our author against Judas of Kerioth. The

synoptics, certainly, have no affection for the latter. But the hatred

of the fourth narrator is more premeditated, more personal; it comes

out in two Or three places previous to the account of the betrayal: it

seeks to accumulate upon the head of the culprit wrongs of which the

other evangelists make no mention.

� 17. Ver. 1-10 of ch. vii. are a small historical treasure. The wicked

sulky humour of the brothers of Jesus, the precautions which the latter

is obliged to take, are therein expressed with admirable ingenuousness.

It is here that the dogmatic and symbolical explanation is completely

at fault. What a dogmatic or symbolic intention to find in that short

passage, which is calculated rather to give rise to the objection that

has served the requirements of the apologetic Christian! Why should an

author whose unique device had been Scribitur ad probandum have

imagined such a fantastic detail? No, no, here we can say boldly,

Scribitur ad narrandum. It is hence an original souvenir, come whence

it might and from whose pen soever it had proceeded. Why say after this

that the personages of our Gospel are certain types, certain

characters, and not historic beings of flesh and bones? In fact, it is

rather the synoptics which have an idyllic and a legendary turn;

compared with them the fourth Gospel possesses the requisites of

history, and a narrative which aims at being correct.

� 18. Now comes a dispute (vii. 11, and following) between Jesus and

the Jews, to which I attach little value. Scenes of this description

are hence very numerous. Our author's species of imagination imposes

itself very strongly on all that he recounts; with him such pictures

must be moderately true in the colouring. The discourses put in the

mouth of Jesus are conformable with the ordinary style of our author.

The intervention of Nicodemus (v. 50 and following) may alone in all

this possess a historic value. Verse 52 is open to objections. This

verse, they say, contains an error which neither John nor even a Jew

could have committed. Could the author be ignorant of the fact that

Jonas and Nahum were born in Galilee? Yes, certainly, he might not know

it, or, at least, he might not think of it. The historical and

exegetical knowledge of the evangelists, and in general the authors of

the New Testament, Saint Paul excepted, was very incomplete. In any

case they wrote from memory, and were not careful as to being exact.

� 19. The account of the woman taken in adultery gives room for great

critical doubts. This passage is wanting in the best manuscripts; I

believe, however, that it constituted part of the primitive text. The

topographical data of verses 1 and 2 are correct. There is nothing in

the fragment which harmonises with the style of the fourth Gospel. I

think it is by reason of a misplaced scruple which originated in the

minds of some false rigorists as to the apparent moral laxity of the

episode, that would make one cut away these lines which, in view of

their beauty, might be saved by attaching them to other parts of the

gospel texts. In any case, if the detail of the adulterous woman did

not at first form a part of the fourth Gospel, it is surely of

evangelical tradition. Luke was acquainted with it, though in a

different form. Papias seems to have read a similar account in the

Gospel according to the Hebrews. The sentence "Let anyone amongst you

who is without sin" . . . is so perfectly in accord with the spirit of

Jesus, corresponds so well with other sentiments of the synoptics, that

we are quite entitled to consider it as being authentic to the same

extent as sentences of the synoptics. At all events, we can much more

readily comprehend why such a passage may have been abridged instead of

added to.

� 20. The theological disputes which fill up the rest of chap. viii.

are without any value in the life of Jesus. The author evidently

attributed his own ideas to Jesus, without either supporting them by

any proof, or by any direct hearsay. How, it might be said, could an

immediate disciple or a traditionist directly associated with an

apostle, thus alter the words of the master? But Plato was an immediate

disciple of Socrates, and he, nevertheless, made no scruple of

attributing to him fictitious discourses. The "Ph�don" contains

historical information of the strictest verity, and discourses which

have no authenticity. The tradition of facts is much easier preserved

than that of discourses. An active Christian school, pervading rapidly

the circle of ideas, succeeded in fifty or sixty years in totally

modifying the image which had been made of Jesus, whilst it was much

better able than all the others to recall certain peculiarities and the

general contexture of the biographies of the reformer. The simple and

gentle Christian families of Batanea, amongst whom was formed the

collection of Dogia,--small committees, which were very pure and very

honest, of ebionine (the poor of God), remained most faithful to the

teachings of Jesus, having piously guarded the dep�t of his words,

forming a little world in which there was little movement of

ideas--could have at once very well preserved the timbre of the

master's voice, and be very bad authorities as to the biographical

circumstances for which they cared little. The distinction which we

here indicate is reproduced, moreover, in that which concerns the first

Gospel. This evangelist is surely the one who gives us the best

rendering of the discourses of Jesus, and yet is, as to facts, more

inexact than the second. It is in vain that unity of authorship is

alleged by some for the fourth Gospel. This unity I indeed recognise:

but a composition compiled by a single hand may yet embrace data of

very unequal value. The life of Mahomet, by Ibn-Hescham, is perfectly

uniform, and yet this Life contains things which we can admit, others

which we cannot.

� 21. Chapters ix. and x. up to verse 21 of the latter form a paragraph

commencing with a new Jerusalem miracle, that of the man being born

blind, where the intention of heightening the demonstrative force of

the prodigy is made to be felt in a more fatiguing manner than in

anywhere else. We nevertheless discern a somewhat precise knowledge of

the topography of Jerusalem (v. 7): the explanation of eiloos is rather

good. It is impossible to pretend that this miracle was evolved from

the symbolical imagination of our author; for it is also found in Mark

(viii. 22, and following), with a coincidence which bears a minute and

bizarre characteristic (comp. John ix. 6 and Mark viii. 23). In the

discussions and discourses which follow, I acknowledge that it would be

dangerous to seek an echo in the mind of Jesus. An essential

characteristic of our author, which is henceforward conspicuous, is his

habit of taking a miracle as a point of departure for long

demonstrations. His miracles are reasoned and explained miracles. This

is not the case with the synoptics. The theurgy of the latter is

perfectly artless: they never retrace their steps in order to draw

marvellous conclusions upon what they have related. The theurgy of the

fourth Gospel, on the contrary, is reflective, set forth with all the

artifices of exposition whose aim is conviction, and exploited in

favour of certain sermons in which the author makes the account of his

prodigies to follow. If our Gospel was limited to such fragments, the

opinion which sees in it a simple thesis of theology would be perfectly

established.

� 22. But it is far from being limited to this. Beginning with verse 22

of chap. x. we enter into topographical details of rigorous precision,

which are hardly applicable if it is maintained that in no degree does

our Gospel embrace the Palestinian tradition. I sacrifice the whole of

the dispute contained in verses 24-39. The journey to Perea indicated

at verse 40 appears, on the contrary, to be historical. The synoptics

are cognisant of this journey, to which they attach the divers

incidents of Jericho.

� 23. We reach now a most important passage (xi. 1-45). It relates to a

miracle, but a miracle which trenches upon others, and is produced

under circumstances entirely different. All the other miracles are

represented as having been attended with some �clat and as wrought upon

obscure individuals who never again figure in evangelical history. In

this instance the miracle takes place in the centre of a well-known

family, and in which the author of our Gospel in particular, if he is

sincere, appears to have participated. The other miracles are little

aside gyrations, designed to prove by their number the divine mission

of the master, but, taken by themselves, of no consequence, since in no

single case are we told what took place; nor does one amongst them form

an integral part of the life of Jesus. They can be treated en bloc, as

I have done in my work, without shaking the edifice or breaking the

continuity of events. The miracle in question here, on the contrary, is

deeply concerned in the account of the last weeks of Jesus, such as we

find them in our Gospel. Now we shall see that it is precisely on

account of that record of these last weeks that our text possesses an

incontestable superiority. This miracle makes then by itself a class

apart; at first glance it seems as if it ought to be reckoned among the

events in the life of Jesus. It is not the minute detail of the account

which strikes me. The two other Jerusalem miracles of Jesus, of which

the author of the fourth Gospel speaks, are recounted in similar

fashion. If the whole of the circumstances of the resurrection of

Lazarus had been the product of the imagination of the narrator, it

would have proved that all these circumstances had been combined with

the view (a constant habit that we have remarked in our author) that

the principal fact should not remain less exceptional in evangelical

history.

The miracle of Bethany is to the Galilean miracles what the stigmata of

Francis d'Assisi were to the miracles of the same saint. M. Karl Hase

has composed an exquisite Life of Christ in the shades, without

insisting particularly upon any of these latter; but he saw clearly

that it would not have been a sincere biography if he had not descanted

upon the stigmata; he has devoted to these a long chapter, giving place

to all sorts of conjectures and suppositions.

