

The History of the Origins of Christianity

Book II The Apostles

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ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOOK II.

THE APOSTLES.

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INTRODUCTION.

CRITICISM OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS.

The first book of our history of the Origins of Christianity has traced the story as far as the death and burial of Jesus. We must now resume the narrative at the point where we left it--to wit, Saturday, 4th April, 33. This will be for some time yet a continuation, in some sort, of the Life of Jesus. Next, after the months of joyous rapture, during which the great Founder laid the foundation of a new order for humanity, these last years were the most decisive in the history of the world. It is still Jesus, some sparks of whose sacred fire have been deposited in the hearts of a few friends who created institutions of the greatest originality, moves, transforms souls, imprints upon everything his divine seal. We have to show how, under this ever active and victorious influence over death, the faith of the resurrection, the influence of the holy Spirit, the gift of tongues, and the power of the Church, established themselves. We shall describe the organization of the Church at Jerusalem, its first trials, its first conquests, the earliest missions which it despatched. We shall follow Christianity in its rapid progress in Syria, as far as Antioch, where was formed a second capital, more important in a sense than that of Jerusalem, which it was destined to supplant. In this new centre, where the converted Pagans constituted the majority, we shall see Christianity separating itself definitely from Judaism, and receiving a name of its own; we shall see especially the birth of the grand idea of distant missions, destined to carry the name of Jesus into the world of the Gentiles. We shall pause at the important moment when Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark set out for the execution of this great design. There we shall interrupt our narrative, and cast a glance at the world which those daring missionaries undertook to convert. We shall endeavour to give an account of the intellectual, political, religious, and social condition of the Roman Empire about the year 45, the probable date of the departure of Saint Paul upon his first mission.

Such is the subject-matter of this second book, which we have entitled, *The Apostles*, for the reason that it expounds the period of common action during which the small family created by Jesus acted in concert, and was grouped morally around a single point--Jerusalem. Our next work, the third, will take us out of this company, and we shall be devoted almost exclusively to the man who, more than any other, represents conquering and travelling Christianity--Saint Paul. Although, from a certain epoch, he called himself an apostle, Paul had not the same right to the title as the Twelve; he is a workman of the second hour, and almost an intruder. The state in which historical documents have reached us are at this stage-misleading. As we know infinitely more of the history of St. Paul than that of the Twelve, as we possess his authentic writings and original memoirs detailing minutely certain periods of his life, we assign to him an importance of the first order, almost exceeding that of Jesus. This is an error. Paul was a great man: in the foundation of Christianity he played a most

important part. Still, we must not compare him with Jesus, nor even with any of the immediate disciples of the latter. Paul never saw Jesus, nor did he ever taste the ambrosia of the Galilean preaching. Hence, the most commonplace man who had had his part of the celestial manna, was from that very circumstance superior to him who had only had an after-taste. Nothing can be more false than an opinion which has become fashionable in these days, that Paul was really the founder of Christianity. The real founder of Christianity was Jesus. The first places, next to him, ought to be reserved to those grand and obscure companions of Jesus, to those faithful and zealous women, who believed in him despite his death. Paul was, in the first century, a kind of isolated phenomenon. He did not leave an organized school. On the contrary he left bitter opponents, who strove, after his death, to banish him from the Church and to place him, in a sort of way, on the same footing as Simon Magus. They tried to take away from him that which we regard as the peculiar work--the conversion of the Gentiles. The church of Corinth, which he himself had founded, claimed to owe its origin to him and to St. Peter. In the second century Papias and St. Justin never mention his name. It was later, when oral tradition came to be regarded as nothing, and when the Scriptures took the place of everything, that Paul assumed a leading part in Christian theology. Paul, it was true, had a theology. Peter and Mary Magdalene had none. Paul left behind him considerable works: none of the writings of the other apostles are to be compared with his, either in regard to their importance or authenticity.

At first glance the documents for the period embraced in this volume are rare and altogether insufficient. The direct testimony is reduced to the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles--chapters, the historical value of which is open to serious objections. Yet, the light which these last chapters of the Gospels cast upon that obscure interval, especially the Epistles of St. Paul, dispels, to some extent, the darkness. An old writing serves to make known, first, the exact date at which it was composed, and, secondly, the period which preceded its composition. Every writing suggests, in fact, retrospective inductions as to the state of society which produced it. Composed, for the most part, between the years 53 and 62, the Epistles of St. Paul are replete with information concerning the early years of Christianity. Moreover, seeing that we are here speaking of great events without precise dates, the essential point is to show the conditions under which they formed themselves, On this subject I ought to remark once for all that the current date inscribed at the head of each chapter is never more than approximate. The chronology of these first years has but a very small number of fixed land-marks. Yet, thanks to the care which the editor of the Acts has taken, not to interrupt the succession of events; thanks to the Epistle to the Galatians, where are to be found some numerical indications of the greatest value; and to Josephus, who gives the dates of events of profane history connected with some facts concerning the apostles, we are able to create for the history of these last a very probable canvas upon which the chances of error are confined within very narrow limits.

I shall again repeat at the beginning of this book what I have already said at the beginning of my Life of Jesus. In histories of that kind, where the general effect alone is certain, and where almost all the details lend themselves more or less to doubt, in consequence of the legendary character of the documents, hypothesis is essential. Upon

periods of which we know nothing no hypothesis is possible. To endeavour to reproduce a group of ancient sculpture, which has certainly existed, but of which we possess only a few fragments, and concerning which we possess scarcely any written account, is an altogether arbitrary work. But to attempt to recompose the entire building of the Parthenon from what remains to us by the aid of the ancient text, availing ourselves of the drawing made in the seventeenth century of all the information possible; in one word, inspiring ourselves with the style of those inimitable fragments, trying to seize their soul and their life--what can be more legitimate? We need not boast of having found the ancient sculptor once more; but we have done what we could to approach him. Such a work is so much the more legitimate in history since language permits doubtful forms, which marble does not allow. There is even nothing to prevent the reader from proposing a choice between diverse theories. The conscience of the writer may be easy since he has put forward as certain that which is certain, as probable that which is probable, as possible that which is possible. In those places where the footing between history and legend is uncertain, the general effect alone is all that need be sought after. Our third book, for which we shall have absolutely historical documents, where we shall have to paint characters of flesh and blood, and to speak of clearly defined facts, will offer a more definite story. It will be seen, however, that the character of that period is not known with greater certainty. Absolute facts speak more loudly than biographical details. We know very little of the incomparable artists who have created these masterpieces of Greek art. But these masterpieces tell us more about the personality of their authors and the public who appreciate them, than the most circumstantial narratives, and the most authentic texts could do.

For the knowledge of the decisive events which happened in the first days after the death of Jesus the authorities are the last chapters of the Gospels containing the narratives of the appearance of the resuscitated Christ. I need not repeat here what I have said in the Introduction to my Life of Jesus as to the value of these documents. On that side we have happily a control which was too often wanting in the life of Jesus; I intend to imply an important passage of St. Paul (1 Cor. xv 5-8), which establishes: 1st the reality of the appearances; 2nd, the long duration of the apparitions as opposed to the narrative of the synoptical Gospels; 3rd, the variety of places in which the apparitions took place in contradiction to Mark and Luke. The study of this fundamental text, together with other reasons, confirms us in the views which we have enunciated as to the reciprocal relation of the Synoptics with the fourth Gospel. In all that concerns the narrative of the resurrection and the apparitions, the fourth Gospel maintains that superiority which it has for all the rest of the Life of Jesus. If we wish to find a consecutive logical narrative, which allows that which is hidden behind the allusions to be conjectured, it is there that we must look for it. I am approaching the most difficult of the questions connected with the origin of Christianity. "What is the historic value of the fourth Gospel?" The use which I have made of it in my Life of Jesus is the point to which enlightened critics have taken the most objection. Almost all the scholars who apply the rational method to the history of theology reject the fourth Gospel as apocryphal in every aspect. I have anew reflected much upon this problem, and I am unable sensibly to modify my first opinion. Only as I differ on this point from the general opinion I have thought it necessary to explain in

detail the reasons for my persistency. I intend to make it the subject of an appendix at the end of a revised and corrected edition of the Life of Jesus which will shortly appear.

The Acts of the Apostles are the most important document for the history which we are about to relate. I ought to explain myself here as to the character of that work, its historical value, and the use which I have made of it.

The one thing beyond question is that the Acts had the same author as the third Gospel, of which they are a continuation. It is not worth while to stop to prove this position, which, however, has never been disputed. The preface at the beginning of both writings, the dedication of both to Theophilus, the perfect similarity of style and of ideas furnish abundant demonstrations in this regard.

A second proposition, which is not quite so self-evident, but which may be regarded as very probable is, that the author of the Acts was a disciple of Paul. who accompanied him during a great part of his journeyings. At the first glance this proposition appeared indubitable. In many places beginning with the 10th verse of chapter xvi., the author in his story makes use of the pronoun "we," indicating thus that thenceforward he made one of the company of Paul. That appears to be beyond question. One issue only presents itself to destroy the force of this argument: it is that of supposing that the passages where the pronoun "we" appears have been copied by the last editor of the Acts from an earlier manuscript by, for example, Timothy, and that the editor, out of inadvertence, had omitted to substitute for "we" the name of the narrator. This explanation is scarcely admissible. Such an inadvertence might easily occur in a vulgar compilation. But the third Gospel and the Acts are compositions most carefully edited, composed with reflection, and even with art, written by the same hand, and according to a deliberate plan. The two books together form a whole of absolutely the same style, offering the same favourite locutions, and the same manner of quoting the Scripture. A blunder of editing so really shocking as that would be inexplicable. We are then forced invincibly to conclude that he who wrote the end of the work wrote the beginning also, and that the narrator of all is he who wrote "we" in the passages mentioned.

This becomes still more striking, if we note in what circumstances the narrator thus puts himself in company with Paul. The use of "we" begins at the moment when Paul goes into Macedonia for the first time (xvi. 10). It ceases at the moment when Paul leaves Philippi, It is renewed when Paul, visiting Macedonia for the last time, again goes by way of Philippi (xx. 5-6.) Thenceforward the narrator never again separates himself from Paul until the end. If we further remark that the chapters in which the narrator accompanies the apostle have a specially precise character, it is impossible to believe that the narrator could have been a Macedonian, or rather a man of Philippi, who went before Paul to Troas during his second mission, who remained at Philippi after the departure of the apostle, and who at the last passage of the apostle through that city (third mission) joined him, not again to leave him. Can it be understood that an editor, writing at a distance, could thus have allowed himself to be ruled by the remembrance of another? Such memories would spoil the unity of the whole, The narrator who says "we" would have his own style; his special expressions; he would be more

Paulinian than the editor himself. Now that is not so: the work is perfectly homogeneous.

There will, perhaps, be some surprise that a thesis so evident should have been contradicted. But criticism of the writings of the New Testament shows that many things which appear to be perfectly clear are, upon examination, full of uncertainty. In the matter of style, thoughts, and doctrines, the Acts are scarcely what might be expected from a disciple of Paul. They in no way resemble his epistles. There is not a trace of the lofty doctrines which constitute the originality of the Apostle of the Gentiles. The temperament of Paul is that of a stiff and self-contained Protestant; the author of the Acts gives us the impression of a good Catholic, docile, optimist, calling every priest a "holy father," every bishop "a great bishop," ready to swallow any fiction, rather than believe that these holy fathers and great bishops quarrel amongst themselves and often make rude war. Whilst professing a great admiration for Paul, the author of the Acts avoids giving him the title of apostle, and is anxious that the initiative of the conversion of the Gentiles should belong to Peter. We should say, in short, that he is a disciple of Peter, rather than of Paul. We shall soon show that, in two or three circumstances, his principles of conciliation have led him gravely to falsify the biography of Paul; he makes mistakes and omissions of things which are very strange in a disciple of this last. He does not mention a single one of his epistles; he keeps back, in the most surprising fashion, explanations of the first importance. Even in the part, where he must have been the companion of Paul, he is sometimes singularly dry, ill-informed and dull. In short, the softness and vagueness of some of his narratives, the conventionality which may be discerned in them, suggest to us a writer who had no personal communication with the apostles, and who wrote between the years 100 and 120.

Must we insist upon these objections? I think not, and I persist in believing that the last editor of the Acts is really the disciple of Paul who says "we" in the last chapters. All the difficulties, insoluble though they may appear, should be, if not set on one side, at least held in suspense by an argument as decisive as that which results from this word "we." We may add, that by attributing the Acts to a companion of Paul, two important peculiarities are explained: on the one hand, the disproportion of the work of which more than three-fifths are consecrated to Paul; on the other, the disproportion which may be remarked, even in the biography of Paul himself, whose first mission is dispatched with great brevity, whilst certain parts of the second and third missions, especially his last journey, are told with minute details. A man altogether a stranger to the apostolic history, would not have exhibited these inequalities. His work would have been better planned as a whole. That which distinguishes history composed from documents, from history written wholly or in part by an actor in it, is exactly this disproportion: The historian of the closet takes for his framework the events themselves; the author of memoirs takes his recollections for his framework, or, at least, his personal relations. An ecclesiastical historian, a sort of Eusebius, writing about the year 120, would have bequeathed to us a book very differently distributed after chapter xiii. The bizarre fashion in which the Acts at this time leaves the orbit in which they had revolved until then can, to my thinking, be explained only by the peculiar situation of the author and by his relations with Paul. This result will be naturally confirmed if

we find amongst the known fellow labourers of Paul the name of the author to whom tradition attributes our writing.

This is in effect what took place. Manuscripts and tradition assign as the author of the third Gospel a certain Lucas or Lucanus. From what has been said it is evident that if Lucas be really the author of the third Gospel, he is also the author of the Acts. Now we find this Lucas mentioned precisely as the companion of Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 14); in that to Philemon (24), and in the II Timothy (iv. 11.) This last Epistle is of more than doubtful authenticity. The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon on their side, although very probably authentic, are not, however, the most undoubted of Paul's Epistles. But those writings are, in any case, of the first century, and suffice to prove that there was a Luke amongst the disciples of Paul. The fabricator of the Epistles to Timothy, in short, is certainly not the author of those to the Colossians and to Philemon (supposing, contrary to our opinion, that these last are apocryphal). To admit that a forger should have attributed an imaginary companion to Paul is to suppose something very improbable. But assuredly different forgers would not have pitched upon the same name. Two circumstances give to this reasoning a peculiar force. The first is that the name of Luke, or Lucanus, is an uncommon one amongst the early Christians; the second that the Luke of the Epistles had no other celebrity. To write a celebrated name at the top of a document, as is done in the second Epistle of Peter, and very probably in Paul's Epistles to Titus and Timothy, was in no way contrary to the habits of the time. But to write at the top of such a document a false name, otherwise obscure, is not to be believed. Was it the intention of the forger to throw over his book the authority of Paul? If it were, why did he not take the name of Paul himself? or at least the name of Timothy or Titus, disciples of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who were much better known? Luke scarcely had a place in tradition, legend, or history. The three passages of the Epistles above mentioned are not sufficient to make his name a generally accepted guarantee. The Epistles to Timothy were probably written after the Acts. The mention of Luke in the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon are equivalent to one only, the two documents being really but one. We think, therefore, that the author of the Acts was really Luke, the disciple of Paul.

The very name of Luke, or Lucanus, and the profession of physician, which the disciple of Paul thus named exercised, answer completely to the indications which the two books furnish as to their author. We have shown in effect that the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts was probably from Philippi, a Roman colony, where Latin was the prevailing language. Further, the author of the Gospel and of the Acts knew little of Judaism and the affairs of Palestine; he scarcely knew Hebrew. He is abreast of the ideas of the Pagan world, and he writes Greek with tolerable correctness. The work was composed far from Judea for the use of people who knew little of its geography, who cared nothing for either profound Rabbinical learning's or for Hebrew names. The dominant idea of the author is, that if the people had been free to follow their inclinations they would have embraced the faith of Jesus, and that it was the Jewish aristocracy who prevented them. The word Jew is always used by him in a bad sense, and as synonymous with enemy of Christians. On the other hand he shows himself very favourable to the Samaritan heretics.

What date may we give to the composition of this important document? Luke appears for the first time in company with Paul on the occasion of the first journey of the apostle to Macedonia, about the year 52. Suppose that he was then 25 years of age; there is nothing unnatural in supposing him to have lived to the year 100. The narrative of the Acts stops at the year 63. But the edition of the Acts being evidently later than that of the third Gospel, and the date of that third Gospel being fixed with sufficient precision in the years which followed the destruction of Jerusalem (70), we cannot dream of placing the production of the Acts earlier than 71 or 72.

If it were certain that the Acts were composed immediately after the Gospel we might stop at this point. But doubt is permissible. Some facts lead to the belief that a considerable interval passed between the composition of the third Gospel and that of the Acts. Thus there is a singular contradiction between the last chapters of the Gospel and the first of the Acts. According to the former account the ascension took place on the very day of the resurrection; according to the Acts it took place only after forty days. It is clear that the second version presents the legend to us in a more advanced form--a form which was adopted when the need was felt for creating a place for the various apparitions, and for giving to the life beyond the tomb of Jesus a complete and logical frame-work. We are even tempted to suppose that the new fashion of conceiving things was not told to the author or did not come into his head except in the interval between the composition of the two works. In any case it is very remarkable that the author finds himself compelled to add new circumstances to his first account and to extend it. If his first book were still in his hands why did he not make the additions to his first account which, separated as they are, look so awkward? That, however, is not decisive, and a grave circumstance leads to the belief that Luke conceived at the same time the plan of both. That is the preface placed at the head of the Gospel, which appears common to the two books. The contradiction we have pointed out may perhaps be explained by the little rare which was taken to present an accurate account of the way in which the time was spent. This it is which makes all the accounts of the life of Jesus after his resurrection in complete disagreement as to the duration of that life. So little care was taken to be historical that the same narrator made no scruple about proposing two irreconcilable systems in succession. The three accounts of the conversion of Paul in the Acts present also little differences, which prove simply that the author did not trouble himself much about the exactness of the details.

It appears then that we shall be very near the truth in supposing that the Acts were written about the year 80. The spirit of the book, in fact, corresponds completely with the age of the first Flavians. The author carefully avoids all that can wound the Romans. He loves to show how favourable the Roman authorities were to the new sect; how they sometimes even embraced it; how they at least defended it against the Jews; how greatly superior is imperial justice to the passions of the local powers. He insists especially on the advantages which Paul owed to his rights as a Roman citizen. He abruptly cuts his narrative short at the moment of the arrival of Paul at Rome, perhaps in order to avoid the necessity of relating the cruelties of Nero towards the Christians. The contrast with the Apocalypse is striking. The Apocalypse, written in the year 68, is full of the memory of the iniquities of Nero; a horrible hatred of Rome overspreads it. Here we see a mild man, who

lives in a period of calm. After about the year 70 until the last years of the first century, the situation was not altogether unpleasant for the Christians. Personages of the Flavian family attached themselves to Christianity. Who knows if Luke did not know Flavius Clemens, if he were not of his familia, if the Acts were not written for that powerful personage, whose official position required caution? Some indications have led to the belief that this book was composed at Rome. One might have said indeed that the principles of the Roman Church weighed upon the author. That Church, from the earliest ages, had the political and hierarchical character which has always distinguished it. The good Luke could enter into that spirit. His ideas of ecclesiastical authority are very advanced: we see the form of the episcopate sprouting. He writes history in that tone of an apologist at any cost which is that of the official historians of the court of Rome. He acts as an ultramontane historian of Clement XIV would act; praising at the same time the Pope and the Jesuits, and seeking to persuade by a narrative full of compunction that both sides in that debate observed the rules of charity. In two hundred years it will also be settled that Cardinal Antonelli and Mgr de Merode loved each other like two brothers. The author of the Acts was, but with a simplicity which will not again be equalled, the first of those complacent narrators, sanctimoniously satisfied, determined to believe that everything goes on in the Church in an evangelic fashion. Too loyal to condemn his master Paul, too orthodox not to share the official opinion which prevailed, he smoothed over differences of doctrine, to allow only the common end to be seen--that end which all these great founders pursued in effect by paths so opposed and through rivalries so energetic.

We can understand how a man who has placed himself intentionally in such a disposition of mind, is the least capable in the world of representing things as they really happened. Historical fidelity is a matter of indifference to him; edification is all he cares for. Luke scarcely conceals this; he writes in order that Theophilus may recognise the truth of what the catechists have taught him. There was then already a recognised system of ecclesiastical history, which was officially taught, and the framework of which, as well as that of the Gospel history itself, was probably already settled. The dominant character of the Acts, like that of the third Gospel, is a tender piety, a lively sympathy with the Gentiles, a conciliatory spirit, an extreme pro. occupation with the supernatural, love for the humble and lowly, a grand democratic sentiment, or rather the persuasion that the people are naturally Christian, that it is the great who prevent them from following their good instincts, an exalted idea of the power of the Church and of its heads, a remarkable taste for community of life. The system of composition is the same in both books, so that we are with respect to the history of the apostles on the same footing as we should be with regard to the Gospel history if we had one single text only, the Gospel of Luke.

The disadvantages of such a situation are manifest. The life of Jesus, as related by the third evangelist alone, would be extremely defective and incomplete. We know it, because so far as the life of Jesus is concerned, comparison is possible. Together with Luke we possess (without speaking of the fourth Gospel) Matthew and Mark, who, as compared with Luke, are in part, at least, original. We can lay a finger on the violent proceedings by means of which Luke dislocates or mixes up anecdotes, on the way in which he modifies the colour of

certain facts according to his personal views, of the pious legends which he adds to the most authentic traditions. Is it not evident that if we could make such a comparison of the Acts, we should find faults of a precisely similar description? The first chapters of the Acts would even appear, without doubt, inferior to the third Gospel, for these chapters were probably composed with fewer and less universally accepted documents.

A fundamental distinction, in fact, is here necessary. From the point of view of historical value, the book of the Acts divides itself into two parts; one, including the first twelve chapters, and relating the principal facts of the history of the primitive Church; the other containing the remaining sixteen chapters, all devoted to the missions of St. Paul. That second part includes in itself two distinct kinds of narrative; those on the one hand, of which the narrator gives himself out as eye-witness; on the other, those in which he relates only what he has been told. It is clear that even in the last case his authority is great. Often the conversations of Paul have furnished his information. Towards the end, moreover, the narrative assumes an astonishing character of precision. The last pages of the Acts are the only completely historical pages which we possess of the origins of Christianity. The first, on the contrary, are those which are most open to attack of all the New Testament. It is especially in the first years that the author obeyed impulses like those which preoccupied him in the composition of his gospel, and even more deceptive. His system of forty days; his account of the ascensions, closing by a species of final carrying off, theatrical solemnity; the strange life of Jesus; his manner of relating the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the miraculous preachings; his mode of understanding the gift of tongues, so different from that of St. Paul, unveil the preoccupation of a period relatively low when the legend is very ripe, rounded as it were in all parts. Everything is done with him with a strange setting and a great display of the marvellous. It must be remembered that the author wrote half a century after the events, far from the country where they happened, concerning incidents which neither he nor his master had seen, according to traditions in part fabulous or transmogrified. Not merely is Luke of another generation than the first founders of Christianity, but he is of another world; he is Hellenist with but very little of the Jew, almost a stranger to Jerusalem and the secrets of the Jewish life; he has not touched the primitive Christian society; he has scarcely known its last representatives. We see in the miracles, which he relates, rather inventions a priori than transformed facts; the miracles of Peter and Paul form two series, which answer each other. His persons resemble each other. Peter differs in nothing from Paul, nor Paul from Peter. The discourses, which he puts into the mouths of his heroes, though admirably appropriate to the circumstances, are all in the same style, and belong to the author rather than to those to whom he attributes them. We even find impossibilities. The Acts, in a word, are a dogmatic history, arranged to support the orthodox doctrine of the time, or to inculcate the ideas which seemed most agreeable to the piety of the author. Let us add that it could be no otherwise. The origin of every religion is known only by the narratives of the faithful. It is only scepticism which writes history ad narrandum.

These are not simple suspicions, conjectures of a criticism defiant to excess. They are solid inductions; every time that we are permitted to examine the narrative of the Acts, we find it incorrect and

unsystematic. The examination of the Gospels, which can be done only by comparison with the Synoptics, we can make with the help of the Epistles of Paul, especially of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians. It is clear that where the Acts and the Epistles clash, the preference ought always to be given to the Epistles--texts of an absolute authenticity, more ancient, of a complete sincerity, and free from legends. In history documents have the more authority the less they possess of historical form. The authority of all the chronicles must yield to that of an inscription, of a medal, of a map, of an authentic letter. From this point of view, the letters of certain authors, or of certain dates, are the basis of all the history of the origins of Christianity. Without them, it might be said that doubt would attach to them, and would ruin, from top to bottom, even the life of Jesus itself. Now, in two very important particulars, the Epistles put in a striking light the private tendencies of the author of the Acts, and his desire to efface all trace of the divisions which existed between Paul and the Apostles of Jerusalem.

And first, the author of the Acts says that Paul, after the incident at Damascus (ix, 19 et seq., xxii, 17 et seq.), having come to Jerusalem at a period when his conversion was hardly known; that he was presented to the Apostles; that he lived with the Apostles and the faithful on a footing of the greatest cordiality; that he disputed publicly with the Hellenist Jews; that a plot of theirs, and a celestial revelation, brought about his departure from Jerusalem. Now Paul tells us that things came about very differently. To prove that he owed nothing to the Twelve, and that he received his doctrine and his mission from Jesus, he asserts (Gal. i., 11 et seq.), that after his conversion he avoided taking counsel with anyone whatever, or going to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him; that he went of his own accord, and without commission from anyone, to preach in Hauran; that three years later, it is true, he accomplished the journey to Jerusalem to make acquaintance with Peter; that he stayed there fifteen days with him; but that he saw no other apostle unless it were James, the Lord's brother, so that his face was unknown to the churches of Judea. The effort to soften down the asperities of the rude apostle by presenting him as a follow worker with the Twelve, labouring at Jerusalem in concert with them, evidently appears here. Jerusalem is made his capital and point of departure; it is desired that his doctrine shall be so identified with that of the apostles, that he might in some sort replace them in the preaching; his first apostolate is reduced to the synagogues of Damascus; he is described as having been disciple and auditor, which he certainly never was; the time between his conversion and his first journey to Jerusalem is materially abridged; his stay in that city is prolonged; he is described as preaching there to the general satisfaction; as having lived intimately with all the apostles, although he himself says that he saw only two; the brethren of Jerusalem are described as watching over him, whilst Paul declares that his face was unknown to them.

The desire to make of Paul an assiduous visitor to Jerusalem, which has led our author to advance and to prolong his first stay in that city after his conversion, appears to have induced him to ascribe to the apostle one journey too many. According to him Paul came to Jerusalem with Barnabas, bearing the offering of the faithful during the famine of the year 44 (Acts xi. 30, xii. 25). Now Paul declares expressly that between the journey which took place three years after his conversion

and the journey about the business of the circumcision, he did not go to Jerusalem (Gal. i. and ii.) In other words, Paul formally excludes the idea of any journey between Acts ix. 26 and Acts xv. 2. If we were to deny, against all reason, the identity of the journey related Acts xv. 2, et seq. we should not obtain the smallest contradiction. "After three years," says St. Paul, "I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter . . . Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas." It has been doubted whether these fourteen years date from the conversion, or the journey which followed three years after that event. Let us take the first hypothesis, which is the most favourable to those who would defend the account in the Acts. There would then be eleven years, at least, according to St. Paul, between his first and his second journey to Jerusalem; now, surely there were not eleven years between what is told Acts ix. 26 et seq. and what is told Acts xi, 30! And if against all probability that hypothesis is maintained, we find ourselves in the presence of another impossibility. In fact, what is told in Acts xi. 30 is contemporaneous with the death of James the son of Zebedee, which furnishes the only date fixed by the Acts of the Apostles, since it preceded by very little the death of Herod Agrippa I. which happened in the year 44. The second journey of Paul having taken place at least fourteen years after his conversion, if Paul had really made that journey in the year 44, the conversion would have taken place in the year 30, which is absurd. It is, therefore, impossible to maintain for the journey related Acts xi. 30 and xii. 35 any reality.

These comings and goings appear to have been related by our author in a very inexact fashion. In comparing Acts xvii. 14-16; xviii. 5, with I. Thess. iii. 1-2, we find another disagreement. But seeing that does not concern matters of dogma, we need not speak of it here.

That which is most important about our present subject which furnishes thin critical ray of light for the difficult question of the historical value of the Acts is a comparison of the passages relative to the business of the circumcision in the Acts (chap. xv.) and in the Epistle to Galatians (chap. ii). According to the Acts the brethren in Judea being come to Antioch and having maintained the necessity of circumcision for the converted Pagans, a deputation, composed of Paul, Barnabas and many others was sent from Antioch to Jerusalem to consult the apostles and the elders in this question. They were received with much warmth by the whole community; a great assembly took place. Dissension scarcely showed itself, checked as it was under the effusions of a common charity and the happiness of finding themselves together. Peter announces the opinion which he had expected to find in the mouth of Paul, that converted Pagans do not become subject to the law of Moses. James appends to that only a very slight restriction. Paul does not speak, and, to say the truth, is under no necessity of speaking, since his doctrine is put into the mouth of Peter. The opinion of the brethren of Judea is supported by none. A solemn decree is formulated by the advice of James. This decree is signified to the churches by deputies specially appointed.

Let us now compare the account of Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians. Paul's version is that the journey to Jerusalem which he undertook on that occasion was the effect of a spontaneous movement, and even the result of a revolution. Arrived at Jerusalem, he communicates his gospel to those whom it concerned; he has, in particular, interviews

with those who appear to be considerable personages. They do not offer him a single criticism; they communicate nothing to him; they only ask that he should remember the poor of Jerusalem. If Titus, who accompanied him, consented to allow himself to be circumcised it is "because of false brethren unawares brought in." Paul makes this passing concession to them, but he does not submit himself to them. As to men of importance (Paul speaks of them only with a shade of bitterness and irony), they have taught him nothing new. More, Peter, having come later to Antioch, Paul "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." First, in effect, Peter ate with all indiscriminately. The emissaries of James having arrived, Peter hides himself and avoids the uncircumcised. "Seeing that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel," Paul apostrophises Peter before them all, and reproaches him bitterly with his conduct.