Amongst the miracles which are spread over the four compilations of the

Life of Jesus, a distinction makes itself felt. Some are pure and

simple legendary creations. There is nothing in the real life of Jesus

which has a place in them. They are the fruit of that labour of

imagination which is produced around all popular celebrities. Others

have had actual facts for their foundation. Legend has not arbitrarily

attributed to Jesus the healing of those possessed of devils.

Doubtless, Jesus more than once was believed to make such cures. The

multiplication of loaves, many cures of sickness, perhaps certain

apparitions, ought to be put in the same category. These are not

miracles hatched out of pure imagination, they are miracles conceived

�propos of real incidents, exaggerated and transformed. Let us

absolutely discard an idea which is very widespread, that no

eye-witness reports miracles. The author of the last chapter of the

Acts is surely an ocular witness of the life of St. Paul. Now this

writer records miracles which have taken place before him. But what am

I saying? St. Paul himself speaks to us of his miracles and founds upon

them the truth of his preaching. Certain miracles were permanent in the

Church, and were in some sort common property. "Why," said they,

"challenge ocular testimony when people recount things which have never

been heard or seen?" But then the tres socii did not know of Francis

d'Assisi, for they record a multitude of things which they could not

have seen or heard.

In what category must we place the miracle which we are now discussing?

Did some actual fact, which had been exaggerated and embellished, give

rise to it? Or, again, does it possess reality of any sort? Is it a

pure legend, an invention of the narrator? What complicates the

difficulty is that the third Gospel, that of Luke, presents to us here

consonances which are most peculiar. Luke, in fact, knew Martha and

Mary; he knew at the same time they did not hail from Galilee; in fine,

he knew them in a light which was strongly analogous to that under

which these two personages figure in the fourth Gospel. Martha, in the

latter text, plays the r�le of a servant, diechonei, Mary, the r�le of

a forward, ardent personage. We know the admirable little episode which

Luke has extracted thence. But, if we compare the passages in Luke and

in the fourth Gospel, it is clearly the fourth Gospel which plays here

the original part; not that Luke, or whoever the author of the third

Gospel may be, may have read the fourth, but in the sense in which we

find in the fourth Gospel the data which explain the legendary anecdote

of the third. Was the third Gospel also cognisant of Lazarus? After

having for a long time refused to admit this, I have arrived at the

belief that this is very probable. Yes, I now think that the Lazarus of

the parable of the rich man is but a transformation of our resurgent

one. Let it not be said that in thus being metamorphosed it has been

much changed in the process. In this respect everything is possible,

since the repast of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, who play a great part in

the fourth Gospel and who are placed by the synoptics in the house of

Simon the Leper, becomes in the third Gospel a repast at the house of

Simon the Pharisee, where there figures a fisherwoman who, like Mary in

our Gospel, anoints the feet of Jesus and wipes them with her hair.

What thread holds together this inextricable labyrinth of broken and

patched-up legends? For my part, I admit the family of Bethany to have

had a real existence, and to have given rise in certain branches of the

Christian tradition to a cycle of legends One of these donn�es

legendaires was that Jesus had called back to life the head even of the

family. Certainly, such an "on dit" may have originated after the death

of Jesus. I do not, however, regard as impossible that one real fact in

his life may not have given it birth. The silence of the synoptics in

regard to the Bethany episode does not greatly astonish me. The

synoptics were very badly informed as to all that which immediately

preceded the last weeks of Jesus. It was not only the Bethany incident

which was lacking to them, but also the whole period of the life of

Jesus to which this incident relates. We are here brought back once

more to that fundamental point, that of knowing which of the two

accounts is the true one, the one which makes Galilee the theatre of

all the activity of Jesus, or the one which makes Jesus pass a part of

his life at Jerusalem.

I know what has been attempted here by means of symbolical explanation.

The miracle of Bethany, according to the learned and profound defenders

of this system, signifies that Jesus is to believers in a spiritual

sense the resurrection and the life. Lazarus is the poor man, the ebion

resurrected by Christ from his state of spiritual death. It was on

account of this, the sense of a popular reawakening which came to

perplex them, that the official classes decided on making Jesus perish.

This is the theory upon which the best theologians that the Church has

possessed in our days repose. In my opinion it is an erroneous one.

That our Gospel is dogmatic I recognise, but it is by no means

allegorical. The really allegorical writings of the first centuries,

the Apocalypse, the Pastor of Hermas, the Pista Sophia, possess quite a

different charm. At bottom of all this symbolism is the companion of

the mysticism of M. Strauss; the expedients of theologians at their

wit's end, seeking by means of allegory, mysticism, and symbolism to

escape from their dilemma. For us, who are seeking only for pure

historic truth without a shade of either theological or political

arri�re pens�e, we have more scope. For us, all this is not mythical,

all this is not symbolical, all this is sectarian and popular history.

It must necessarily provoke grave distrust, but no party offers fitting

explanations.

Divers examples are pleaded. The Alexandrian school, such as we know it

through the writings of Philo, exercised unquestionably a strong

influence upon the theology of the apostolic century. Now, do we not

see this school press its taste for symbolism to the verge of folly?

The whole of the Old Testament became in its hands only a pretext for

subtle allegories. Are not the Talmud and the Midraschim full of

pretended historical teachings which have been stripped of all truth,

and which can only be explained by religious tenets or by the desire of

originating arguments in support of a thesis? But this is not the case

with the fourth Gospel. The principles of criticism which it is proper

to apply to the Talmud and the Midraschim, cannot be transferred to a

composition altogether at variance with the likings of the Palestinian

Jews. Philo discerns allegories in the ancient texts; he does not

invent allegorical texts. An old sacred book exists; the plain

interpretation of this text embarrasses or is insufficient; we seek in

it its hidden and mysterious meaning; examples such as these abound.

But when we write an extended historical narrative with the arri�re

pens�e of concealing in it symbolical finesse which was only to be

discovered seventeen hundred years later, this is what is but seldom

seen. It is the partisans of the allegorical explanation who, in this

case, play the part of Alexandrians. It is they who, embarrassed by the

fourth Gospel, treat it just as Philo treated Genesis, just as the

Jewish and Christian tradition has treated the Canticle of Canticles.

For us simple historians who admit first of all (1) That the question

here is only one of legends, in parts true, in parts false, like all

legends; (2) that the reality which served as a basis for these legends

was beautiful, splendid, touching and delicious, but, like all things

human, greatly marred by weaknesses which would disgust us if we saw

them--for us, I say, there are no difficulties of this kind. There are

texts, and the question is to extract the largest amount of historic

truth possible, that is all.

Another very delicate question presents itself here. In the miracles of

the second class, in those which owe their origin to a real fact in the

life of Jesus, is there not mixed up with these sometimes a little

complaisance? I believe so, or at least I declare that if this were not

so, nascent Christianity has been an event absolutely without parallel.

This event has been the greatest and the most beautiful amongst facts

of the same species; but it has not escaped the common laws which must

govern the facts of religious history. There does not exist a single

great religious creation which does not embrace a little of that which

would now be denominated--fraud. The ancient religions were full of it.

Few of the institutions of the past have a greater right to be

recognised by us than the oracle of Delphi, seeing that that oracle

eminently contributed to save Greece, the mother of all science and of

all art. The enlightened patriotism of Pythia was not more than once or

twice found at fault She was ever the mouthpiece of the sages who were

endowed with the justest sentiment of Greek interests. These sages, who

have founded civilisation, made no scruple about consulting this

virgin, who was reputed to be inspired by the gods. Moses, if the

traditions we have regarding him contain anything historical, made use

of natural events, such as tempests and fortuitous plagues, to further

his designs and his policy. All the ancient legislators gave their laws

as if inspired by a god. All the prophets, without any scruple, made it

appear as if their sublime invectives were prompted by the Eternal.

Buddhism, which is full of such high religious sentiment, saw permanent

miracles, which could not be produced of themselves. The most artless

country of Europe, the Tyrol, is the country of the stigmatics, the

fashion of which is only possible by means of a little trickery. The

history of the Church, so respectable in its way, is full of false

relics and false miracles. Was there ever a religious movement more

ingenuous than that of Francis d'Assisi? And yet the whole history of

the stigmata is inexplicable without some connivance on the part of the

intimate companions of the saint.