The difference is palpable. On the one hand a solemn agreement, on the other anger ill-restrained, extreme susceptibilities. On the one side a sort of council; on the other nothing resembling it. On one side a formal decree issued by a recognized authority; on the other different opinions, which remain in existence without any reciprocal yielding, save for form's sake. It is useless to say which version merits the preference. The account in the Acts is scarcely probable, since according to this account the council was occasioned by a dispute of which no trace is to be found when the council has met. The two orators expressed themselves in a sense altogether different from that which we know to have been otherwise their usual part. The decree which the council is said to have decided upon is assuredly a fiction. If this decree of which James would have settled the terms had been really promulgated, why those terrors of the good and timid Peter? Why did he hide himself? He and the Christian community of Antioch were acting in the fullest conformity with the decree the terms of which had been settled by James himself. The business of the circumcision occurred about the year 51. Some years afterwards, about the year 56, the quarrel which the decree ought to have ended is more lively than ever. The Church of Galatia is troubled by new envoys from the Church of Jerusalem. Paul answered this new attack of his enemies by his thundering epistle. If the decree mentioned in Acts xv. had had any real existence, Paul had a very simple means of silencing debate--he had only to quote it. Now all that he says supposes the non-existence of this decree. In 57, Paul, writing to the Corinthians, ignores the same decree, and even violates its prescriptions. The decree orders abstinence from meats offered to idols. Paul, however, is of opinion that those meats may be eaten if no one is scandalized thereby, but they ought to be abstained from in cases where scandal would arise. In 58, then, about the time of the last journey of Paul to Jerusalem, James is more obstinate than ever. One of the characteristic features of the Acts--a feature which proves plainly that the author proposes to himself less to prevent historical truth and even to satisfy logic, than to edify pious readers--is the circumstance that the question of the admission of the uncircumcised is always settled, yet is always open. It is settled at first by the baptism of the eunuch of Queen Candace, then by the baptism of the centurion Cornelius, both miraculously ordained; then by the foundation of the church of Antioch (xi. 19, et. seq.) then by the pretended Council of Jerusalem, which does not prevent that; on the last pages of the book (xxi. 20-21.) the question is still in suspense. To tell the truth it has always remained in that state. The two fractions of the nascent Christianity never

agreed upon it. One of them, however, that which clung to the practices of Judaism remained infertile, and faded into obscurity. Paul was so far from being accepted by all that after his death a part of Christendom anathematized him, and pursued him with calumnies.

In our third book we shall have to deal in detail with the question which lies at the root of all those curious incidents. Here we have desired to give only some examples of the manner in which the author of the Acts understands history, of his system of conciliation, of his preconceived ideas. Must we conclude from them that the first chapters of the Acts are devoid of authority, as some celebrated critics think, that fiction so far enters as to create both pieces and persons, such as the eunuch of Candace, the centurion Cornelius, and even the deacon Stephen and the pious Tabitha? I think by no means. It is probable that the author of the Acts has not invented the persons, but is a skilful advocate, who writes to prove his case, and who makes the most of the facts which have come to his knowledge to support his favourite theories, which are the legitimacy of the calling of the Gentiles, and the divine institution of the hierarchy. Such a document must be used with great caution, but to reject it absolutely is as uncritical as to follow it blindly. Some paragraphs, besides, even in the first part, have a universally recognised value, and represent authentic memoirs extracted by the last editor. Chapter xii., in particular, is excellent matter, and may have been the work of John-Mark.

It may be seen in what distress we should be if the only documentary authorities we have for this history were a legendary book like this. Happily, we have others which refer directly to the period which will be the subject of our third book, and which shed a great light upon this. These are the Epistles of St. Paul. The Epistles to the Galatians especially is a veritable treasury, the basis of the chronology of this age, the key which opens everything, the testimony which ought to re-assure the most sceptical as to the reality of matters concerning which they might doubt. I beg, serious readers who may be tempted to regard me as too bold or too credulous, to read again the two first chapters of that remarkable document. They are certainly the two most important chapters for the study of nascent Christianity. The Epistles of St. Paul have, in fact, an unequalled advantage in that history: their absolute authenticity. No doubt has ever been raised by serious criticism as to the authenticity of the Epistle to the Galatians. of the two Epistles to the Corinthians, of the Epistle to the Romans. The reasons for which the two Epistles to the Thessalonians and that to the Philippians, have been attacked are valueless. At the beginning of our third volume we shall have to discuss the more specious, although indecisive, objections which have been raised against the Epistle to the Colossians, and the note to Philemon; the special problem presented by the Epistle to the Ephesians; the strong reasons, finally, which point to the rejection of the two Epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus. The epistles of which we shall have to make use in this volume are those whose authenticity is indisputable; for, at least, the inductions which we shall draw from the others are independent of the question of whether they have or have not been dictated by St. Paul.

It is not necessary to refer in this place to the rules of criticism which have been followed in the composition of this work; that has already been done in the introduction to the Life of Jesus. The first twelve chapters of the Acts are in effect a document analogous to the

synoptical Gospels, and require to be treated in the same fashion. Documents of this kind, half historical, half legendary, can never be regarded as wholly legend or wholly history. Almost everything in them is false in detail, nevertheless it may enclose some precious truths. To translate these narratives pure and simple is not to write history. These narratives are, in fact, often contradicted by other and more authentic texts. In consequence, even when there is only one text, one is always constrained to fear that if there had been others there would have been the same contradictions. For the Life of Jesus the narrative of Luke is continually controlled and corrected by the two other synoptical Gospels and by the fourth. Is it not probable, I repeat, that if we had for the Acts the analogue of the Synoptics and of the fourth Gospel, the Acts would be corrected on a host of points where we have now only their testimony? In our third book, where we shall be in clear and definite history, and where we shall have in our hands original and often biographical information, we shall be guided by other rules. When St. Paul himself tells us the story of some episode of his life which he had no interest in presenting in any particular light, it is clear that all that we need do is to insert his very words, word for word, in our narrative, according to the method of Tillemont. But when we are concerned with a narrator preoccupied with a system, writing as the advocate of certain ideas, editing after this infantine fashion, with vague and soft outlines, colours absolute, and strongly marked such as legend always offers, the duty of the critic is not to stick close to the text; his duty is to discover what truth the text may embody, without ever being too certain of having found it. To debar criticism from such interpretations would be as unreasonable as to command an astronomer to concern himself only with the apparent state of the heavens. Does not astronomy, on the contrary, consist in rectifying the parallax caused by the position of the observer, and to construct a real and veracious chart instead of a deceptive apparent one?

How besides can it be pretended that documents should be followed to the letter when they are full of impossibilities? The first twelve chapters of the Acts are a tissue of miracles. Now it is an absolute rule of criticism to give no place in historical documents to miraculous circumstances. This is not the result of a metaphysical system, but simply a matter of observation. Facts of that kind can never be verified. All the pretended miracles that we can study closely resolve themselves either into illusions or impostures. If a single miracle were proved, we could hardly reject all those of ancient history in a mass, for after all, admitting that a great number of these last were false, it is still possible to believe that certain of them were true. But it is not thus. All discussable miracles fade away. May we not reasonably conclude from that fact that the miracles which are removed from us by centuries, and concerning which there is no way of establishing an exhaustive discussion, are also without reality? In other words, there is no miracle except when one believes it; the substance of the supernatural is faith. Catholicism itself, which pretends that the miraculous power is not yet extinct within its bosom, undergoes the power of this law. The miracles which it pretends to work happen only in places of its choice. When there is so simple a method of proving its authenticity, why not do so in open daylight? A miracle in Paris, under the eyes of competent and learned men, would put an end to all doubts. But alas! that is what never happens. Never has a miracle been wrought before the public whom it is desirable to convert,

I would say before the incredulous. The condition of the miracle is the credulity of the witness. No miracle is performed before those who might discuss and criticise it. To that rule there is not a single exception. Cicero said, with his usual good sense and acuteness, "Since when has that secret force disappeared? Is it not since men have become less credulous?"

"But," it is said, "if it is impossible to prove that there has ever been a supernatural fact, it is equally impossible to prove that there has not been one. The positive savant who denies the supernatural proceeds then as gratuitously as the believer who admits it." In no way. It is for him who affirms a proposition to prove it. He, before whom it is affirmed, has but one thing to do, to wait for the proof, and to yield if it is good. Supposing we had called upon Buffon to give a place in his Natural History to sirens and centaurs, Buffon would have answered, "Show me a specimen of these beings, and I will admit them; until you do, they do not exist for me"--"But prove that they do not exist?"--"It is for you to prove that they exist." The burden of proof in science rests upon those, who make the assertion. Why do we not believe in angels or devils, although innumerable historic texts assume their existence? Because the existence of an angel or a devil has never yet been proved.

To maintain the reality of the miracle appeal is made to the phenomena, which, it is said, could have been produced only by going beyond the laws of nature, the creation of man for example. "The creation of man," it is said, "could have come about only by the direct intervention of the Deity; why should not that intervention be repeated at other decisive moments of the development of the universe?" I shall not insist upon the strange philosophy, and the paltry idea of the Divinity which such a method of reasoning involves, for history has its method, independent of all philosophy. Without entering, in the smallest degree, upon the province of theodicy, it is easy to show how defective such an argument is. It is equivalent to saying that everything which does not happen in the existing state of the world, everything which we cannot explain by the existing condition of science, is miraculous. But then the sun is a miracle, for science is far from having explained the sun; the conception of every man is a miracle, for philosophy is still silent on that point; conscience is a miracle, for it is an absolute mystery; every animal is a miracle, for the origin of life is a problem concerning which we have almost no information. If we say that all life, that every soul is in effect of a superior order in nature, we are simply playing upon words. We are anxious that this should be understood; but then there must be an explanation of the word miracle. Can that be a miracle which happens every day and every hour? Miracle is not the unexplained; it is a formal derogation in the name of a particular will of known laws. What we deny is the exceptional; those are the private interventions, like that of a clockmaker, who has made a clock, very well, it is true, but to which he is from time to time obliged to put his hand to supply the deficiencies of the wheel-work. That God permeates everything, especially everything that lives, is distinctly our theory; we only say that no special intervention of a supernatural force has ever been proved. We deny the reality of private supernaturalism until a demonstrated fact of this kind has been presented to us. To seek this fact before the creation of man; to fly beyond history to periods, where all verification is impossible, in order to escape from verifying historical miracles, is to take refuge

behind a cloud, to prove one obscure thing by another still more obscure, to dispute a known law, because of a fact of which we are not certain. Miracles are appealed to which took place before any witness existed, simply because it is impossible to quote one of which there is any credible witness.

Without doubt, in distant ages, things happened in the universe, phenomena which offer themselves no more, at least upon the same scale in the actual state of things. But these phenomena may be explained by the date at which they have occurred. In the geological formation a great number of minerals and precious stones are found, which it would appear are no longer produced in nature. Nevertheless Messrs.

Mitscherlich, Ebelman, de Senarmont, Daubree have artificially recomposed the majority of these minerals and precious stones. If it is doubtful whether they will ever succeed in artificially producing life, it is because the artificial reproduction of the circumstances under which life commences (if it ever does commence) will be always out of the reach of humanity. How can we bring back a state of the planet which has disappeared for thousands of years? How are we to try an experiment which will occupy centuries? The diversity of the means and the centuries of slow evolution--these are the things that are forgotten when we speak of the phenomena of old times, which do not happen to-day as miracles. In some celestial body at the present moment things are perhaps being done which have ceased upon this earth for an infinite period of time. Surely the formation of humanity is the most shocking and absurd thing in the world, if it is supposed to be sudden, instantaneous. It reverts to general analogies (without ceasing to be mysterious) if we see in it the result of a slow progress continued during incalculable periods. We must not apply the laws of maturity to embryonic life. The embryo develops all its organs one after another; the adult man, on the contrary, creates no more organs. He creates no more because he is no longer of an age to create; he does not even invent language because he is not called upon to invent it. But what is the use of meeting adversaries who continually evade the question? We ask for an authenticated historical miracle; we are told that there were such things before history existed. Assuredly, if a proof were required of the necessity for supernatural beliefs in certain states of the soul, it might be found in the fact that minds penetrating enough in every other respect have been able to rest the edifice of their faith on such a desperate argument.

Others, abandoning miracles of the physical order, entrench themselves behind moral miracles, without which they maintain that these events cannot be explained. Certainly the formation of Christianity is the greatest event in the religious history of the world. But it is not a miracle for all that. Buddhism, Babism have had martyrs as numerous, as exalted, as resigned as Christianity. The miracles of the foundation of Islam are of a wholly different character, and I confess that they affect me little. It must, however, be remarked that the Mussulman doctors base upon the establishment of Islam, upon its diffusion as by a train of fire, upon its rapid conquests, upon the force which gives it everywhere an absolute reign, the same reasonings which the Christian apologists base upon the establishment of Christianity, and assert that they clearly behold there the finger of God. Let us allow, if it is desired, that the foundation of Christianity is a unique fact. Hellenism is another absolutely unique fact, understanding by that word the ideal perfection in literature, in art, in philosophy, which Greece

has achieved. Greek art surpasses all other art, as Christianity surpasses all other religions, and the Acropolis at Athens--a collection of masterpieces by the side of which everything else is no better than clumsy fumbling, or more or less successful imitation--is perhaps that which in its way most successfully defies comparison. Hellenism, in other words, is as much a miracle of beauty as Christianity is a miracle of sanctity. A unique thing is not a miraculous thing. God is in varying degrees in all that is beautiful, good, and true. But he is never in one of his manifestations in so exclusive a fashion that the presence of his breath in a religious or a philosophical movement ought to be deemed a privilege or exception.

I hope that the interval of two years and a half passed since the publication of the Life of Jesus will lead some of my readers to consider these problems with greater calmness. Religious controversy is always one of bad faith, without any intention or desire that it should be so. There is no independent discussion; no anxious seeking for the truth; it is the defence of a position already taken up to prove that the dissident is ignorant or dishonest. Calumnies, misinterpretations, falsifications of ideas and of texts, triumphant reasonings over things that an opponent has never said, cries of victory over mistakes which he has not made, nothing appears disloyal to the man who would hold in his hand the interests of absolute truth. I should have ignored history if I had not expected all that. I am cool enough to be almost insensible to it, and I have a sufficiently lively taste for matters of faith to be able to understand in a kindly spirit what there is that is often touching in the sentiment which inspired those who contradicted me. Often, in seeing so much simplicity, such a pious assurance, a wrath coming so frankly from good and pure souls, I have said, with John Huss, at the sight of an old woman who sweated under a faggot for his burning: Oh, sancta simplicitas! I have regretted certain emotions, which could only be profitless. According to the beautiful expression of the Scriptures, "God is not in the tempest." Ah! without doubt, if this trouble led to the discovery of the truth, we should be consoled for many agitations. But it is not thus: truth does not exist for the passionate man. It is reserved for the minds of those who seek for it without prejudice, without persistent love, without lasting hatred, with an absolute liberty, and without any after intention of acting in the business of humanity. These problems are only some of the innumerable questions of which the world is full, and which the curious examine. No one is offended by the enunciation of a theoretical opinion. Those who hold to their faith as to a treasure have a very simple method of defending it--that of taking no note of works written in a sense different from their own. The timid do better not to read them.