"People do not prepare," I have been told, "sophistical miracles, when

people believe they everywhere are truth." This is an error. It is when

people believe in miracles that they are drawn away, without doubting

in them, to augment their number. We can with difficulty, with our

consciences clear and precise, figure to ourselves the bizarre

illusions by which these obscure but powerful consciences, playing with

the supernatural, if I might say so, would glide incessantly from

credulity to complaisance, and from complaisance to credulity. What can

be more striking than the mania spread at certain epochs of attributing

to the ancient sages the apocryphal books? The apocrypha of the Old

Testament, the writings of the hermetic cycle, the innumerable

pseudo-epigraphic productions of India, responded to a great elevation

of religious sentiments. People believed they were doing honour to the

old sages in attributing to them these productions; people became their

collaborators without thinking that the day would come when that would

be denominated a fraud. The authors of the Middle Age legends,

magnifying in cold blood upon their desks the miracles of their saints,

would also be surprised in hearing themselves called impostors.

The eighteenth century would describe all religious history as

imposture. The critic of our times has totally discarded that

explanation. The term is certainly improper; but to what extent have

the most beautiful souls of the past not aided in their own illusions,

or in those of which they have been the object, is what a reflective

age can no longer comprehend. For one to understand this thoroughly one

must have been in the East. In the East passion is the soul of

everything and credulity has no limits. We can never get at the bottom

of the mind of an Oriental; because this bottom often does not exist

for himself. Passion on one side, credulity on the other, make

imposture. So no great movement is produced in this country without

some fraud. We no longer know how to desire or to hate; cunning finds

no longer a place in our society, for she has no longer an object. But

exaltation is a passion which does not accommodate itself to this

reserve, this indifference to consequences which is the basis of our

sincerity. When absolute natures will embrace a thesis after the

Oriental manner, they are no longer restrainable, and nothing, the day

even when illusion becomes necessary, is too dear to them. Is that the

fault of sincerity? Not at all; it is because conviction is most keenly

felt by such spirits, because they are incapable of returning upon

themselves, that they have few scruples. To call this deceit is

inexact; it is precisely the force with which they embrace their idea

which extinguishes in them every other thought, for the end appears so

absolutely good to them that everything which can serve it seems in

their view legitimate. Fanaticism is always sincere in respect of its

thesis, but an impostor in respect of the choice of methods of

demonstration. If the public do not at first accept the reason which it

believes to be good, that is to say, its affirmations, it has recourse

to reasons which it knows to be bad. With it to believe is everything:

the motives which induce belief are of but little importance. Who among

us would accept the responsibility for all the arguments through which

was wrought the conversion of the barbarians? In our days people only

employ fraudulent devices when they are aware of the falsity of that

which is maintained. Formerly, the employment of these means

presupposed a profound conviction, and was allied to the highest moral

elevation. Our method of criticism is different. It professes to expose

falsehood and to discover the truth through the network of deceptions

and illusions of every sort which envelop history; while in face of

such facts we experience a sentiment of repugnance. But do not let us

impose our delicate scruples upon those whose duty it has been to

direct poor humanity. Between the general truth of a principle and the

truth of a meagre fact the man of faith never hesitates. We had, at the

time of the coronation of Charles X., the most authentic proofs of the

destruction of the ampulla. The ampulla was found again, inasmuch as it

was necessary. On the one side, there was the salvation of royalty, so

at least it was believed; on the other, the question of the

authenticity of some drops of oil; no good royalist hesitated.

To summarise amongst the miracles which the Gospels attribute to Jesus,

there are some purely legendary. But there were probably some of them

in which he consented to play a part. Let us put to one side the fourth

Gospel. The Gospel of Mark, the most original of the synoptics, is the

life of an exorcist and thaumaturgist. Some details, as in Luke viii.

45, 46, are not less sad than those which, in the episode of Lazarus,

lead the theologians to exclaim in a loud voice against the myths and

symbols. I do not hold to the reality of the miracle in question. The

hypothesis which I propose in the present edition reduces everything to

a misapprehension. I desire solely to show that this fantastic episode

of the fourth Gospel is not a decisive objection against the historic

value of the said Gospel. In each part of the "Life of Jesus," on which

we are now about to enter, the fourth Gospel contains many special

points of information, which are infinitely superior to any in the

synoptics. Now it is singular that the account of the resurrection of

Lazarus is joined to these last pages by hooks so slender that, if we

were to reject it as being imaginary, the whole edifice of the last

weeks of the "Life of Jesus," which are so solid in our Gospel, would

crumble at a stroke.

� 24. Verses 46-54 of chapter xi. introduce us to a first secret

council held by the Jews, in order to put Jesus to death, as a direct

consequence of the miracle of Bethany. People might say that this bond

was an artificial one. Bat why? Does not our narrator more nearly

approach probability than the synoptics, which make the conspiracy

against Jesus begin only two or three days before his death? The whole

account we have just examined is otherwise very natural; it is

terminated by a circumstance which was not surely invented--the flight

of Jesus to Ephraim or Ephron. What allegorical meaning is to be found

in that? Is it not evident that our author possessed data totally

unknown to the synoptics, which latter, caring little about composing a

regular biography, compressed into a few days the last six months of

the life of Jesus? Verses 55, 56 present a chronological arrangement

which is very satisfactory.

� 25. Again (xii. 1 and following) is an episode common to all the

narratives, except to Luke, who has, in this instance, arranged his

facts in a wholly different fashion; we mean the feast of Bethany. We

have seen in the "six days" of verse xii. 1 a symbolical reason. I mean

the intention of making the day of the unction coincide with the 10th

of Nisan, the day on which the paschal lambs should have been selected

(Exodus xii. 3, 6) The latter is much less clearly indicated. At

chapter xix. v. 36, where we can penetrate the design of assimilating

Jesus to the paschal lamb, the author is much more explicit. As regards

the incidents of the feast, is it from pure fancy that our author here

enters into details which were unknown to Matthew and to Mark? I do not

think so. It is that he was better acquainted with them. The woman who

is not named in the synoptics is Mary of Bethany. The disciple who

makes the observation is Judas, and the name of this disciple

immediately leads the narrator into lively personal abuse (v. 6). This

v. 6 breathes strongly the hatred of two co-disciples whc have lived

long together, who are deeply embittered against one another, and who

have followed opposite paths. And this Martha diechonei explains so

fully an episode of Luke! And the hair used to wipe the feet of Jesus,

is it not also found in Luke! All leads to the belief that we here hit

upon an original source, which serves as a key to the other less

skilfully constructed narratives. I do not deny the strangeness of

verses 1, 2, 9-11, 17, 18, which return three times to the resurrection

of Lazarus and improve upon xi. 45 and following. On the contrary, I

see nothing at all unlikely in the design imputed to the family of

Bethany of awakening the indifference of the Jerusalemites by exterior

demonstrations which were unknown to the simple Galilean. It must not

be said such and such suppositions are false, because they are shocking

and pitiful. If people were to see the obverse of the greatest events

which take place in this world, of those which enchant us, of those

amidst which we live, nothing would be accomplished. Let us remark,

moreover, that the actors here are women who have imbibed that

unequalled love which Jesus knew how to inspire around him; women who

believed they were living in the bosom of the marvellous, who felt

convinced that Jesus had done innumerable prodigies, and who were

placed face to face with incredulous people, who railed at him whom

they loved. If a scruple could have arisen in their soul, the

recollection of other miracles of Jesus would have silenced it. Suppose

that a legitimist dame was reduced to the extremity of assisting heaven

to save Joas? Would she hesitate? Passion imputes always to God anger

and selfishness; it enters into the councils of God, makes him speak,

urges him to act. People are sure of being in the right; they make use

of God in advocating their cause, in supplementing the zeal which he

does not evince.

� 26. The account of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (xii.

12 and following) is conformable with the synoptics. Yet that which

astonishes us here is the imperturbable appeal to the miracle of

Bethany (v. 17, 18). It was on account of that miracle that the

Pharisees decided on the death of Jesus; it was that miracle which made

the Jerusalemites think; it was that miracle which was the cause of the

triumph of Bethphage. I should like to put the whole of this to the

account of an author of the year 150, who was ignorant of the real

character and the artless innocence of the Galilean movement. But first

let us guard against believing that innocence and conscientious

illusion were likewise excluded. It is in the fugitive sensations of

the soul of the woman of the East that we must here seek for analogies.

Passion, ingenuousness, abandon, tenderness, perfidy, poetry and crime,

frivolity and depth, sincerity and deceit, alternate in these sorts of

natures, and baffle any absolute estimation. The critic ought in such

circumstances to steer clear of every exclusive system. The mythical

explanation is often true; but for all that the historical explanation

ought not to be banished. Now look at verses xii. 20 and following,

which contain an undoubted historical secret. First, it is the obscure

and isolated episode of the Hellenes which is addressed to Philip.

Remark the part played by this apostle; our Gospel is the only one

which knows anything of it. Remark, especially, how the whole of this

passage is exempt from any dogmatical or symbolical design. To say that

these Greeks are reasonable beings, like Nicodemus and the Samaritan

woman, is most gratuitous. The discourses which they hold (v. 23 et

seq.) have no relation to them.

The aphorism in v. 25 is again met with in the synoptics; it is

evidently authentic. Our author does not copy it from the synoptics.

Again, even when he makes Jesus speak, the author of the fourth Gospel

now and then follows a tradition.

� 27. Verses 27 et seq. possess much importance; Jesus is troubled. He

prays his Father "to deliver him from this hour." Then he resigns

himself. A voice makes itself heard from heaven, or better, according

to other accounts, an angel speaks to Jesus. What does this episode

import? There is no doubt that it is the parallel of the agony of

Gethsemane, which, to be sure, is omitted by our author at the place

where it should have been found--after the Last Supper. Remark the

incident of the apparition of an angel, which Luke alone knew of. There

is one more feature to add to the series of those agreements between

the third Gospel and the fourth, which constitute for evangelical

criticism a fact of so great importance. But the existence of two

versions so different from an incident which happened during the last

days of Jesus, which is certainly historic, constitute a fact much more

decisive still. Which merits here the preference? The fourth Gospel, in

my opinion. First, the narrative of this Gospel is less dramatic, less

skilfully adjusted and constructed, less beautiful, I admit. In the

second place, the moment where the fourth Gospel introduces the episode

in question is much more convenient. The synoptics report the scene of

Gethsemane, along with other solemn circumstances, as taking place on

the last evening of Jesus, in consequence of the tendency we have of

accumulating our recollections upon the last hours of a beloved person.

These circumstances placed thus have, moreover, more effect. But, to

admit the order of the synoptics, we must suppose that Jesus knew with

certainty the day on which he should die. We thus generally find the

synoptics yielding oftentimes to the desire for an arrangement which

shall proceed with a certain art. Art divine, whence has emerged the

most beautiful popular poem that has ever been written--the Passion But

undoubtedly in such a case the historical critic will always prefer the

version which is least dramatic. It is this principle which makes us

place Matthew after Mark, and Luke after Matthew, when the question is

one of determining the historical value of a synoptical account.

� 28. We have now reached the last evening (chapter xiii). The farewell

repast is recounted, as in the synoptics, at great length. But the

surprising thing is that the capital circumstance of this repast, as

reported in the synoptics, is omitted. There is not a word about the

establishment of the Lord's Supper, which holds such an important

position in the preoccupations of our author (chap. vi.). And this is

as though the narration took here a reflective turn (v. 1), as though

the author insists upon the tender and mystic signification of the last

feast. What does that silence mean? Here, as in the episode of

Gethsemane, I see in such an omission an idea of superiority on the

part of the fourth Gospel. To pretend that Jesus reserved for the

Friday evening so important a ritual institution is to believe in a

sort of miracle, to suppose that he was certain to die the next day.

Although Jesus (it is permissible to believe) might have presentiments,

we cannot, apart from the supernatural, admit such distinctness in his

previsions. I hence think that it was by means of a displacement, very

easy to explain, that the disciples centred all their eucharistic

remembrances upon the Last Supper. Jesus on this occasion, as he had

done many times before, practised the habitual Jewish rite at table, in

attaching to it the mystical sense when it was convenient, and, as the

last supper could be better recalled to mind than others, people fell

into accord in referring to it this fundamental usage. The authority of

St. Paul, which is here in accord with the synoptics, possesses no

preeminence, seeing that he had not been present at the repast; it

proves only that which no one can doubt, that a great part of tradition

fixed the establishment of the sacred memorial on the eve of his death.

This tradition answers to the generally accepted tradition that on the

said evening Jesus substituted a new Eastern for the Jewish Passover;

it supports another opinion of the synoptics, which is contradicted by

the fourth Gospel, to wit, that Jesus made with his disciples the

paschal feast, and died, consequently, on the morrow of the day when

people eat the paschal lamb.

What is very remarkable is, that the fourth Gospel, in place of the

eucharist, gives another rite, the washing of feet, as having been the

proper institution of the last supper. Doubtless, our evangelist has

for once yielded to the natural tendency of reporting on the last

evening the solemn acts in the life of Jesus. The hatred of our author

against Judas unmasks itself more and more, because of a strong

prepossession which made him speak of this unhappy man, even when he is

not directly in evidence (verses 2, 10, 11, 18). In the account of the

announcement that Jesus had committed treason, the great superiority of

our text again reveals itself. The same anecdote is to be found in the

synoptics, but is presented in an improbable and contradictory manner.

In the synoptics Jesus is represented as designating the traitor in

indirect language, and yet the expressions he makes use of become known

to all. Our fourth Gospel explains clearly this little misapprehension.

According to it, Jesus privately confided his presentiment to a

disciple who lay upon his bosom, who, in turn, communicated to Peter

what Jesus had said to him. In regard to the others present, Jesus

shrouds himself in mystery, and no one has any suspicion of what has

passed between him and Judas. The little details of the account, the

broken bread, the glimpse which verse 29 gives us of the inner life of

the sect, are also characterised by justness, and when we see the

author saying quite clearly, "I was there," one is inclined to think

that he speaks the truth. Allegory is essentially cold and stiff. The

persons in it are of brass, and are moved simultaneously. It is not so

with our author. That which is striking in his narrative is its life,

its realism. We perceive a passionate man, who is jealous because he

loves much, and susceptible, a man who resembles the Orientals of our

days. Fictitious compositions never possess this personal trait; there

is something vague and awkward which always betrays their origin.

� 29. Now follow long discourses which possess a certain beauty, but

which, there can be no doubt, contain nothing traditional. These are

fragments of theology and rhetoric, having no analogy to the discourses

of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels, and to which we must not attribute

any more historical reality than to the discourses which Plato puts

into the mouth of his master at the moment of dying. Nothing must be

concluded hence as to the value of the context. The discourses inserted

by Sallust and Titus Livy in their histories are assuredly fictions;

but are we to conclude from this that the basis of these histories is

fictitious ) It is probable, moreover, that in these homilies

attributed to Jesus there is one feature which is of historic value,

Thus, the promise of the Holy Spirit (xiv. 16 et seq. 26; xv. 26; xvi.

7, 13), which Mark and Matthew do not give in a direct form, are found

in Luke (xxiv. 49), and correspond with a statement in Acts (ii.) which

must have had some reality. In any case, this idea of a spirit which

Jesus will send from the bosom of his Father, when he shall have

quitted the earth, is another instance of agreement with Luke (Acts i.

and ii.). The idea of the Holy Spirit concerned as Mediator (Paraclete)

is also found, especially in Luke (xii. 11, 12; comp. Matthew x. 20;

Mark xiii. 11). The scheme of the Ascension, explained by Luke, finds

its obscure germ in our author (xvi. 7).

� 30. After the Supper our evangelist, like the synoptics, conducts

Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane (chap. xviii.). The topography of v.

1 is exact. T�nchedron may be an inadvertence of the copyist, or, if we

might say so, of the editor, of him who prepared the narrative for the

public. The same error is to be found in the Septuagint (2 Sam. xv.

23). The Codex Sina�ticus bears touchedrou. The true reading touchedrou

would appear strange to people who did not know Greek. I have elsewhere

already explained the omission of the agony at this particular moment,

an omission in which I see an argument in favour of the account of the

fourth Gospel. The arrest of Jesus is also much better told. The

incident of the kissing of Judas, so touching, so beautiful, but which

has a legendary odour, is passed over in silence. Jesus names himself

and frees himself. This is, indeed, a very useless miracle (v. 6); but

the incident of Jesus requesting of them to let the disciples go away

which acompanied it (v. 8) is plausible. It is quite possible that the

latter may have been at first arrested with their master. Faithful to

his habits of precision--whether real or apparent--our author knew the

names of the two persons who were for the moment engaged in a struggle,

from which resulted a slight effusion of blood.