There are practical persons who, with regard to a work of science, ask what political party the author proposes to satisfy, and who are anxious that every poem should convey a moral lesson. Such persons do not admit that it is possible to write for something else besides a propaganda. The idea of art and of science aspiring only to find the true, and to realize the beautiful, outside of all politics, is to them incomprehensible. Between us and such persons misunderstandings are inevitable. "These people," as the Greek philosopher said, "take back with their left hand what they give with their right." A host of letters, dictated by a worthy sentiment, which I have received, may be summed up thus:--"What do you want? What end do you propose?" Good God!

the same that every one proposes in writing history. If I had many lives at my disposal I would devote one to writing the history of Alexander, another to writing the history of Athens, a third, it may be, to writing a history of the French Revolution, or a history of the Order of St. Francis. What end should I propose to myself in writing those works? One only, to find the truth and to make it live, to work so that the great things of the past may be known with the greatest possible exactitude, and expounded in a manner worthy of them. The notion of overthrowing the faith of anyone is far removed from me. These works ought to be executed with a supreme indifference, as if one were writing for a deserted planet. Every concession to scruples of an inferior order is a failure in the worship of art and of truth. Who does not admit that the absence of the proselytising spirit is at once the quality and the defect of a work composed in this spirit?

The first principle of the critical school in effect is that in matters of faith everyone admits what he wants to admit, and, as it were, makes the bed of his belief in proportion to his own stature. Why should we be so senseless as to mix ourselves up with what depends upon circumstances concerning which no one knows anything? If anyone accepts our principles, it is because he possesses the turn of mind and the necessary education for them; all our efforts would give neither, did one not already possess those qualities. Philosophy differs from faith, inasmuch as faith operates by itself, independently of the understanding that we have of the dogmas. We believe, on the contrary, that a truth has no value, save when it is reached by itself, when one sees the whole order of ideas to which it belongs. We do not force ourselves to silence such of our opinions as are not in harmony with the belief of a portion of our fellow-man; we make no sacrifice to the exigencies of divergent orthodoxies; but on the other hand we do not dream of attacking or provoking them; we act as though they did not exist. For myself, the day when I may be convicted of an effort to convert to my views a single adherent who did not come of himself would cause me the most acute pain. I should conclude from it, either that my mind had lost its freedom and calmness, or that something was oppressing me so that I could not content myself any longer with the free and joyous contemplation of the universe.

If, moreover, my aim had been to make war upon established religions, I should have worked in another way, undertaking only to point out the impossibilities and the contradictions of the texts and dogmas held as sacred. That minute task has been done a thousand times, and done well. In 1856, I wrote as follows:--"I protest once for all against the false interpretation which would be put upon my labours, if the various essays upon the history of religions which I have or may publish in the future, be treated as polemical works. Looked at as such, I should be the first to admit that these essays were very weak. Controversy requires tactics to which I am a stranger; it is necessary to know the weak side of one's adversary, to hold to it, never to touch doubtful questions, to avoid all concession, that is to say, to renounce the very essence of the scientific spirit. Such is not my method. The fundamental question upon which religious discussion must turn, that is to say, the question of revelation and of the supernatural, I never touch, not that that question may not be resolved for me with entire certainty, but because the discussion of such a question is not scientific, or rather because independent science supposes it to be resolved beforehand. Assuredly if I had any polemical or proselytising

object in view, this would be a cardinal fault, it would be to transport into the region of delicate and obscure problems a question which is usually treated in the coarsest terms by controversialists and apologists. So far from regretting the advantages which I should thus give my opponent, I rejoice in them, if thereby I might convince the theologians that my writings are of another order than theirs, that in them they must look only for pure researches of study, open to attack as such, wherein an attempt is sometimes made to apply to the Jewish religion and to the Christian the principles of criticism which are followed in other branches of history and philology. I intend at no time to enter into the discussion of questions of pure theology any more than M.M. Burnouf, Creuzer, Guigniaut, and so many other critical historians of the religions of antiquity have thought themselves obliged to undertake the reputation of, or the apology for, the forms of worship with which they were occupied, The history of humanity is for me a vast whole, where everything is essentially unequal and diverse, but where everything of the same order arises from the same causes and obeys the same laws. These laws I inquire into with no other intention than that of discovering the exact tint of what really is. Nothing will make the change an obscure position, but one which is fruitful for science for the part of controversialist, an easy fact, inasmuch as it wins for the writer an assured favour amongst people who think it their duty to oppose war to war. In that polemic, the necessity for which I am far from disputing, but which is neither to my taste nor to my abilities, Voltaire is enough. One cannot be at the same time a good controversialist and a good historian. Voltaire, weak in scholarship; Voltaire, who appears so devoid of the sentiment of antiquity to us who are initiated into a better method; Voltaire is twenty times victorious over those who are even more innocent of criticism than he is himself. A new edition of the works of this great man would satisfy the want which appears to be felt at the present moment of answering the encroachments of theology; an answer bad in itself, but worthy of what it has to fight against; an old-fashioned answer to a science that is out of date. Let us do better, we who possess love of truth and a vast curiosity; let us leave these disputes to those whom they please; let us labour for the small number of those who march in the front rank of the human mind. Popularity, I know, belongs by preference to writers who, instead of pursuing the most elevated form of truth, apply themselves to struggling against the opinion of their times; but by a just revenge they have no value so soon as the opinion they have contested has ceased to exist. Those who refuted the magic and judicial astrology in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, rendered an immense service to reason, yet their writings are unknown at the present day; their very victory has caused them to be forgotten.

I intend to hold invariably to this rule of conduct--the only one worthy of a scholar. I know that the researches of religious history touch upon living questions which appear to demand a solution. Persons familiar with free speculation do not understand the calm deliberation of thought; practical minds grow impatient with science, which does not answer to their eagerness. Let us avoid these vain excitements. Let us avoid finding anything. Let us rest in our respective Churches, profiting by their daily worship and their tradition of virtue, participating in their good work, and rejoicing in the poetry of their past. Nor should their intolerance repel us, We may even forgive that intolerance, for it is like egotism, one of the necessities of human

nature. To suppose that it will henceforward form new religious families, or that the proportion amongst those which now exist will ever greatly change is to go against all appearances. There will soon be great schism in the Catholic Church; the days of Avignon, of the anti-popes, of the Clementists and the Urbanists will probably return. The Catholic Church may have its fourteenth Century again, but, notwithstanding her divisions, she will still remain the Catholic Church. It is probable that within a hundred years the relations between the number of Protestants, of Catholics, and of Jews will not have sensibly changed. But a great alteration will be made, or, rather, will have become apparent to the eyes of all. Each of these religious families will have two sorts of faithful ones; some believing absolutely as in the Middle Ages; others sacrificing the letter and holding only to the spirit. This second fraction will grow in every communion, and as the spirit agrees as much as the letter divides, the spiritualists of each communion will have reached such a point of agreement that they will altogether neglect to amalgamate. Fanaticism will be lost in a general tolerance. Dogma will become a mysterious ark which no one will ever want to open. If the ark is empty, then what matters it. One single religion will, I fear, resist this dogmatic softening; that is Islamism. There are amongst certain Mussulmans of the old school and amongst certain eminent men in Constantinople, there are in Persia, especially, forms of a large and conciliatory spirit. If these good forms are suffocated by the fanaticism of the ulemas, Islamism will perish, for two things are evident: the first, that modern civilization does not desire that the ancient religions should die out altogether; the second is, that it will not allow itself to be hampered in its work by old religious institutions. These last have the choice between submission and death.

As for pure religion, the pretension of which is not to be a sect or a Church apart, why should it submit to the inconveniences of a position of which it has none of the advantages? Why should it raise flag against flag when it knows that salvation is possible everywhere and to everybody; that it depends on the degree of nobility which each carries in himself? We can understand how Protestantism in the sixteenth century brought about an open rupture. Protestantism began with a very absolute faith. Far from corresponding to a weakening of dogmatism, the Reformation marked a renaissance of the most rigid Christian spirit. The movement of the nineteenth century, on the contrary, springs from a sentiment which is the very reverse of dogmatism; it arises not in sects or separate Churches, but in a general softening of all the Churches. The marked divisions increase the fanaticism of orthodoxy and provoke reactions. The Luthers and Calvins made the Caraffa, the Ghislieri, the Loyolas, the Philip II.'s. If our Church rejects them let us not recriminate; let us learn to appreciate the sweetness of modern manners, which has rendered those hatreds powerless; let us console ourselves by dreaming of that invisible Church which takes in the excommunicated saints, the best souls of every century. The banished of a Church are always its best men; they are in advance of their times; the heretic of to-day is the orthodox of to-morrow. What besides is the excommunication of men? Our Heavenly Father excommunicates only dry souls and narrow hearts. If the priest refuses to admit us to the cemetery, let us forbid our families to cry out. God is the Judge; the earth is a good mother who makes no differences; the corpse of a good man entering the unconsecrated corner carries consecration with it.

Undoubtedly there are circumstances in which the application of these principles is difficult. The spirit breathes where it will; the spirit is liberty. Now it is to persons who are as it were chained to absolute faith I would speak; of men in holy orders or clothed with some ministerial authority. Even then a fine soul knows how to find the ways of issue. A worthy country priest, by his solitary studies and by the purity of his his, comes to see the impossibility of literal dogmatism; must he sadden those whom he has hitherto consoled by explaining to them simple changes which they cannot understand? God forbid! There are not two men in the world who have exactly the same duties. The good Bishop Colenso accomplished an act of honesty such as the Church has not seen since its origin, in writing his doubts as soon as they came to him. But the humble Catholic priest, in a country of narrow and timid minds, ought to hold his tongue. How many discreet tombs around our village churches hide in this way poetic reserves--angelic silences! Will those whose duty it has been to speak equal the merit of those secrets known to God alone?

Theory is not practice. The ideal must remain the ideal; it must fear lest it soil itself by contact with reality. Thoughts which are good for those who are preserved by their nobility from all moral danger may not be, if they are, applied without their inconveniences for those who are surrounded with baseness. Great things are achieved only with ideas strictly defined; the man absolutely without prejudice would be powerless. Let us enjoy the liberty of the sons of God; but let us take care lest we become accomplices in the diminution of virtue which would menace society if Christianity were to grow weak. What should we be without it? What could replace the great schools of seriousness and respect, such as St. Sulpice, or the devoted ministry of the Sisters of Charity? How can we avoid being affrighted by the pettiness and the cold heartedness which have invaded the world? Our disagreement with persons who believe in positive religions is, after all, purely scientific; at heart we are with them! We have only one enemy who is theirs also--vulgar materialism, the baseness of the interested man.

Peace then, in God's name! Let the various orders of humanity live side by side, not falsifying their own intelligence in order to make reciprocal concessions which will lessen them, but in naturally supporting each other. Nothing ought to reign here below to the exclusion of its opposite. No one force ought to be able to suppress the others. The harmony of humanity results from the free emission of the most discordant notes. If orthodoxy should succeed in killing science we know what would happen. The Mussulman world of Spain died from having too conscientiously performed that task. If Rationalism wishes to govern the world without regard to the religious needs of the soul, the experience of the French Revolution is there to teach us the consequences of such a blunder. The instincts of art, carried to the highest point of refinement, but without honesty, made of the Italy of the Renaissance a den of thieves, an evil abode. Weariness, stupidity, mediocrity are the punishment of certain Protestant countries where, under the pretence of good sense and Christian spirit, art has been suppressed and science reduced to something paltry. Lucretius and St. Theresa, Aristophanes and Socrates, Voltaire and Francis of Assisi, Raphael and Vincent, St. Paul have an equal right to exist, and humanity would be the less if one of the elements which compose it were wanting.

THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

FORMATION OF BELIEFS RELATIVE TO THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS--THE APPARITIONS AT JERUSALEM.

Jesus, although speaking constantly of resurrection, of new life, never stated distinctly that he would rise again in the flesh. The disciples, in the hours immediately following his death, had not, in this respect, any settled expectations. The sentiments, in which they have so unaffectedly taken us into their confidence, implied even that they believed all was finished. They wept, and interred their friend, if not as they would at the death of a common person, at least as a person whose loss was irreparable. They were sad and cast down. The hope that they had cherished of seeing him realise the salvation of Israel is now proved to have been vanity. They were spoken of as men who had been robbed of a grand and dear illusion.

But enthusiasm and love do not recognise conditions barren of results. They dallied with the impossible, and, rather than abdicate hope, they did violence to all reality. Several phrases of the Master, which were recalled, especially those in which he predicted his future advent, might be interpreted in the sense that he would leave the tomb. Such a belief was, besides, so natural that the faith of the disciples would have sufficed to create it in every part. The great prophets, Enoch and Elijah, had not tasted death. They began even to believe that the patriarchs and the men of the first order in the old law, were not really dead, and that their bodies were in their sepulchres at Hebron, alive and animated. It was to happen to Jesus, what had happened to all men who have captivated the attention of their fellow-men. The world, accustomed to attribute to them superhuman virtues, cannot admit that they would have to undergo the unjust, revolting and iniquitous law, to wit, a common death. At the moment when Mahomet expired, Omar issued from the tent, sabre in hand, and declared that he would strike off the head of anyone who dared to say that the prophet was no more. Death is a thing so absurd--when it strikes down a man of genius, or the large-hearted man--that people will not believe in the possibility of such an error in nature. Heroes do not die. Is not true existence that which is implanted in the hearts of those whom we love? This adored Master had filled for some years the little world which pressed around him with joy and with hope; would people consent to leave him to rot in the tomb? No; he had lived too much in those who surrounded him for people not to declare after his death that he still lived.

The day which followed the burial of Jesus (Saturday, 15th April) was crowded with these thoughts. People were interdicted from all manner of manual labour, because of the Sabbath. But never was repose more fruitful. The Christian conscience had on that day but one object--the Master laid low in the tomb. The women, in particular, embalmed him in ointment with their most tender caresses. Not for a moment did their thoughts abandon that sweet friend, reposing in his myrrh, whom the wicked had killed! Ah! the angels are doubtless surrounding him, veiling their faces in his shroud! He, indeed, did say that he should

die, that his death would be the salvation of the sinner, and that he should rise in the kingdom of his Father. Yes; he shall live again; God will not leave his Son to be a prey to hell; He will not suffer his chosen one to see corruption. What is this tombstone which weighs upon him? He will raise it up; he will reascend to the right hand of his Father, whence he descended. And we shall see him again; we shall hear his charming voice; we shall enjoy anew his conversations, and it is in vain that they have crucified him.

The belief in the immortality of the soul, which, through the influence of the Grecian philosophy, has become a dogma of Christianity, readily permits of one resigning oneself to death, inasmuch as the dissolution of the body in that hypothesis was only a deliverance of the soul, freed henceforth from vexatious bonds, without which it can exist. But that theory of man, considered as a being composed of two substances, did not appear very clear to the Jews. To them the reign of God and the reign of Spirit consisted in a complete transformation of the world and in the annihilation of death. To acknowledge that death could be victorious over Jesus, over him who came to extinguish its empire, was the height of absurdity. The very idea that he could suffer had previously disgusted his disciples. The latter, then, had no choice between despair or heroic affirmation. A man of penetration might have announced on that Saturday that Jesus would rise again; the little Christian Society on that day wrought the veritable miracle; it resurrected Jesus in its heart, because of the intense love that it bore for him. It decided that Jesus had not died. The love of these passionate souls was, in truth, stronger than death; and, as the property of passion is to be communicative, to light like a torch a sentiment which resembles itself, and, consequently, to be indefinitely propagated; Jesus, in a sense, at the moment of which we speak, is already risen from the dead. Let but one material fact, insignificant itself, permit the belief that his body is no longer here below, and the dogma of the resurrection will be established for eternity.