But here follows the proof the most sensible which our author possesses

on the Passion--evidence much more original than that of the other

evangelists. He alone causes Jesus to be conducted to Annas or Hanan,

the father-in-law of Ka�aphas. Josephus confirms the correctness of

this account, and Luke seems here again to gather a sort of echo of our

Gospel. Hanan had for a long time been deposed from the Pontificate;

but, during the remainder of his long life, he in reality retained the

power, which he exercised under the names of his son and sons-in-law,

who were successively raised to the sacerdotal sovereignty. This

circumstance, which the two first synoptics, very poorly informed as to

matters at Jerusalem, cast no doubt upon, is a trait de lumi�re. How

could a sectary of the second century, writing in Egypt or Asia Minor,

have known this? The too oft repeated opinion that our author knew

nothing of Jerusalem or of matters Jewish appears to me to be utterly

destitute of foundation.

� 32. The recital of the denials of Peter possesses the same

superiority. The whole episode, in our author, is more circumstantial

and better explained. The details of v. 16 contain a marvellous amount

of truth. Far from seeing in them an improbability, I discover in them

a mark of simplicity, resembling that of a provincial who boasts of

having influence in a minister's office because he is acquainted with a

doorkeeper or a domestic. Will it also be maintained that there is here

some mystic allegory? A rhetorician coming a long time after the

events, and composing his work from accepted texts, would not have

written like that. Look at the synoptics: everything is ingeniously

combined for the sake of effect. Certainly a multitude of the details

of the fourth Gospel smell also of an artificial arrangement, but

others seem indeed only to be there because they are true, being so

many accidents and sharp angles.

� 33. We come now to Pilate. The incident of v. 28 has all the

appearance of truth. Our author is at variance with the synoptics as to

the day on which Jesus died. According to him it was on the day on

which the paschal Iamb was eaten, the 14th of Nisan; according to the

synoptics it was the day following. The error in the synoptics might be

quite naturally explained by the desire which people had to make of the

last supper the paschal feast, so as to give it more solemnity and to

furnish a motive for the celebration of the Jewish Passover. True, it

may also be said that the fourth Gospel has placed the death on the day

on which the paschal lamb was eaten, so as to inculcate the idea that

Jesus himself was the veritable paschal lamb, an idea which he in one

place avows (xix. 36), and which, perhaps, is to be met with in other

passages (xii. 1, xix. 29). That which, however, clearly proves that

the synoptics here do violence to historical reality is that they add a

circumstance drawn from the ordinary ceremony of the Passover, and not

certainly from a positive tradition. I refer to the singing of psalms.

Certain incidents reported by the synoptics--the fact, for example, of

Simon of Cyrene returning from his labours in the fields--presuppose

thus that the crucifixion took place before the commencement of the

sacred period. Finally, it cannot be conceived that the Jews should

provoke an execution, or even that the Romans should bring about one,

on a day so solemn.

� 34. I abandon the conversations of Pilate and Jesus, composed

evidently from mere conjecture, yet with an exact enough sentiment as

regards the situation of the two persons. The question in v. 9 has,

however, its echo in Luke, and, as usual, that insignificant detail

becomes in the third Gospel wholly legendary. The topography and the

Hebrew are good counterfeits. The whole scene presents great historical

exactness, even though the language imputed to the personages is in the

narrator's style. What concerns Barabbas, however, is, in the

synoptics, more satisfactory. Our author doubtless is mistaken in

making of this man a thief. The synoptics are much nearer probability

in representing him to be a personage beloved by the people and

arrested for causing a riot. As regards the flagellation, Mark and

Matthew contain also a little shade more of information. In their

account we see better that flagellation was a simple preliminary of

crucifixion, ordained by common law. The author of the fourth Gospel

does not seem to doubt that flagellation presupposed an irrevocable

condemnation. Once more, he proceeds in perfect accord with Luke

(xxiii. 16), and like the latter seeks in everything which concerns

Pilate to exculpate the Roman authority and to inculpate the Jews.

� 35. The minute details of the seamless coat furnish also an argument

against our author. It might be said that his false conception of it

arose from his having eagerly seized the parallelism of the passage in

Psalm xxii. which he cites. We have an example of the same kind of

error in Matt. xxi. 2-5. Perhaps also the seamless vestment of the high

priest (Josephus, Ant. III. vii. 4) has something to do with all this.

We touch now upon the greatest objection against the veracity of our

author. Matthew and Mark make only the Galilean women, the inseparable

companions of Jesus, assist at the crucifixion. Luke adds to those

women all the people of the acquaintance of Jesus (pant es oignostoi

auto), an addition which is at variance with the two first Gospels, and

with what Justin tells us of the defection amongst the disciples (oi

gnori moiautou pantes) after the crucifixion. At all events, in the

three first Gospels, this group of the faithful kept at a distance from

the cross, and did not hold converse with Jesus. Our Gospel adds three

essential details. 1st. Mary, the mother of Jesus, assisted at the

crucifixion. 2nd. John also assisted at it. 3rd. They all stood at the

foot of the cross; Jesus conversed with them, and confided the care of

his mother to his favourite disciple. This is most singular. "The

mother of the sons of Zebedee," or Salome, whom Matthew and Mark place

amongst the faithful women, is deprived of these honours in the recital

which is alleged to have been written by her son. The attributing of

the name of Mary to the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is also a

most singular thing. Here I am wholly with the synoptics. "That the

knowledge of the touching presence of Mary near the cross, and the

filial functions which Jesus entrusted to John," says M. Strauss,

"should be forgotten, is that which is indeed less easy of

comprehension than it is to comprehend why all this should have been

invented by the circle from which the fourth Gospel emanated. Is it to

be thought that it was a circle in which the Apostle John enjoyed

especial veneration, the proof of which we see in the care with which

our Gospel chooses him from amongst the three most esteemed confidants

of Jesus, in order to make of him the one apostle well-beloved?

henceforth, is it possible to find anything which puts the seal to this

predilection in a more striking manner than the solemn declaration of

Jesus, who, by a last act of his will, bequeaths to John his mother, as

the most precious legacy, substituted him thus in his place, and made

him Vicar of Christ,' without thinking whether it was natural to ask

this, both in respect of Mary and of the apostle well-beloved, and

whether it was possible when they were far removed from the side of

Jesus at that supreme moment?"

This is very happily put. It completely proves that our author had more

than one arri�re pens�e, that he had not the sincerity and the absolute

na�vete of Matthew and Mark. But it is, at the same time, the most

apparent indication of the origin of the work we are discussing. In

comparing this passage with others where the privileges "of the

disciple whom Jesus loved" are mentioned, there can be no doubt as to

the Christian family whence this book originated. This does not prove,

however, that an immediate disciple of Jesus wrote it; yet it proves

that he who held the pen believed, or wished it to be believed, that he

recorded the recollections of an immediate disciple of Jesus, and that

his intention was to exalt the prerogative of that disciple, and show

that he had been what neither James nor Peter had been--a true brother,

a spiritual brother of Jesus.

In any case, this new accord which we have found between our text and

the Gospel is very remarkable. The words of Luke, in fact (xxiii. 49),

do not exactly exclude Mary from the foot of the cross, and the author

of the Acts, who is in truth the same person as the author of the third

Gospel, places Mary amongst the disciples at Jerusalem a few days after

the death of Jesus. But this is of small historical value, for the

author of the third Gospel and of the Acts (at least of the first

chapters of the latter work) is the least authoritative traditionist of

all the New Testament. Still, it establishes more and more this fact,

in my eyes a very serious one, that the Johannine tradition was not an

isolated accident in the primitive Church, that many traditions

belonging to the school of John had become known or were common to

other Christian churches, even before the compilation of the fourth

Gospel, or at least independently of it. For to suppose that the author

of the fourth Gospel had the Gospel of Luke under his eyes when

composing his work, is what appears to me most improbable.

� 37. Our text recovers its superiority in that which concerns the

potion offered on the cross. This circumstance, with respect to which

Matthew and Mark express themselves with obscurity, which in Luke is

entirely transformed (xxiii. 36), finds here its true explanation. It

is Jesus himself who, burning with thirst, asks for something to drink.

A soldier offers him, on a sponge, a little acidulated water. This is

very natural and most consistent with ancient usage. It's presented

neither in derision nor to aggravate his sufferings, as the synoptics

would have us believe. It is a humane action on the part of the

soldier.

� 38. Our Gospel omits the earthquake and the phenomena which the most

widely circulated legend would have it believed accompanied the last

supper of Jesus.

� 39. The episode of the crurifragium (the breaking of Jesus' legs) and

the lance thrust, which are peculiar to our Gospel, is certainly

possible. The ancient Jewish and Roman customs, contained in v. 31, are

exact. The crurifragium was indeed a Roman punishment. As to the

medicine spoken of in v. 34, it is attributable to several sources.

But, even though our author should give proof here of an imperfect

physiology, no inference can be drawn from this. I am aware that the

lance thrust may have been invented to accord with Zechariah xii. 10,

comp. Apoc. i. 7. I recognise that the � priori symbolical explanation

was very well adapted to the circumstance that Jesus was not subjected

to the crurifragium. The author wishes to assimilate Jesus to the

paschal lamb, and it suits his thesis very well indeed that the bones

of Jesus were not broken. Nor was he perhaps displeased that a little

hyssop should have been introduced. As for the water and the blood

which flowed from his side, it is equally easy to discover their

dogmatic value. Is it to be said that the author of the fourth Gospel

invented these details? I can very well understand people who reason

thus: Jesus, as Messiah, was to be born at Bethlehem; the writings,

most improbable in other respects, which make his parents go to

Bethlehem on the eve of his birth, belong to fiction. But can it also

be said that it was written beforehand that not a bone of Jesus was to

be broken, and that water and blood should flow from his side? Is it

not admissible that such circumstances really happened, circumstances

that the subtle mind of the disciples would instantly remark, and

whence appeared profound providential combinations? I know of nothing

more instructive in this respect than in the comparison of that which

concerns the potion offered to Jesus before the crucifixion in Mark

(xv. 23) and in Matthew (xxvii. 34). Mark here, as almost always, is

the most original. According to his account, Jesus is offered, as was

customary, an aromatic wine, to render him insensible. There is nothing

Messiani about that. According to Matthew, the aromatic wine was

compounded of gall and vinegar. In this manner was brought about a

pretended fulfilment of the 22nd verse of Psalm lxix. Here then is one

instance where we can attach to a fact a process of transformation. If

we had only the narrative of Matthew, we would be authorised in

believing that that circumstance was of pure invention, that it was

created to obtain the realisation of a passage alleged to have

reference to the Messiah. But the account of Mark indeed proves that

there was in this instance an actual fact, and that it has been warped

to suit the requirements of the Messianic interpretation.

� 40. At the burial, Nicodemus, a personage peculiar to our Gospel,

reappears. It must be observed that this personage plays no part in the

early apostolic history. Moreover, as regards the Twelve Apostles,

seven or eight of them disappeared completely after the death of Jesus.

It seems that there were near Jesus groups which looked upon him in

very different lights, and some of which do not figure in the history

of the Church. The author of the teachings which form the basis of our

Gospel has been able to recognise friends of Jesus who are not

mentioned in the synoptics, who lived in a less extended world. The

evangelical personnel was very different in the different Christian

families. James, brother of the Lord, a man in St. Paul's eyes of the

first importance, plays only a very secondary part in the eyes of the

synoptics and of our author. Mary Magdalene, who, according to the four

texts, played a capital part in the resurrection, is not included by

St. Paul in the number of the persons to whom Jesus showed himself, and

after that solemn hour she is no more heard of It was the same in the

case of Babism. In the accounts which we possess of the origins of that

religion, and which are in complete accord, the personnel differs quite

sensibly. Each witness has observed the fact from his own point of

view, and has attributed a special importance to such of the founders

as were known to him.

Observe a new textual coincidence between Luke (xx3 53) and John (xix.

41).

� 41. An important fact arises from the discussion which have just

instituted. Our Gospel, disagreeing very considerably with the

synoptics up to the last week of Jesus, is throughout the whole account

of the Passion in general accord with them. We cannot say, however,

that it has borrowed from them, for, on the contrary, it sails

perfectly dear of them, it has not copied any of their expressions. If

the author of the fourth Gospel had read some account of the synoptic

tradition, which is very possible, it must at least be said that he did

not have it before him when he wrote. What is to be concluded hence?

That he had a tradition of his own, a tradition similar to that of the

synoptics, although between the two we have only intrinsic reasons to

guide us in forming a decision. A fictitious narrative, a sort of �

priori gospel, written in the second century, would not have had that

character. Like as with the apocryphas, the author has copied the

synoptics, but has amplified them to suit his own tastes. The position

of the Johannine writer is that of an author who was not ignorant of

what had already been written on the subject he was treating, who

approved many of the things which had been said, but who believed

himself to be possessed of superior information, and advanced the

latter without disturbing himself about others. This may be compared to

what we know of the Gospel of Marcion. Marcion wrote a gospel under

similar conditions to those which had been attributed to the author of

the fourth Gospel. But observe the difference: Marcion had a sort of

agreement or had an extract made setting forth certain views. A

composition of the same description as that imputed to the author of

our gospel, if that author lived in the second century and wrote with

the end in view that is alleged of him, is absolutely without

precedent. That is neither the eclectic method and conciliation of

Tatian and of Marcion, nor the amplification pasticcio of the

apocryphal Gospels, nor the wholly arbitrary reverie, without

historical basis, of the Pista Sophia. To get rid of certain dogmatic

difficulties, one falls into verbal historical difficulties which are

destitute of meaning.

� 42. The agreement of our Gospel with the synoptics, which strikes one

in the narrative of the Passion, is hardly discernible, at least in

Matthew, in that of the resurrection and what follows. But here again I

think our author much more near the truth. According to it, Mary

Magdalene alone goes first to the tomb; alone, she is the first

messenger of the resurrection, which accords with the finale of the

Gospel of Mark (xvi. 9, et seq.). On the news brought by Mary

Magdalene, Peter and John go to the tomb; another most remarkable

consonance, even in the expression and the little details, with Luke

(xxiv. 1, 2, 12, 24) and with the finale of Mark, preserved in the

manuscript L and in the margin of the Philoxenian version. The two

first evangelists do not speak of a visit of the apostles to the tomb.

A decisive authority gives here the advantage to the tradition of Luke

and of the Johannine writer; we refer to St. Paul. According to the

first epistle to the Corinthians, he writes about the year 57, and

surely a good while before the Gospels of Luke and John the first

apparition of the resurrected Jesus was seen by Cephas. True, this

assertion of Paul coincides better with the account of Luke, who does

not mention Peter, than with the account of the fourth Gospel,

according to which the well-beloved apostle should have accompanied

Peter. But the first chapters of the Acts constantly present Peter and

John to us as inseparable companions. It is probable that at this

decisive moment they were together, that they were together when they

were informed of the event, and that they ran together. The finale of

Mark in the manuscript L makes use of a more vague formula: oi peri ton

Petrou.

The ingenuous personal characteristics which are presented here in the

narrative of our author are almost sign-manuals. The determined

adversaries of the authenticity of the fourth Gospel impose on

themselves a difficult task in forcing themselves to see in these

characteristics the artifices of a forger. The design of the author to

place himself alongside or before Peter in important circumstances (i.

35, et seq.; xiii. 23, et seq.; xviii. 15, et seq.) is altogether

remarkable. If one would give to it the meaning desired, one would say

that the compilation of these passages could be but little posterior to

the death of John. The account of the first goings and comings of

Sunday morning, which are somewhat confused in the synoptics, is in our

author perfectly distinct. Yes, here the tradition is original, the

disjointed members of which have been arranged in the three synoptics

in three different manners, but wholly inferior, in point of

likelihood, to the scheme of the fourth Gospel. Remark, that at the

decisive moment on Sunday morning, the disciple alleged to be the

author does not attribute to himself any particular vision. A forger,

writing without regard to tradition for the purpose of creating the

chief of a school, would not have committed the blunder, in the midst

of a rolling fire of apparitions, with which latter every tradition of

these first days was full, of attributing it to a favourite disciple,

just as it has been done in the case of James.

Note again a coincidence between Luke (xxiv. 4) and John (xx. 12, 13).

Matthew and Mark have only an angel at this moment. Verse v. 9 is un

trait de lumiere. The synoptics are here destitute of all credulity,

when they pretend that Jesus had predicted his resurrection.

� 43. The apparition which follows, in our author--we mean the one

which takes place before the apostles assemble on Sunday

evening--coincides well with the account of Paul. But it is with Luke

that the agreements here become striking and decisive. Not only does

the apparition take place on the same date in presence of the same

people, but also the words pronounced by Jesus are the same; the

circumstance of Jesus showing his feet and his hands is lightly

transposed, but it is recognisable as a part of the other, whilst it is

wanting in the two first synoptics. The Gospel of the Hebrews marches

here in accord with the third and fourth Gospels. "But why," it might

be said, "hold to the narrative of an eyewitness, a narrative which

embraces manifest impossibilities? He who does not admit the miracle,

and admits the authenticity of the fourth Gospel, is he not forced to

regard as an imposture the so formal assurance of verses 30, 31?"