It was that which happened in the circumstances which, though part obscured, because of the incoherency of the traditions, and especially because of the contradictions which they presented, can, nevertheless, be grasped with a sufficient degree of probability.

Early on Sunday morning, the Galilean women who on Friday evening had hastily embalmed the body, visited the tomb in which he had been temporarily deposited. These were Mary Magdalene, Mary Cleophas, Salome, Joanna, wife of Kouza, and others. They came, probably, each on her own account, for it is difficult to call in question the tradition of the three synoptical gospels, according to which several women came to the tomb; on the other hand, it is certain that in the two most authentic narratives which we possess of the resurrection, Mary Magdalene alone played a part. In any case she had, at that solemn moment, taken a part altogether out of line. It is she whom we must follow step by step, for she bore on that day, for an hour, all the burden of a Christian conscience; her testimony decided the faith of the future.

Let us not forget that the vault in which the body of Jesus had been enclosed, was a vault which had been recently cut in the rock, and was situated in a garden near the place of execution. It had, for the latter reason been specially taken, seeing that it was late in the day

and that they were desirous of not desecrating the Sabbath. The first gospel alone adds one circumstance, to wit, that the vault belonged to Joseph of Arimath \heartsuit a. But, in general, the anecdotal circumstances annexed by the first gospel to the common fund of the tradition, are without any value, especially when the matter in hand is the last days of the life of Jesus. The same gospel mentions another detail which, in view of the silence of the others, has not any probability; we refer to the public seals and a guard being placed at the tomb. We must also remember that the mortuary vaults were low chambers, cut into an inclining rock, in which was contrived a vertical cutting. The door, ordinarily downwards, was closed by a very heavy stone, fitted into a groove. These chambers had not a lock and key, the weight of the stone was the sole safeguard that one had against thieves or profaners of tombs; it was likewise so arranged that, to remove it, either a machine or the combined efforts of several persons were required. All the traditions agree on that point, that the stone had been put at the mouth of the vault on the Friday evening.

But when Mary Magdalene arrived on the Sunday morning, the stone was not in its place. The vault was open. The body was no longer there. In her mind the idea of the resurrection was as yet little developed. That which filled her soul was a tender regret and the desire to render funeral honours to the body of her divine friend. Her first sentiments, moreover, were those of surprise and of sadness. The disappearance of the cherished body had stripped her of the last joy upon which she had calculated. She could not touch him again with her hands! And what had become of him? The idea of a desecration was present to her and she was shocked at it. Perhaps, at the same time, a glimmer of hope crossed her mind. Without losing a moment, she ran to a house in which Peter and John were together. "They have taken away the body of our Master," said she, "and I know not where they have laid him."

The two disciples got up hastily and ran with all their might to see. John, the younger, arrived first. He stooped down to look into the interior. Mary was right. The tomb was empty. The linen which had served to enshroud him was scattered about the sepulchre. They both entered, examined the linen, which was no doubt stained with blood, and remarked in particular the napkin, which had enveloped his head, rolled up in a corner apart. Peter and John returned home extremely perplexed. If they did not now pronounce the decisive words: "He is risen!" we may be sure that such a consequence was the irrevocable conclusion, and that the generating dogma of Christianity was already established.

Peter and John departed from the garden; Mary remained alone at the mouth of the sepulchre. She wept profusely. One single thought engaged her: Where have they put the body? Her woman's heart did not go beyond the desire of holding the well-beloved body again in her arms. Suddenly she heard a slight noise behind her. A man is standing near her. She thinks at first it is the gardener. "Sir," said she, "if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." In response, she heard herself called by her name, "Mary!" It was the voice which had so often before thrilled her. It was the voice of Jesus. "Oh, my master!" she exclaimed. She made as if to touch him. A sort of instinctive movement induced her to kneel down and kiss his feet. The vision gently receded, and said to her: "Touch me not!" Gradually the shadow disappeared. But the miracle of love was accomplished. What Cephas was not able to do, Mary had done. She knew

how to extract life, sweet and penetrating words, from the empty tomb. It was no longer a question of deducing consequences or of framing conjectures. Mary had seen and heard. The resurrection had its first immediate witness.

Frantic with love, inebriated with joy, Mary returned to the city and said to the first disciples whom she met: "I have seen him; he has spoken to me." Her greatly troubled imagination, her broken and incoherent discourse, made her to be taken by some as mad. Peter and John, in their turn, related what they had seen. Other disciples went to the tomb and saw likewise. The conviction reached by the whole of this first group was that Jesus had risen. Many doubts still existed. But the assurances of Mary, of Peter and of John, imposed upon the others. Subsequently, this was called "the vision of Peter." Paul, in particular, does not speak of the vision of Mary, and awards all the honour of the first apparition to Peter. But that statement was very inexact. Peter only saw the empty sepulchre, the napkin and the winding sheet. Mary alone loved enough to dispense with nature and to have revived the phantom of the perfect master. In these sorts of marvellous crises, to see after others have seen--goes for nothing; all the merit consists in being the first to see; for others afterwards model their visions on the received type. It is the characteristic of good organisations to perceive the image promptly, accurately, and as if by a sort of innate sense of design. The glory, then, of the resurrection belongs to Mary Magdalene. Next to Jesus, it is Mary who has done the most for the establishment of Christianity. The image created by the delicate sensibility of Mary Magdalene hovers over the world still. Queen and patroness of idealists, Magdalene knew better than any other person how to verify her dream, how to impose upon all the holy vision of her passionate soul. Her great woman's affirmation, "He is risen!" has been the basis of the faith of humanity. Begone hence, powerless reason! Seek not to apply cold analysis to this masterpiece of idealism and of love. If wisdom renounces the part of consoling that poor human race, betrayed by fate, let folly attempt the enterprise. Where is the sage who has given to the world so much joy as Mary Magdalene, the possessed of devils?

The other women who had been to the tomb spread meanwhile the news abroad. They had not seen Jesus; but they spoke of a man in white, whom they had seen in the sepulchre, and who had said to them: "He is not here; return into Galilee; he will go before you there; there shall ye see him." Perhaps it was these white linen clothes which had originated this hallucination. Perhaps, again, they saw nothing, and only commenced to speak of their vision when Mary Magdalene had related hers. Indeed, according to one of the most authentic texts, they kept silence for some time--a silence which was afterwards attributed to terror. However this may be, these recitals increased every hour, and underwent some singular transformations. The man in white became the angel of God; it was told that his garments shone like the snow; that his face seemed like lightning. Others spoke of two angels; one of whom appeared at the head, the other at the foot of the sepulchre. By evening, many, perhaps, already believed that the women had seen this angel descend from heaven, move away the stone, and Jesus issue forth with a great noise. Doubtless they varied in their depositions; suffering from the effect of the imagination of others, as is always the case with common people; they borrowed every embellishment, and thus participated in the creation of the legend which grew up around

them and suited their ideas.

The day was stormy and decisive. The little company was greatly dispersed. Some had already departed for Galilee; others hid themselves for fear. The deplorable scene of the Friday; the afflicting spectacle which they had had before their eyes, in seeing him of whom they had expected so much expire upon the gibbet, without his Father coming to deliver him, had, moreover, extinguished the faith of many. The news imparted by the women and Peter was received on every side with scarcely dissembled credulity. Of the diverse stories, some were believed; the women went hither and thither with singular and inconsistent stories, enriching them as they went. Statements, the most opposed, were put forth. Some still wept over the sad event of the day before; others were already triumphant; all were disposed to entertain the most extraordinary accounts. Nevertheless, the distrust which the excitement of Mary Magdalene inspired, the little authority which the women had, the incoherency of their narratives, produced grave doubts. People were living in the expectation of seeing new visions, and which could not fail but come. The state of the sect was altogether favourable to the propagation of strange rumours. If all the members of the little church had been assembled, the legendary creation would have been impossible; those who knew the secret of the disappearance of the body, would probably have reclaimed against the error. But in the confusion which prevailed, the door was opened for the most prolific misapprehensions.

It is the characteristic of those states of the soul, in which originate ecstasy and apparitions, to be contagious. The history of all the great religious crises, proves that these sort of visions are infectious. In an assembly of persons, entertaining the same beliefs, it is sufficient for one member of the body to affirm having seen or heard something supernatural for others to see and to hear also. Amongst the persecuted Protestants, a report was spread that people had heard the angels singing psalms upon a recently destroyed temple: They all went there and heard the same psalm. In cases of this kind, it is the most excited who give law, and who regulate the temperature of the common atmosphere. The exaltation of a few is transmitted to all; no one desires to be left behind, or likes to confess that he is less favoured than the others. Those who see nothing, are carried away, and finish by believing either that they are less clear-sighted, or that they do not take proper account of their sensations. In any case, they take care not to avow it; they would be disturbers of the common joy, would cause sadness to others, and would be playing a disagreeable part. When, therefore, one apparition is brought forward in such assemblies, it is customary for everyone to see it, or believe he has seen it. It is necessary to remember, however, what was the degree of intellectual culture possessed by the disciples of Jesus. What is called a weak head, very often, is associated with infinite goodness of heart. The disciples believed in phantoms; they imagined themselves to be compassed about with miracles; they participated in nothing which had relation to the positive science of the times. This science existed amongst some hundreds of men, scattered over those countries alone where Grecian culture had penetrated. But the commonality, in every country, participated very little in it. Palestine was, in this respect, one of the most backward countries. The Galileans were the most ignorant people of Palestine, and the disciples of Jesus might be counted amongst the persons the most simple of Galilee. It was to this

very simplicity that they were indebted for their heavenly election. Among such people, belief in marvellous deeds found the most extraordinary facilities for propagating itself. Once the opinion on the resurrection of Jesus had been noised abroad, numerous visions were sure to follow. And so in fact they did follow.

On the same Sabbath day, at an advanced hour of the morning, when the tales of the women had already been circulated, two disciples, one of whom was named Cleopatros or Cleopas, set out on a short journey to a village named Emmaus, situated a short distance from Jerusalem. They talked together of recent events, and were filled with sadness on the way, an unknown companion joined them, and inquired as to the cause of their sorrow. "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem?" said they, "And hast not known the things which are come to pass in these days?" And he said unto them, "What things?" And they said unto him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not." The unknown individual was a pious man, well versed in the Scriptures, citing Moses and the prophets. These three good people became friendly. Approaching Emmaus, the stranger was making as if he would continue his journey, the two disciples begged him to come and break bread with them. The day was far spent; the recollections of the two disciples became then more vivid. This hour of the evening for refreshments, was the one which they looked back to as being at once the most charming and most melancholy. How many times had they not seen, during that hour, their beloved Master forget the burden of the day, in the abandon of gay conversation, and enlivened by several sips of excellent wine, spoke to them of the fruit of the vine, which he would drink anew with them in the Kingdom of his Father. The gesture which he made in the breaking of bread, and in offering it to them, according to the custom of the heads of Jewish families, was deeply engraven on their memories. Filled with a tender sadness, they forgot the stranger: it was Jesus they saw holding the bread, then breaking and offering it to them. These recollections engrossed them to such an extent, that they scarcely perceived that their companion, anxious to continue his journey, had quitted them. And when they had awakened out of their reverie: "Did we not perceive," they said, "something strange? Do you not remember how our hearts burned while he talked with us by the way? And the prophecies which he cited, proved clearly that Messiah must suffer before entering into his glory." "Did you not recognize him at the breaking of bread?" "Yes: up to that time our eyes were closed; they were only opened when he vanished." The conviction of the two disciples was that they had seen Jesus. They returned with all haste to Jerusalem.

The main body of the disciples were, just at that moment, assembled at the house of Peter. Night had completely set in. Each was relating his impressions, and what he had seen and heard. The general belief already willed that Jesus had risen. At the entrance of the two disciples, the

brethren hastened to speak to them of that which was called, "the vision of Peter." They, on their side, told what had befallen them on the way to Emmaus, and how that they had recognized him in the breaking of bread. The imaginations of everyone became quite excited. The doors were shut; for they feared the Jews. Oriental cities are silent after sunset. The silence, hence, for some moments in the interior was frequently profound. Every slight sound which was accidentally produced was interpreted in the sense of the common expectation. Expectation, as is usual, was the progenitor of its object. During a moment of silence, a slight breath of wind passed over the face of the assembly. At these decisive times, a current of air, a creaking window, a casual murmur, suffices to fix the beliefs of people for centuries. At the same moment the breath of air was felt, they believed that they heard sounds. Some declared that they had seen the word schalom, "happiness" or "peace." This was the ordinary salutation of Jesus, and the word by which he signaled his presence. It was impossible to doubt; Jesus was present; he was there, in the assembly. It was his dear voice; everyone recognized it. This idea was the more easily accepted, inasmuch as Jesus had said to them, that as often as they came together in his name, he would be in the midst of them. It was then an accepted fact, that on Sunday evening, Jesus had appeared before his assembled disciples. Some of them pretended to have distinguished the marks of the nails in his hands and his feet, and in his side the trace of the spear thrust. According to a widely-spread tradition, this was the self-same evening that he breathed upon his disciples the holy spirit. The idea, at least, that his breath had passed over them on re-assembling, was generally admitted.

Such were the incidents of that day, which has decided the fate of humanity. The opinion that Jesus had risen was, on that day, established in an irrevocable manner. The sect, which was believed to be extinguished by the death of the Master, was, from that instant, assured of a great future.

Some doubts were, nevertheless, ventilated. The apostle, Thomas, who was not present at the meeting on Sunday evening, avowed that he envied those who had seen the marks of the spear and of the nails. Eight days after, this envy, it is said, was allayed. But there has attached to him, in consequence, some slight blame and a mild reproach. By an instinctive feeling of exquisite justness, they understood that the ideal was not to be touched with hands, and that it must not be subjected to the test of experience. *Noli, me tangere* (touch me not) is the motto of all great affection. The sense of touch leaves nothing to faith; the eye, a purer and more noble organ than the hand, which nothing can sully, and by which nothing is sullied, became very soon a superfluous witness. A singular sentiment began to grow up; any hesitation was held to be a mark of disloyalty and lack of love; one was ashamed to remain behind hand, and one interdicted oneself from desiring to see. The dictum: "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believed," became the key-note of the situation. It was thought to be a thing so much more generous to believe without proof. The really sincere friends denied having seen any vision. Just as, in later times, Saint Louis refused to be a witness to an eucharistic miracle, so as not to detract from the merits of faith. From that time, credulity became a hideous emulation, and a kind of out-bidding one another. The merit consisted in believing without having seen; faith at any cost; gratuitous faith; the faith which went as far as folly--was exalted, as

if it were the first of the gifts of the soul. The credo quia absurdum (I believe because I cannot understand) was established. The law of Christian dogmas was to be a strange progression, which no impossibility should be able to prevent. A sort of chivalrous sentiment prevented one from even looking back. The dogmas, the most dear to piety, those to which it was to attach itself with the most heedless frenzy, were the most repugnant to reason, in consequence of that touching idea, which the moral value of faith augments in proportion to the difficulty in believing, the reason of man not being compelled to prove any love when he admits that which is clear.