Certainly not. St. Paul also affirms that he saw Jesus, and yet we do

not reject either the authenticity of the first chapter to the

Corinthians or the veracity of St. Paul.

� 44. A peculiarity of our Gospel is that the inspiration of the Holy

Spirit occurs on the very evening of the resurrection (xx. 22). Luke

(Acts ii. et seq.) places this event after the ascension. It is

nevertheless remarkable that the verse John xx. 22 has its parallel in

Luke xxiv. 49. Only the contour of the passage in Luke is made to be

undecided, so as not to contradict the account of the Acts (ii. 1 et

seq.). Here again, the third and fourth Gospels communicate with one

another through a kind of secret channel.

� 45. Like all critics, I make the compilation of the fourth Gospel

terminate at the end of chapter xx. Chapter xxi. is an addition, but an

addition nearly contemporaneous, either by the author himself or by one

of his disciples. The chapter contains the account of a new apparition

of the resurrected Jesus. Here again important coincidences with the

third Gospel are to be remarked (comp. John xxi. 12, 13 with Luke xxiv.

41-43), not to mention certain resemblances to the Gospel to the

Hebrews.

46. Details somewhat obscure follow (15 et seq.), in which we have a

more lively sensation than anywhere else of the imprint of the school

of John. The perpetual preoccupation of the relations of John and Peter

reappear. The aim of all this resembles a series of private letters

which are only understood by him who has written them or by the

initiated. The allusion to the death of Peter, the amicable and

fraternal sentiment of rivalry between the two apostles, the belief,

emitted with reserve, that John should not die before seeing the

apparition of Jesus--all this appears sincere. The exaggeration of bad

style, in v. 25, is not felt to be inconsistent in a composition so

inferior, in the literary sense, to the synoptics. This verse is

lacking, moreover, in the Codex Sina�ticus. Verse 24, finally, seems a

signature. The words, "And we know that his witness is true," are an

addition of the disciples, or rather induce the belief that the last

editors utilised notes or recollections of the apostle. These

protestations of veracity are found in almost similar terms in two

writings which are by the same hand as our Gospel.

� 47. So, in the account of the life beyond the tomb of Jesus, the

fourth Gospel retains its superiority. This superiority is to be

especially recognised in portions taken generally. In the Gospels of

Luke and Mark (xvi. 9-20) the life of Jesus resurrected has the

appearance of enduring only for a day. In Matthew it seems to have been

short. In the Acts (chapter i.) it endures forty days. In the three

synoptics and in the Acts it terminates by an adieu or by an ascension

to Heaven. Matters are arranged in a less convenient form in the fourth

Gospel. The life beyond the tomb has no fixed limits; it is prolonged

somehow indefinitely. Elsewhere I have demonstrated the superiority of

this system. It suffices for the present to remember that it responds

much better to the important passage of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 5-8.

What is the result of this long analysis? Firstly, that considered by

itself the narrative of the material circumstances of the life of

Jesus, as furnished by the fourth Gospel, is superior in point of

probability to the narrative of the synoptics. Secondly, that, on the

other hand, the discourses which the fourth Gospel impute to Jesus have

in general no character of authenticity. Thirdly, that the author has a

tradition of the life of Jesus very different from that of the

synoptics, except as concerns the last days. Fourthly, that this

tradition, however, was pretty well spread; for Luke, who does not

belong to the school whence emerged our Gospel, has an idea more or

less vague of many of the facts which were known to our author, and of

which Matthew and Mark knew nothing. Fifthly, that the work is less

beautiful than the synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Mark being the

masterpieces of spontaneous art, Luke presenting an admirable

combination of ingenuous art and of reflection, whilst the fourth

Gospel presents only a series of notes, very badly arranged, in which

legend and tradition, reflection and na�vet� se fondent mal. Sixthly,

that the author of the fourth Gospel, whoever he may be, has written to

raise the authority of one of the apostles, in order to show that this

apostle had played a part, in circumstances where he is not mentioned

in the other narratives, in order to prove that he knew things which

the other disciples knew not. Seventhly, that the author of the fourth

Gospel wrote at a time when Christianity was more advanced than the

synoptics, and with a more exalted idea of the divine r�le of Jesus,

the figure of Jesus being with him more rugged, more heretical, like

that of an �on or a divine hypostasis who operates through his own

will. Eighthly, that if the material teachings are more exact than

those of the synoptics, its historic colouring is much less so,

insomuch that, in order to seize the general physiognomy of Jesus, the

synoptic Gospels, despite their lacunes and their errors, are still the

veritable guides.

Naturally, these reasons in favour of the fourth Gospel would be

singularly confirmed if it could be established that the author of this

Gospel is the apostle John, son of Zebedee. But the present is a

research of a different order. Our aim has been to examine the fourth

Gospel by itself, independently of its author. This question of the

authorship of the fourth Gospel is assuredly the most singular that

there is in literary history. I know of no question of criticism in

which contrary appearances are so evenly balanced and which hold the

mind more completely in suspense.

It is clear at first that the author wishes to pass himself off as an

ocular witness of evangelical facts (i. 14, xix. 35), and for the

friend preferred by Jesus (xiii. 22 et seq., xix. 26 et seq., compared

with xxi. 24). It will serve no purpose to say that chap. xxi. is an

addition, since this addition is by the author himself or by his

school. In two other places, moreover (i. 35 et seq., xviii. 15 et

seq.), one sees clearly that the author loves to speak of himself in

covered language. One of two things must be true; either the author of

the fourth Gospel is a disciple of Jesus, an intimate disciple, and

belonging to the oldest epoch; or else the author has employed, in

order to give himself authority, an artifice which he has pursued from

the commencement of the book to the end, the tendency being to make

believe that he was a witness as well situated as it was possible to be

to render a true account of the facts.

Who is the disciple whose authority the author thus seeks to make

prevail? The title indicates it; it is "John." There is not the least

reason to suppose it may have been added in opposition to the

intentions of the real author. It was certainly written at the head of

our Gospel at the end of the second century. On the other hand,

evangelical history only presents, outside of John the Baptist, a

single personage of the name of John. It is necessary then to choose

between the hypotheses; either we must acknowledge John, son of

Zebedee, as the author of the fourth Gospel, or regard that Gospel as

an apocryphal writing composed by some individual who wished to pass it

off as a work of John, son of Zebedee. The question at issue here is

not in fact one of legends, the work of multitudes, for which no person

is responsible. A man who, in order to give credence to that which he

records, deceives the public not only in regard to his name, but also

as to the value of his testimony, is not a writer of legends, he is an

impostor. Such a biography as that of Francis d'Assisi, written one or

two hundred years posterior to that extraordinary man, may recount

shoals of miracles created by tradition, without ceasing, for all that,

to be one of the most candid and most innocent men of the world. But if

this biography were to say, "I was his companion, he preferred me to

any other, everything I am about to tell you is true, for I have seen

it," without contradicting the proper qualification, then it is quite

another thing.

That fault is not, moreover, the only one which the author may have

committed. We have three epistles which in like manner bear the name of

John. If there is one thing in the domain of criticism which is

probable, it is that the first at least of these epistles is by the

same author as the fourth Gospel. One might almost denominate it as a

detached chapter. The vocabulary of the two writings is identical. Now

the language of the works of the New Testament is so poor in expression

and so little varied that such inductions can be drawn with an almost

absolute certainty. The author of this epistle, like the author of the

Gospel, gives himself out as an eyewitness (1 John i. 1, et seq., iv.

14) of evangelical history. He represents himself as a person

well-known, and enjoying high consideration in the Church. At first

glance, it seems that the most natural hypothesis is to admit that the

whole of these writings are indeed the work of John, son of Zebedee.

Let us hasten to add, nevertheless, that critics of the first order

have not without grave reason rejected the authenticity of the fourth

Gospel. The work is too rarely cited in the most ancient Christian

literature; its authority only commences to be known much later.

Nothing could less resemble than this Gospel that which might be

expected from John, an old fisher on the Lake of Gennesareth. The Greek

in which it is written is not in any sense the Palestinian Greek with

which we are acquainted in the other books of the New Testament. The

ideas, in particular, are of an entirely different order. Here we are

in full Philonian and almost Gnostic metaphysics. The discourses of

Jesus as they are reported by this pretended witness, this confidential

friend, are false, often flat, nay impossible. In a word, the

Apocalypse is also given out as the work of John, not, it is true, in

the quality of Apostle, but by one who, in the churches of Asia,

arrogates to himself such a preeminence, and who, with but little

effort, can be identified with the Apostle John. Now, when we compare

the style and the thoughts of the author of the Apocalypse with the

style and the thoughts of the author of the fourth Gospel and the first

Johannine epistle, we find the most striking discordance. How are we to

get out of that labyrinth of singular contradictions and of

inextricable difficulties?