The first days were hence a period of intense feverishness, in which the faithful, infatuated with one another, and imposing one's fancies each upon the other, mutually carried away, and imparting to each other the most exalted notions. Visions were multiplied without number. The evening assemblies were the most common occasions when they were produced. When the doors were closed, and when each was beset with his fixed idea, the first who was believed to hear the sweet word, schalom, "salutation," or "peace," would give the signal. All would then listen, and would soon hear the very same thing. It was hence a great joy to those unsophisticated souls to know that Jesus was in the midst of them. Each tasted of the sweetness of that thought, and believed himself to be favoured with some inward colloquy. Other visions were noised abroad of a different description, and recalled those of the sojourners to Emmaus. During meal time, Jesus was seen to appear, taking the bread, blessing it, breaking it, and offering it to him who had been honoured with a vision of himself. In a few days, a whole string of stories, greatly differing in details, but inspired by the same spirit of love, and of absolute faith, was invented and spread abroad. It is the gravest of errors to suppose that legends require any length of time to be formed. Legend is sometimes born in a day. On Sunday evening (16 of Nisan, 5th April), the resurrection of Jesus was held to be a reality. Eight days after, the character of the life of the risen one, which had been conceived for him, was determined in regard at least to three essentials.

CHAPTER II.

DEPARTURE OF THE DISCIPLES FROM JERUSALEM--SECOND GALILEAN LIFE OF JESUS.

THE most eager desire of those who have lost a dear friend, is to revisit the places where they have lived with them. It was, doubtless, this sentiment which, a few days after the events of the Passover, induced the disciples to return into Galilee. From the moment of the arrest of Jesus, and immediately after his death, it is probable that many of the disciples had already found their way to the northern provinces. At the time of the resurrection, a rumour was spread abroad, according to which, it was in Galilee that he would be seen again. Some of the women who had been to the sepulchre came back with the report that the angel had said to them that Jesus had already preceded them into Galilee. Others said that it was Jesus himself who had ordered them to go there. Now and then some people said that they themselves remembered that he had said so during his life time. What is certain is, that at the end of a few days, probably after the Paschal Feast of the Pass-over had been quite over, the disciples believed they had a command to return into their own country, and to it accordingly they

returned. Perhaps the visions began to abate at Jerusalem. A species of melancholy seized them. The brief appearances of Jesus were not sufficient to compensate for the enormous void left by his absence. In a melancholy mood, they thought of the lake and of the beautiful mountains where they had received a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. The women, especially, wished, at any cost, to return to the country where they had enjoyed so much happiness. It must be observed that the order to depart came especially from them. That odious city weighed them down. They longed to see once more the ground where they had possessed him whom they loved, well assured in advance of meeting him again there.

The majority of the disciples then departed, full of joy and hope, perhaps in the company of the caravan, which took back the pilgrims from the Feast of the Passover. What they hoped to find in Galilee, were not only transient visions, but Jesus himself to continue with them, as he had done before his death. An intense expectation filled their souls. Was he going to restore the Kingdom of Israel, to found definitely the Kingdom of God, and, as was said, "Reveal his justice?" Everything was possible. They already called to mind the smiling landscapes where they had enjoyed his presence. Many believed that he had given to them a rendezvous upon a mountain, probably the same to which with them there clung so many sweet recollections. Never, it is certain, had there been a more pleasant journey. All their dreams of happiness were on the point of being realized. They were going to see him once more! And, in fact, they did see him again. Hardly restored to their harmless chimeras, they believed themselves to be in the midst of the Gospel dispensation period. It was now drawing near to the end of April. The ground is then strewn with red anemones, which were probably those "lilies of the fields" from which Jesus delighted to draw his similes. At each step, his words were brought to mind, adhering, as it were, to the thousand accidental objects they met by the way. Here was the tree, the flower, the seed, from which he had taken his parables; there was the hill on which he delivered his most touching discourses; here was the little ship from which he taught. It was like the recommencement of a beautiful dream. Like a vanished illusion which had reappeared. The enchantment seemed to revive. The sweet Galilean "Kingdom of God" had recovered its sway. The clear atmosphere, the mornings upon the shore or upon the mountain, the nights passed on the lakes watching the nets, all these returned again to them in distinct visions. They saw him everywhere where they had lived with him. Of course it was not the joy of the first enjoyment. Sometimes the lake had to them the appearance of being very solitary. But a great love is satisfied with little, if all of us, while we are alive, could surreptitiously, once a year, and during a moment long enough to exchange but a few words, behold again those loved ones whom we have lost--death would not be death!

Such was the state of mind of this faithful band, in this short period when Christianity seemed to return for a moment to his cradle and bid to him an eternal adieu. The principal disciples, Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, the sons of Zebedee, met again on the shores of the lake, and henceforth lived together; they had taken up again their former calling of fishermen, at Bethsaida or at Capernaum. The Galilean women were no doubt with them. They had insisted more than the others on that return, which was to them a heartfelt love. This was their last act in the establishment of Christianity. From that moment, they disappear.

Faithful to their love, their wish was to quit no more the country in which they had tasted their greatest delight. They were quickly forgotten, and, as the Galilean Christianity possessed but little of futurity, the remembrance of them was completely lost in certain ramifications of the tradition. These touching demoniacs, these converted fisherwomen, these actual founders of Christianity, Mary Magdalene, Mary Cleophas, Joanna, Susanna, all passed into the condition of forgotten saints. St. Paul knew them not. The faith which they had created almost consigned them to oblivion. We must come down to the middle ages before we find justice done them; then, one of them, Mary Magdalene, takes her proper place in the Christian hierarchy.

The visions, at first, on the lake appear to have been pretty frequent. On board these crafts where they had come in contact with God, how many times had the disciples not seen again their Divine Friend? The simplest circumstances brought him back to them. Once they had toiled all night without taking a single fish; suddenly the nets were filled; this was a miracle. It appeared that some one from the land had said to them: "Cast your nets to the right." Peter and John regarded one another. "It is the Lord," said John. Peter, who was naked, covered himself hastily with his fisher's coat, and cast himself into the sea, in order to go to the invisible councillor. At other times Jesus came and partook of their simple repasts. One day, when they had done fishing, they were surprised to find lighted coals, with fish placed upon them, and bread near by. A lively sense of their feasts of past times crossed their minds, since bread and fish had been always an essential part of their diet. Jesus was in the habit of offering these to them. After the meal they were persuaded that Jesus himself had sat by their side, and had presented to them those victuals which hail already become to them eucharistic and sacred, John and Peter were the ones who were specially favoured with those private conversations with the well-beloved phantom. One day, Peter, dreaming, perhaps (but what am I saying! their life on the shore was it not a perpetual dream?) believed that he heard Jesus ask him: "Lovest thou Me?" The question was repeated three times. Peter, wholly possessed by a tender and sad sentiment, imagined that he responded, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love thee," and each time the apparition said: "Feed my sheep." On another occasion Peter told John, in confidence, a strange dream. He had dreamt he had been walking with the Master, John was following a few steps behind. Jesus said to him, in terms most obscure, which seemed to announce to him a prison or a violent death, and repeated to him at different times: "Follow me." Peter, thereupon, pointing his finger to John, who was following them, asked: "Lord, and this man?" "If I will," said Jesus, "that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." After the execution of Peter, John remembered that dream, and saw in it a prediction of the manner of death his friend had died. He recounted it to his disciples; the latter believed to discover in it the assurance that their master would not die before the final advent of Jesus.

These grand and melancholy dreams, these never ceasing conversations, broken off and recommenced with the death of the cherished one, occupied the days and months. The sympathy of Galilee for the prophet that the Hierosolymites of Jerusalem had put to death was re-awakened. More than five hundred persons were already devoted to the memory of Jesus. In default of the lost master, they obeyed the disciples, the most authoritative--Peter--in particular. One day, when following in

the suite of their spiritual chiefs, the faithful Galileans had ascended one of those mountains whither Jesus had often conducted them, and they imagined that they saw him again. The atmosphere of these heights is full of strange mirages. The same vision which formerly had occurred to the most intimate disciples was once more produced. The whole assembly believed that they saw the divine spectre displayed in the clouds; all fell on their faces and worshipped. The sentiment which the clear horizon of those mountains inspires is the idea of the extent of the world, and the desire of conquering it. On one of the neighbouring peaks Satan, pointing out to Jesus with his finger the kingdoms of the world and all their glory, offered to give them to him, it is stated, if he would only fall down and worship him. On this occasion, it was Jesus who, from the tops of these sacred summits, showed to his disciples the whole world, and assured them of the future. They descended from the mountain, persuaded that the son of God had given to them the command to convert the whole human race, and promised to be with them till the end of time. A strange ardour, a divine fire, pervaded them at the close of these conversations. They regarded themselves as the missionaries of the world, capable of performing supernatural deeds. St. Paul saw several of those who had assisted at that extraordinary scene. At the end of twenty-five years the impression they left was still as strong and as lively as on the first day.

Nearly a year rolled on, during which they led this life, suspended between heaven and earth. The charm, far from diminishing, increased. It is a property of great and holy things, always to become grander and more pure of themselves. The sentiment in regard to a loved one who has been lost, is certainly keener at a distance of time, than on the morrow after the death. The greater the distance, the more the sentiment gains strength. The sorrow, which at first is a part of it and, in a sense, lessens it, is changed into a serene piety. The image of the defunct one is transfigured, idealized, becomes the soul of life, the principle of all action, the source of all joy, the oracle which is consulted, the consolation which is sought in moments of despondency. Death is a necessary, condition of every apotheosis. Jesus, so beloved during his life, was in this way more so after his last breath, or rather his last breath was the commencement of his actual life in the bosom of the church. He became the intimate friend, the confidant, the travelling companion, the one who, at the turning point of the route, joins you, follows you, sits down at table with you, and reveals himself at the moment of disappearance. The absolute lack of scientific exactitude in the minds of these new believers, made it that one could not weigh any question in regard to the nature of one's existence. They represented him as impassible, endowed with a subtle body, passing through opaque walls, now visible, now invisible, but always living. Sometimes they imagined that his body was not composed of matter; that it was pure shadow or apparition. At other times there was attributed to him a material body, with flesh and bones; through a naïve scrupulousness, as though the hallucination had inclined to take precautions against himself, he was made to drink and eat; nay, it was maintained that some of them had touched his body gently with their hands. Their ideas on this point were extremely vague and uncertain. We have not until now dreamt of putting a frivolous question; at the same time the present is one not easily of solution. Whilst Jesus had risen in this real manner, that is to say, in the hearts of those who loved him; whilst the immovable conviction of the

apostles was being formed, and the faith of the world prepared, in what place did the worms consume the inanimate body which on the Saturday evening had been deposited in the tomb? People ignore always this point, for, naturally, the Christian traditions can do nothing to clear up the subject. It is the spirit which quickeneth; the flesh is nothing. The resurrection was the triumph of the idea over the reality. Now that the idea had entered upon its immortality, what mattered the body?

About the years 80 or 83, when the actual text of the first Gospel received its final additions, the Jews already had on this matter a settled opinion. If they are to be believed, the disciples might have come by night and stolen away his body. The Christian conscience was alarmed at this rumour, and in order to cut short such an objection, they invented the circumstance of the military guard, and of the seal put on the sepulchre. That circumstance, to be found only in the first gospel, mixed up with legends of doubtful authority, is wholly inadmissible. But the explanation of the Jews, although irrefutable, is far from being altogether satisfactory. It can hardly be admitted that those who had so firmly believed Jesus had risen from the dead, were the same persons who had taken away his body. Little accustomed as these men were to reflection, one can hardly imagine so singular an illusion. It must be remembered that the little church at that moment was completely dispersed. It had no expectation, no centralisation, no regular method of procedure. Beliefs sprang up on every hand, and were then amalgamated as best they might. The contradictions between the narratives, upon which we base the incidents of the Sabbath morning, prove that the rumours were spread through the most diverse channels, and that they did not care much about bringing them into accord. It is possible that the body may have been taken away by some of the disciples, and transported by them into Galilee. The others, who remained at Jerusalem, may not have been cognizant of the fact. On the other hand, the disciples, who may have carried the body into Galilee, could not at first have any knowledge of the stories which were current at Jerusalem, so that the belief in the resurrection may have been invented after they went away, and must, therefore, have surprised them. They did not reclaim, and, even had they done so, it would have unsettled nothing. When it is a question of miracles a tardy correction is not feared. No material difficulty ever impedes a sentiment from being developed and of creating the fictions it has need of. In the recent history of the miracle of Salette, the error was demonstrated by the clearest of evidence, but that did not hinder the belief from springing up, and the faith from spreading. It is allowable also to suppose that the disappearance of the body was the work of the Jews. Probably they thought by that to prevent the tumultuous scenes which might be enacted over the body of a man so popular as Jesus. Probably they wished to prevent people from making a noisy funeral display, or from raising a tomb to that just man. Finally, who knows that the disappearance of the corpse was not the work of the proprietor of the garden, or of the gardener. The proprietor, according to all accounts, was a stranger to the sect. His sepulchre was chosen because it was the nearest to Golgotha, and because they were pressed for time. Probably he was dissatisfied with the mode of taking possession of his property, and had the body removed. In good truth, the details reported in the fourth gospel, of the linen left in the sepulchre, and the napkin folded carefully away in the corner, does not accord with such an hypothesis.

This last circumstance would lead one to suppose that a woman's hand had crept in there. The five narratives of the visit of the women to the tomb are so confused and embarrassing, that it is certainly quite allowable for us to suppose that they contained some misapprehension. The female conscience, when dominated by passion, is capable of the most extravagant illusions. Often it becomes the abettor of its own dreams. To these sort of incidents, for the purpose of having them considered as marvellous, nobody deliberately deceives; but everybody, without thinking of it, is led to connive at them. Mary Magdalene, according to the language of the times, had been "possessed of seven devils." In all this it is necessary to take account of the lack of the precision of mind of the women of the East, of their absolute want of education, and of the peculiar shade of their sincerity. Exalted conviction renders any return upon herself impossible. When the sky is seen everywhere, one is led to put oneself at times in the place of the sky.

Let us draw a veil over these mysteries. In states nt religious crises, everything being regarded as divine, the greatest effects may be the results of the most trifling causes. If we were witnesses of the strange facts which are at the origin of all the works of faith, we should discover circumstances which to us would not appear proportioned to the importance of the results, and others which would make us smile. Our old cathedrals are reckoned among the most beautiful objects in the world; one cannot enter them without being in some sort inebriated with the infinite. Yet these splendid marvels are almost always the fruit of some little conceit. And what does it matter definitively. The result alone counts in such matters. Faith purifies all. The material incident which has induced belief in the resurrection was not the true cause of the resurrection. That which raised Jesus from the dead was love. That love was so powerful that a petty accident sufficed to erect the edifice of a universal faith. If Jesus had been less loved, if faith in the resurrection had had less reason for its establishment, these kind of accidents would have occurred in vain, nothing would have come out of them. A grain of sand causes the fall of a mountain, when the moment for the fall of the mountain has come. The greatest things proceed at once from the greatest and smallest causes. Great causes alone are real; little ones only serve to determine the production of an effect which has for a long time been in preparation.

CHAPTER III.

RETURN OF THE APOSTLES TO JERUSALEM.--END OF THE PERIOD OF APPARITIONS.

THE apparitions, in the meanwhile, as happens always in movements of credulous enthusiasm, began to abate. Popular chimeras resemble contagious maladies; they grow stale quickly and change their form. The activity of these ardent souls had already turned in another direction. What they believed to have heard from the lips of the dear risen one, was the order to go forth and preach, and to convert the world. But where should they commence? Naturally, at Jerusalem. The return to Jerusalem was then resolved upon by those who at that time had the direction of the sect. As these journeys were ordinarily made by caravan at the time of the feasts, we now suppose with all manner of likelihood, that the return in question took place at the Feast of

Tabernacles at the close of the year 33, or the Paschal Feast of the year 34. Galilee was thus abandoned by Christianity, and abandoned for ever. The little church which remained there continued, no doubt, to exist; but we hear it no more spoken of. It was probably broken up, like all the rest, by the frightful disaster which then overtook the country during the war of Vespasian; the wreck of the dispersed community sought refuge beyond Jordan. After the war it was not Christianity which was brought back into Galilee; it was Judaism. In the ii., iii., and iv. centuries, Galilee was a country wholly Jewish; the centre of Judaism, the country of the Talmud. Galilee thus counted but an hour in the history of Christianity; but it was the sacred hour, par excellence; it gave to the new religion that which has made it endure--its poetry, its penetrating charms. "The Gospel," after the manner of the synoptics, was a Galilean work. But we shall attempt further on to show that "The Gospel" thus extended, has been the principal cause of the success of Christianity, and continues to be the surest guarantee of its future. It is probable that a fraction of the little school which surrounded Jesus in his last days remained at Jerusalem. At the moment of separation the belief in the resurrection was already established. That belief was thus developed from two points of view, each having a perceptibly different aspect; and such is, no doubt, the cause of the complete divergencies which are remarked in the narratives of the apparitions. Two traditions, the one Galilean, the other Hierosolymitish, were formed; according to the first, all the apparitions (except those of the first period) had taken place in Galilee; according to the second, all had taken place at Jerusalem. The accord of the two fractions of the little church on the fundamental dogma, naturally only served to confirm the common belief. They embraced each other effusively; they repeated with the same faith, "He is risen." Perhaps the joy and the enthusiasm which were the consequences of this agreement, led to some other visions. It is about this period that we can place the vision of James, mentioned by Saint Paul. James was the brother, or at least, a relation of Jesus. We do not find that he had accompanied Jesus on his last sojourn to Jerusalem. He probably went there with the apostles, when the latter gritted Galilee. All the chief apostles had had their visions; it was hard that this "brother of the Lord," should not also have his. It was, it seems, an eucharistic vision, that is to say, in which Jesus appeared taking and breaking the bread. Later, those portions of the Christian family who attached themselves to James, those that were called the Hebrews, changed this vision to the same day as the resurrection, and wanted it to be looked upon as the first of all.

In fact, it is very remarkable that the family of Jesus, some of whose members during his life had been incredulous and hostile to his mission, constituted now a part of the Church, and held in it a very exalted position. One is led to suppose that the reconciliation took place during the sojourn of the apostles in Galilee. The celebrity which had attached itself to the name of their relative, those five thousand persons who believed in him, and were assured of having seen him after he had arisen, served to make an impression on their minds. From the time of the definite establishment of the apostles at Jerusalem, we find with them Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the brothers of Jesus. In what concerns Mary, it appears that John, thinking in this to obey a recommendation of the Master, had adopted and taken her to his own home. He perhaps took her back to Jerusalem. This woman, whose personal history and character have remained veiled

in obscurity, assumed hence great importance. The words that the evangelist put into the mouth of some unknown women: "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the babes which thou has sucked," began to be verified. It is probable that Mary survived her son a few years. As for the brothers of Jesus, their history is wrapped in obscurity. Jesus had several brothers and sisters. It seemed probable, however, that in the class of persons which were called "Brothers of the Lord," there were included relations in the second degree. The question is only of moment so far as it concerns James. This James the Just, or "brother of the Lord," whom we shall see playing a great part in the first thirty years of Christianity, was the James, the son of Alph~~o~~us, who appears to have been a cousin germain of Jesus, or a whole brother of Jesus? The data in respect of him are altogether uncertain and contradictory. What we do know of this James represents him to be such a different person from Jesus, that we refuse to believe that two men so dissimilar were born of the same mother. If Jesus was the true founder of Christianity, James was its most dangerous enemy; he nearly ruined everything by his narrow-mindedness. Later, it was certainly believed that James the Just was a whole brother of Jesus. But perhaps some confusion was mixed up with the subject.

Be that as it may, the apostles henceforth separated no more, except to make temporary journeys. Jerusalem became their head-quarters; they seemed to be afraid to disperse, while certain acts served to reveal in them the prepossession of being opposed to return again into Galilee, which latter had dissolved its little society. An express order of Jesus is supposed to have interdicted their quitting Jerusalem, before, at least, the great manifestations which were to take place. Apparitions became more and more rare. They were spoken much less of, and people began to believe that they would not see the Master again until His grand appearance in the clouds. Peoples' thoughts were turned with great force towards a promise which it was supposed Jesus had made. During his life-time, Jesus, it was said, had often spoken of the Holy Spirit, which was understood to mean a personification of divine wisdom. He had promised his disciples that the Spirit would nerve them in the combats that they would have to engage in, would be their inspirer in difficulties, and their advocate, if they had to speak in public. When the visions became rare, the brethren found compensation in this Spirit, which they looked upon as a consoler, as another self which Jesus had bequeathed to his friends. Sometimes it was supposed that Jesus suddenly presented himself in the midst of his disciples assembled, and breathed on them out of his own mouth a current of vivifying air. At other times the disappearance of Jesus was regarded as a premonition of the coming of the Spirit. It was believed that in the apparitions he had promised the descent of this Spirit. Many people established an intimate connection between this descent and the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. All the fervency of imagination which the sect had displayed in inventing the legend of Jesus risen again, was now about to be employed to create an assemblage of pious believers, in regard to the descent of the Spirit and its marvellous gifts. It seems, however, that a grand apparition of Jesus had taken place at Bethany or upon the Mount of Olives. Certain traditions annexed it to that vision of the final recommendations of Jesus, and the reiterated promise of the sending down of the Holy Spirit, the act which was to invest the disciples with the power of remitting sins. The features of these apparitions became more and more vague; they were confounded one with another; and people came not to think much about

them. It was an accepted fact that Jesus was living; that he manifested himself by a number of apparitions, sufficient to prove his existence; that he would again be manifested in some partial visions, until the grand final revelation which would be the consummation of all. Thus, Saint Paul presents the vision he had on the way to Damascus, as of the same order as those we have just been speaking of. At all events, it was admitted, in an idealistic sense, that the Master was to be with his disciples and he would remain with them unto the end. In the first period the apparitions were very frequent. Jesus was conceived as dwelling permanently on the earth and fulfilling more or less the functions of terrestrial life. When the visions became rare, they were made to conform to another idea. Jesus was represented as having entered into his glory, and as being seated at the right hand of his Father. "He is ascended to Heaven," it was said. This statement rested mainly on a vague conception of the idea, or on an induction. But it was converted by many into a material scene. It was desired that it should follow the last vision common to all the apostles, and in which he gave them his supreme recommendations. Jesus was received up into Heaven. Later, the scene was developed and became a complete legend. It was recounted that some heavenly messengers, agreeably to the divine manifestations, most brilliant, appeared at the moment when a cloud enveloped him, and consoled his disciples by the assurance of his return in the clouds, resembling wholly the scene of which they had just been witnesses. The death of Moses had been surrounded in the popular imagination with circumstances of the same kind. Perhaps they also called to mind the ascension of Elias. A tradition placed the locality of this scene near Bethany, upon the summit of the Mount of Olives. That quarter remained very dear to his disciples, doubtless because Jesus had lived there.

The legend would make it appear that the disciples, after that marvellous scene, re-entered Jerusalem "with joy." For ourselves, it is with sadness that we have to say to Jesus a final adieu. To have found him living again his shadow life, has been to us a great consolation. That second life of Jesus, a pale image of the first, is yet full of charm. Now, all scent of him is lost. Raised on a cloud to the right hand of his Father, he has left us with men, but, oh, Heaven! the fall is terrible! The reign of poetry is past. Mary Magdalene, retired to her native village, buried there her recollections. In consequence of that eternal injustice which ordains that man appropriates to himself alone the work in which woman has had as great a share as he, Cephas eclipsed her, and made her to be forgotten! No more sermons on the Mount; no more of the possessed of devils healed; no more courtesans touched; no more of those strange female fellow workers in the work of redemption whom Jesus had not repelled! God has verily disappeared. No; history of the church is to be most often henceforth the history of treasons to blot out the name of Jesus. But such as it is, that history is still a hymn to his glory. The woofs and the image of the illustrious Nazarene shall remain in the midst of infinite miseries as a sublime ideal. We shall comprehend better how great it was when we have seen how little were his disciples.

CHAPTER IV.

DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT--ECSTATIC, AND PROPHETICAL PHENOMENA.

Mean, narrow, ignorant, inexperienced they were, as completely so as it was possible to be. Their simplicity of mind was extreme; their credulity had no limits. But they had one quality: they loved their Master to foolishness. The recollection of Jesus was the only moving power of their lives; it was perpetually with them, and it was clear that they lived only for him, who, during two or three years, had so strangely attached and seduced them. For souls of a secondary standard, who cannot love God directly, that is to say, discover truth, create the beautiful, do right of themselves, salvation consists in loving some one in whom there shines a reflection of the true, the beautiful, and the good. The great majority of mankind require a worship of two degrees. The multitude of worshippers desire an intermediary between it and God.

When a person has succeeded in attracting to himself, by an elevated moral bond, several other persons, when he dies, it always happens that the survivors, who, up to that time are often divided by rivalries and dissensions, beget a strong friendship the one for the other. A thousand cherished images of the past, which they regret, become to them a common treasure. There is a manner of loving the dead, which consists in loving those with whom we have known him. We are anxious to meet one another, in order to re-call the happy times which are no more. A profound saying of Jesus is found then to be true to the letter: The dead one is present in the midst of those who are united again by his memory.

The affection that the disciples had the one for the other, while Jesus was alive, was thus enhanced tenfold after his death. They formed a very small and very retired society, and lived exclusively by themselves. At Jerusalem they numbered about one-hundred-and-twenty. Their piety was active, and, as yet, completely restrained by the forms of Jewish piety. The temple was then the chief place of devotion. They worked, no doubt, for a living; but at that time, manual labour in Jewish society engaged very few. Everyone had a trade, but that trade by no means hindered a man from being educated and well-bred. With us, material wants are so difficult to satisfy, that the man living by his hands is obliged to work twelve or fifteen hours a day; the man of leisure alone can follow intellectual pursuits; the acquisition of instruction is a rare and costly affair. But in those old societies (of which the East of our days gives still an idea), in those climates, where nature is so prodigal to man and so little exacting, in the life of the labourer there was plenty of leisure. A sort of common instruction puts every man au courant of the ideas of the times. Mere food and clothing satisfied their wants; a few hours of moderate labour provided these. The rest was given up to day dreaming, and to passion. Passion had attained in the minds of those people a degree of energy which is to us inconceivable. The Jews of that time appear to us to be in truth possessed, each pursuing with a blind fatality the idea with which he had been seized.

The dominant idea in the Christian community, at the moment at which we are now arrived, and when apparitions had ceased, was the coming of the Holy Spirit. People were believed to receive it in the form of a mysterious breath, which passed over the assembly. Mary pretended that it was the breath of Jesus himself. Every inward consolation, every bold movement, every flush of enthusiasm, every feeling of lively, and pleasant gaiety, which was experienced without knowing whence it came,

was the work of the Spirit. These simple con-sciences referred, as usual, to some exterior cause the exquisite sentiments which were being created in them. It was in the assemblies, particularly, that these fantastic phenomena of illumination were produced. When all were assembled, and when they awaited in silence, inspiration from on high, a murmur, any noise whatever, was believed to be the coming of the Spirit. In the early times, it was the apparitions of Jesus which were produced in this manner. Now the turn of ideas had changed. It was the divine breath which passed over the little church, and filled it with a celestial effluvia.

These beliefs were strengthened by notions drawn from the Old Testament. The prophetic spirit is represented in the Hebrew books as a breathing which penetrates man and inspires him. In the beautiful vision of Elijah, God passes by in the form of a gentle wind, which produces a slight rustling noise. This ancient imagery had handed down to later ages beliefs analogous to those of the Spiritualists of our days. In the ascension of Isaiah, the coming of the Spirit is accompanied by a certain rustling at the doors. More often, however, people regarded this coming as another baptism, to wit, the "baptism of the Spirit," far superior to that of John. The hallucinations of touch being very frequent among persons so nervous and so excited, the least current of air, accompanied by a shuddering in the midst of the silence, was considered as the passage of the Spirit. One conceived that he felt it; soon everybody felt it; and the enthusiasm was communicated from one to another. The correspondence of these phenomena with those which are to be found amongst the visionaries of all times is easily apprehended. They are produced daily, partly under the influence of the Acts of the Apostles, in the English or American sects of Quakers, Jumpers, Shakers, Irvingites; amongst the Mormons; in the camp-meetings and revivals of America; we have seen them reproduced amongst ourselves in the sect called the Spiritualists. But an immense difference ought to be made between aberrations, which are without bounds, and without a future, and the illusions which have accompanied the establishment of a new religious code for humanity.

Amongst all these "descents of the Spirit," which appear to have been frequent enough, there was one which left a profound impression on the nascent Church. One day, when the brethren were assembled, a thunder-storm burst forth. A violent wind threw open the windows: the heavens were on fire. Thunderstorms, in these countries, are accompanied by prodigious sheets of lightning; the atmosphere is, as it were, everywhere furrowed with ridges of flame. Whether the electric fluid had penetrated the room itself, or whether a dazzling flash of lightning had suddenly illuminated the faces of all, everyone was convinced that the Spirit had entered, and that it had alighted on the head of each in the form of tongues of fire. It was a prevalent opinion in the theurgic schools of Syria, that the communication of the Spirit was produced by a divine fire, and under the form of a mysterious glare. People fancied themselves to be present at the splendours of Sinai, at a divine manifestation analogous to those of former days. The baptism of the Spirit thenceforth became also a baptism of fire. The baptism of the Spirit and of fire was opposed to, and greatly preferred to, the baptism of water, the only baptism which John had known. The baptism of fire, was only prepared on rare occasions. Thy apostles and the disciples of the first guest-chamber alone were reputed to have received it. But the idea that the Spirit had alighted on them in the

form of jets of flame, resembling tongues of fire, gave rise to a series of singular ideas, which took a foremost place in the thought of the period.