For my part I see but one way. It is to hold that the fourth Gospel is,

indeed, in a sense chataIoanoen, that it was not written by John

himself, that it was for a long time esoteric and secret in one of the

schools which adhered to John. To penetrate into the mystery of this

school, to learn how the writing in question was put forth, is simply

impossible. Can the notes or data left by the Apostle be used as a

basis for the text which we have? Has a secretary, nurtured by the

reading of Philo, and possessing a style of his own, given to the

narratives and letters of his master a turn which without this they

could never have had? Have we not here something analogous to the

letters of Saint Catherine of Sienna, revised by her secretary, or to

those revelations of Catherine Emmerich, of which we can say equally

that they are by Catherine, and that they are by Bretano, the ideas of

Catherine having traversed the style of Bretano? Have not some purely

semi-Gnostics, at the close of the life of the Apostle, seized his pen,

and, under the pretext of aiding him in writing his recollections and

of assisting him in his correspondence, incorporated their ideas, and

favourite expressions, covering themselves with his authority. Who is

that Presbyteros Johannes, a sort of double of the Apostle, whose tomb

is pointed out by the side of John's? Is he a different personage from

the Apostle? Is he the Apostle himself whose long life was for many

years the foundation of the hopes of believers? I have elsewhere

touched upon these questions. I shall often return to them again. I

have had but one aim in this: that in recurring so often in the "Life

of Jesus" to the fourth Gospel, in order to establish the thread of my

narrative, I have had strong reasons, even in the case of the said

Gospel, for not holding it to be the work of the Apostle John.

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123. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=10&scrV=24#xxxiii-p32.2

124. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=10&scrV=40#xxxiii-p32.3

125. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=11&scrV=1#xxxiii-p33.1

126. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=11&scrV=45#xxxiii-p44.9

127. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=11&scrV=46#xxxiii-p43.1

128. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=11&scrV=55#xxxiii-p43.2

129. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=11&scrV=56#xxxiii-p43.2

130. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=1#xxxiii-p44.1

131. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=1#xxxiii-p44.2

132. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=1#xxxiii-p44.8

133. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=1#xxxiii-p48.3

134. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=1#xxxiii-p54.3

135. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=2#xxxiii-p44.8

136. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=6#xxxiii-p44.5

137. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=6#xxxiii-p44.6

138. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=9#xxxiii-p44.8

139. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=12#xxxiii-p24.3

140. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=12#xxxiii-p45.1

141. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=17#xxxiii-p44.8

142. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=17#xxxiii-p45.2

143. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=18#xxxiii-p44.8

144. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=18#xxxiii-p45.2

145. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=20#xxxiii-p45.3

146. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=23#xxxiii-p45.4

147. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=25#xxxiii-p46.1

148. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=12&scrV=27#xxxiii-p47.1

149. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=13&scrV=1#xxxiii-p48.1

150. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=13&scrV=2#xxxiii-p49.1

151. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=13&scrV=10#xxxiii-p49.1

152. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=13&scrV=11#xxxiii-p49.1

153. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=13&scrV=18#xxxiii-p49.1

154. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=13&scrV=22#xxxiii-p75.3

155. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=13&scrV=23#xxxiii-p66.2

156. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=13&scrV=29#xxxiii-p49.2

157. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=14&scrV=16#xxxiii-p50.1

158. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=14&scrV=26#xxxiii-p50.2

159. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=15&scrV=26#xxxiii-p50.3

160. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=16&scrV=7#xxxiii-p50.4

161. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=16&scrV=7#xxxiii-p50.12

162. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=16&scrV=13#xxxiii-p50.4

163. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=17&scrV=1#xxxiii-p2.1

164. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=18&scrV=1#xxxiii-p51.2

165. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=18&scrV=1#xxxiii-p51.1

166. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=18&scrV=6#xxxiii-p51.7

167. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=18&scrV=8#xxxiii-p51.8

168. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=18&scrV=15#xxxiii-p66.3

169. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=18&scrV=15#xxxiii-p75.8

170. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=18&scrV=16#xxxiii-p53.1

171. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=18&scrV=28#xxxiii-p54.1

172. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=1#xxxiii-p2.2

173. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=9#xxxiii-p55.1

174. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=23#iv-p40.2

175. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=24#iv-p40.2

176. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=26#xxxiii-p75.4

177. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=29#xxxiii-p54.4

178. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=31#xxxiii-p61.2

179. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=34#xxxiii-p61.4

180. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=35#xxxiii-p75.2

181. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=36#xxxiii-p44.4

182. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=36#xxxiii-p54.2

183. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=39#xxxiii-p17.4

184. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=19&scrV=41#xxxiii-p63.3

185. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=20&scrV=9#xxxiii-p67.3

186. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=20&scrV=12#xxxiii-p67.2

187. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=20&scrV=13#xxxiii-p67.2

188. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=20&scrV=22#xxxiii-p69.1

189. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=20&scrV=22#xxxiii-p69.3

190. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=20&scrV=30#xxxiii-p68.1

191. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=20&scrV=31#xxxiii-p68.1

192. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=1#iv-p27.3

193. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=1#xxxiii-p25.3

194. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=1#xxxiii-p70.1

195. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=1#xxxiii-p75.6

196. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=12#xxxiii-p70.2

197. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=13#xxxiii-p70.2

198. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=15#xxxiii-p71.1

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201. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=24#xxxiii-p75.5

202. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=John&scrCh=21&scrV=25#xxxiii-p71.2

203. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=Acts&scrCh=1&scrV=1#xxxiii-p72.2

204. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=Acts&scrCh=1&scrV=1#xxxiii-p50.7

205. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=Acts&scrCh=2&scrV=1#xxxiii-p69.5

206. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=Acts&scrCh=2&scrV=1#xxxiii-p50.6

207. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=Acts&scrCh=2&scrV=1#xxxiii-p50.8

208. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=Acts&scrCh=2&scrV=1#xxxiii-p69.2

209. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=1Cor&scrCh=15&scrV=5#xxxiii-p72.3

210. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=1John&scrCh=1&scrV=1#xxxiii-p77.1

211. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3?scrBook=Rev&scrCh=1&scrV=7#xxxiii-p61.6

212. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p27.2

213. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p30.2

214. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p18.4

215. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p44.7

216. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p7.1

217. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p51.3

218. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p36.1

219. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p31.4

220. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p15.4

221. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p37.1

222. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p37.2

223. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p15.3

224. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p56.4

225. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p65.3

226. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p56.3

227. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxii-p7.1

228. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxii-p7.2

229. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p51.6

230. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p51.5

231. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p79.1

232. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxi-p15.1

233. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-p32.1

234. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxi-p16.1

235. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p27.3

236. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p27.2

237. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxiv-p3.1

238. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxx-p1.2

239. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxx-p3.1

240. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p61.7

241. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p61.1

242. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p61.3

243. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-p4.1

244. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-p7.1

245. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p21.1

246. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xiv-p8.1

247. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p33.1

248. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p33.2

249. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxix-p2.1

250. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#vii-p7.1

251. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p25.1

252. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p37.1

253. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p38.1

254. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p57.1

255. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xvii-p2.1

256. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p30.3

257. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p36.2

258. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p33.3

259. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p18.2

260. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p38.2

261. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#v-p8.1

262. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#v-p5.1

263. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#v-p13.1

264. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p10.2

265. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p73.1

266. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p36.3

267. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iv-p27.1

268. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#v-p11.1

269. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p62.1

270. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p62.2

271. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-p29.1

272. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxvi-p7.1

273. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#viii-p8.1

274. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#vii-p6.1

275. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xiii-p7.1

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277. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p52.1

278. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xxxiii-p67.4

279. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#xiv-p2.1

280. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#i-Page\_i

281. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#i-Page\_ii

282. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#i-Page\_iii

283. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#ii-Page\_iv

284. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#ii-Page\_v

285. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#ii-Page\_vi

286. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#ii-Page\_vii

287. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#ii-Page\_viii

288. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#ii-Page\_ix

289. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_x

290. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xi

291. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xii

292. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xiii

293. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xiv

294. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xv

295. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xvi

296. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xvii

297. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xviii

298. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xix

299. file://localhost/ccel/r/renan/lifeofjesus/cache/lifeofjesus.html3#iii-Page\_xx

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