The tongue of the inspired man was supposed to receive a kind of sacrament. It was pretended that many prophets, before their mission, had been stammerers; that the Son of God had passed a coal over their lips, which purified them and conferred on them the gift of eloquence. In preaching, the man was supposed not to speak of his own volition. His tongue was considered as the organ of divinity which inspired it. These tongues of fire appeared a striking symbol. People were convinced that God desired to signify in this manner that he poured out upon the apostles his most precious gifts of eloquence, and of inspiration. But they did not stop there. Jerusalem was, like the majority of the large cities of the East, a city in which many languages were spoken. The diversity of tongues was one of the difficulties which one found there in the way of propagating a universal form of faith. One of the things, moreover, which alarmed the apostles, at the commencement of a ministry destined to embrace the world, was the number of languages which was spoken there: they were asking themselves incessantly how they could learn so many tongues. "The gift of tongues" became thus a marvellous privilege. It was believed that the preaching of the Gospel would clear away the obstacle which was created by the diversity of idioms. It was imagined that, in some solemn circumstances, the auditors had heard the apostle preaching each in his own tongue: in other words, that the apostolic preaching translated itself to each of the listeners. At other times, this was understood in a somewhat different manner. To the apostles was attributed the gift of knowing, by divine inspiration, all tongues, and of speaking them at will. There was in this a liberal idea; they meant to imply that the Gospel should have no language of its own; that it should be translatable into every tongue; and that the translation should be of the same value as the original. Such was not the sentiment of orthodox Judaism. Hebrew was for the Jews of Jerusalem the holy tongue; no language could be compared to it. Translations of the Bible were lightly esteemed, whilst the Hebrew text was scrupulously guarded. In translations, changes and modifications were permitted. The Jews of Egypt, and the Hellenists of Palestine, practised, it is true, a more tolerant system. They employed Greek in prayer, and perused constantly Greek translations of the Bible. But the first Christian idea was even broader. According to that idea the word of God has no language of its own: it is free and unhampered by idiomatic fetters; it is delivered to all spontaneously, and needs no interpreter. The facility with which Christianity was detached from the Semitic tongue which Jesus had spoken, the liberty which it left at first each nation to create its own liturgy, and its versions of the Bible in its natural tongue, served as a sort of emancipation of tongues. It was generally admitted that the Messiah would gather into one all tongues as well as all peoples. Common usage and the promiscuity of languages were the first steps towards that great era of universal pacification.

For the rest, the gift of tongues soon underwent a considerable transformation, and resulted in more extraordinary effects. Brain excitement led to ecstasy and prophecy. In these ecstatic moments the faithful, impelled by the Spirit, uttered inarticulate and incoherent sounds, which were taken for the words of a foreign language, and which they innocently sought to interpret. At other times it was believed

that the ecstatically possessed spoke new and hitherto unknown languages, or even the language of the angels. These extravagant scenes, which led to abuses, did not become habitual until a later period. Yet it is probable that from the earliest years of Christianity they were produced. The visions of the ancient prophets had often been accompanied by phenomena of nervous excitation. The dythyrambic state amongst the Greeks produced the same kind of occurrences; the Pythia used by preference foreign or obsolete words, which were called, as in the apostolic phenomena, glosses. Many of the passwords of primitive Christianity, which were properly bilingual, or formed by anagrams, such as Abba pater, anathema, maran-atha, were probably derived from these strange paroxysms, intermingled with sighs, stifled groans, ejaculations, prayers, and sudden transports, which were taken for prophecies. It resembled a vague music of the soul, uttered in indistinct sounds, and which the auditors sought to transform into images and determinate words, or rather as the prayers of the Spirit addressed to God, in a language known to God only, and which God knew how to interpret. No ecstatic person, in short, understood anything of what he uttered, and had not even any cognizance of it. People listened with eagerness and attributed to the incoherent utterances the thoughts which there and then occurred to them. Each referred to his own tongue and ingenuously sought to explain the unintelligible sounds by what little he actually knew of languages. In this they always more or less succeeded, the auditor filling in between the broken sentences the thoughts he had in mind.

The history of fanatical sects is fruitful in instances of the same kind. The preachers of the Cevennes displayed similar instances of "glossolaly." The most striking instance, however, is that of the "readers" of Sweden, about the years 1841-43. Involuntary utterances, enunciations, having no meaning to those who uttered them, and accompanied by convulsions and fainting fits, were for a long time practised daily in that little sect. The thing became perfectly contagious, and occasioned a considerable popular movement. Amongst the Irvingites the phenomenon of tongues has been produced with features which reproduce in the most striking manner the stories of the Acts and of Saint Paul. Our own century has witnessed illusive scenes of the same kind, which we will not recount here; for it is always unjust to compare the inseparable credulity of a great religious movement with the credulity which results from dulness of intellect.

These strange phenomena were sometimes produced out of doors. The ecstatic persons, at the very moment when they were a prey to their extravagant illuminations, had the hardihood to go out and show themselves to the multitude. They were taken for drunken persons. Although sober-minded in point of mysticism, Jesus had more than once presented in his own person the ordinary phenomena of the ecstatic state. The disciples, for two or three years, were beset with these ideas. Propheying was frequent and considered as a gift analogous to that of tongues. Prayers, accompanied by convulsions, rhythmic modulations, mystic sighs, lyrical enthusiasm, songs with graceful attitudes, were a daily exercise. A rich vein of "canticles," "psalms," "hymns," in imitation of those of the Old Testament, was thus found to be open to them. Sometimes the mouth and heart mutually accompanied one another; sometimes the heart sang alone, accompanied inwardly by grace. No language being able to render the new sensations which were produced, they indulged in an indistinct muttering, at once sublime and

puerile, in which what one might call "the Christian language," was wafted in a state of embryo. Christianity, not finding in the ancient languages an appropriate instrument for its needs, has shattered them. But whilst the new religion was forming a language suited to its use, centuries of obscure effort and, so to speak, of childish prattle, were required. The style of Saint Paul, and, in general, that of the authors of the New Testament, what is its characteristic, if it be not stifled, halting, informal, improvisation of the "glossolalist"? Language failed them. Like the prophets, they aped the a, a, a, of the infant. They did not know how to speak. The Greek and the Semetic tongues equally betrayed them. Hence that shocking violence which nascent Christianity inflicted on language. It might be compared to a stutterer, in whose mouth the tones being stifled, clash with and against each other, and terminate in a confused medley, but yet marvellously expressive.

All this was very far from the sentiment of Jesus; but for minds penetrated with a belief in the supernatural, these phenomena possessed great importance. The gift of tongues, in particular, was considered as an essential sign of the new religion, and as a proof of its truth. In any case, there resulted from it much fruit for edification. Many Pagans were converted in this way. Up to the third century "glossolaly" was manifested in a manner analogous to that described by St. Paul, and was considered as a perpetual miracle. Many of the sublime words of Christianity are derived from these incoherent sighs. The general effect was touching and penetrating. Their manner of offering in common their inspirations and of handing them over to the community for interpretation established in time amongst the faithful a strong bond of fraternity.

As in the case of all mystics, the new sectaries led fasting and austere lives. Like the majority of Orientals, they ate little, which contributed to maintain them in a state of excitement. The sobriety of the Syrian, the cause of his physical weakness, keeps him in a perpetual state of fever and of nervous susceptibility. Our severe, continuous, intellectual efforts, are impossible under such a regimen. But this cerebral debility and muscular laxity, produces, apparently without cause, lively alternations of sorrow and joy, and puts the soul in constant relationship with God. That which was called "Godly sorrow" passed for a Heavenly gift. All the teachings of the Fathers concerning the life spiritual, such as John Climacus, as Basil, as Nilus, as Arsenius,--all the secrets of the grand art of the inward life, one of the most glorious creations of Christianity--were in germ in the peculiar state of mind which possessed, in their mouths of ecstatic expectation, those illustrious ancestors of all "The men of longings." Their moral condition was peculiar; they lived in the supernatural. They acted only upon visions, dreams, and the most insignificant circumstances appeared to them to be admonitions from heaven. Under the name of gifts of the Holy Spirit were thus concealed the rarest and most exquisite effusions of soul, love, piety, respectful fears, objectless sighings, sudden languors, and spontaneous tenderness. All the good that is born in man, without man having any part in it, was attributed to a breathing from on high. Tears, above all, were regarded as a heavenly favour. This charming gift, the exclusive privilege of souls most good and most pure, was produced with infinite sweetness. We know what power, delicate natures, especially in women, find in the divine faculty of being able to weep much. It is to them prayer, and, assuredly, the most holy of prayers. We must come down quite to the

middle ages to that piety, drenched with the tears of St. Bruno, St. Bernard and St. Francis de Assisi, to find again the chaste melancholy of those early days, when they truly sowed in tears in order that they might reap with joy. To weep became a pious act. Those who were not qualified to preach, work, speak languages, nor to perform miracles, wept. It might, indeed, be said that their souls were melted, and that they desired, in the absence of a language which would interpret their sentiments, to display themselves outwardly, by a vivid and brief expression of their whole inner being.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST CHURCH OF JERUSALEM; IT IS ENTIRELY CENOBITICAL.

The custom of living together, holding the same faith, and indulging the same expectation, necessarily produced many common habits. Very soon rules were framed, which made that primitive church resemble, to some extent, the establishments of the cenobitical life, rules with which Christianity subsequently became acquainted. Many of the precepts of Jesus conduced to this; the true ideal of evangelical life is a monastery, not a monastery enclosed with iron bars, a prison after the type of the Middle Ages, with the separation of the sexes, but an asylum in the midst of the world, a place set apart for spiritual life, a free association or little private confraternity, surrounded by a barrier, which may serve to ward off the cares which are prejudicial to the liberty of the Kingdom of God.

All, then, lived in common, having but one heart and one mind. No one possessed anything which was his own. On becoming a disciple of Jesus, one sold one's goods and made a gift of the proceeds to the society. The chiefs of the society then distributed the common possessions to each, according to his needs. They lived in the same quarter, They took their meals together, and continued to attach to them the mystic sense that Jesus had prescribed. They passed long hours in prayers. Their prayers were sometimes improvised aloud, but more often meditated in silence. Trances were frequent, and each one believed oneself to be constantly favoured with divine inspiration. The concord was perfect; no dogmatic quarrels, no disputes in regard to precedence. The tender recollection of Jesus effaced all dissensions. Joy, lively and deep-seated, was in every heart. Their morals were austere, but pervaded by a soft and tender sentiment. They assembled in houses to pray, and to devote themselves to ecstatic exercises. The recollection of these two or three first years remained and seemed to them like a terrestrial paradise, which Christianity will pursue henceforth in all its dreams and to which it will vainly endeavour to return. Who does not see, in fact, that such an organisation could only be applicable to a very small church? But, subsequently, the monastic life will resume on its own account that primitive ideal which the church universal will hardly dream of realising.

That the author of the Acts, to whom we are indebted for the picture of this primitive Christianity at Jerusalem, has laid on his colours a little too thickly, and, in particular, exaggerated the community of goods which obtained in the sect, is certainly possible. The author of the Acts is the same as the author of the third gospel, who, in his life of Jesus, had the habit of adapting his facts to suit his

theories, and with whom a tendency to the doctrine of ebonism, that is to say, of absolute poverty, is very perceptible. Nevertheless, the narrative of the Acts cannot here be destitute of some foundation. Although Jesus himself would not have given utterance to any of the communistic axioms which one reads in the third gospel, it is certain that a renunciation of worldly goods and of the giving of alms pushed to the length of self-despoilment, were perfectly conformable to the spirit of his preaching. The belief that the world is coming to an end has always produced a distaste for worldly goods, and a leaning to the communistic life. The narrative of the Acts is, however, perfectly conformable to that which we know of the origin of other ascetic religions--of Buddhism for example. These sorts of religion commence always with monastical life. Their first adepts are some species of mendicant monks. The layman does not appear in them until later, and when these religions have conquered entire societies, in which monastic life can only exist under exceptional circumstances.

We admit, then, in the Church of Jerusalem a period of cenobitical life. Two centuries later Christianity produced still on the Pagans the effect of a communistic sect. It must be remembered that the Essenians or Therapeutians had already given the model of this species of life, which sprang very legitimately from Mosaism. The Mosaic code being essentially moral and not political, its natural product was a social Utopia (church, synagogue and convent) not a civil state, nation or city. Egypt had had for many centuries recluses, both male and female, maintained by the state, probably in fulfilment of charitable legacies, near the Serapeum at Memphis. It must especially be remembered that such a life in the East is by no means what it has been in our West. In the East, one can very well enjoy nature and existence without possessing anything. Man, in these countries, is always free, because he has few wants; the slavery of toil is there unknown. We readily admit that the communism of the primitive church was neither so rigorous nor so universal as the author of the Acts would have. What is certain is, that there was at Jerusalem a large community of poor, governed by the apostles, and to whom were sent gifts from every quarter of Christendom. This community was obliged, no doubt, to establish some rather seven rules, and some years later, it was even necessary, in order to enforce these rules, to employ terror. Some frightful legends were circulated, according to which the mere fact of having retained anything beyond that which one gave to the community, was looked upon as a capital crime and punished by death.

The porticoes of the temple, especially the portico of Solomon, which looked down on the Valley of Cedron, was the place where the disciples usually met during the day. There they could recall the hours Jesus had spent in the same place. In the midst of the extreme activity which reigned all about the Temple, they were little noticed. The galleries, which formed a part of the edifice, were the resort of numerous schools and sects, the theatre of endless disputations. The faithful followers of Jesus were, however, regarded as extreme devotees; for they still, without scruple, observed the Jewish customs, praying at the appointed hours, and observing all the precepts of the Law. They were Jews, differing only from others in believing that the Messiah had already come. The common people who were not informed as to their concerns, and they were an immense majority, regarded them as a sect of Hasidim, or pious people. One needed not to be either a schismatic or a heretic, in order to affiliate oneself with them, any more than one need cease to

be a Protestant in order to be a disciple of Spencer, or a Catholic, in order to belong to the sect of Saint Francis or of Saint Bruno. The people loved them, because of their piety, their simplicity, their kindly disposition. The aristocrats of the Temple looked upon them, no doubt, with displeasure. But the sect made little noise; it was tranquil, thanks to its obscurity.

At eventide, the brethren returned to their quarters, and partook of the meal, being divided into groups, in sign of paternity, and in remembrance of Jesus, whom they always believed to be present in the midst of them. The one at the head of the table broke the bread, blessed the cup, and sent them round as a symbol of union in Jesus. The most common act of life became in this way the most sacred and the most holy. These meals en famille, which were always enjoyed by the Jews, were accompanied by prayers, pious raptures, and pervaded by a sweet cheerfulness. They believed themselves once more to be in the time when Jesus animated them by his presence: they imagined they saw him, and it was not long before the rumour went abroad that Jesus had said: "As often as ye break the bread, do it in remembrance of Me." The bread itself became in some sort Jesus, conceived to be the only source of strength for those who had loved him, and who still lived by him. These repasts, which were always the chief symbol of Christianity, and the soul of its mysteries, took place at first every evening. Usage, however, soon restricted them to Sunday evenings. Later on, the mystic repast was changed to the morning. It is probable that at the period of the history which we have now reached, the holy day of each week was still, with the Christians, the Saturday.

The apostles chosen by Jesus, and who were supposed to have received from him a special mandate to announce to the world the Kingdom of God, had, in the little community, an incontestable superiority. One of the first cares, as soon as they saw the sect settle quietly down at Jerusalem, was to fill the vacancy that Judas of Kerioth had left in its ranks. The opinion that the latter had betrayed his master, and had been the cause of his death, became more and more general. The legend was mixed up with him, and every day one heard of some new circumstance which enhanced the black-heartedness of his deed. He had bought a field near the old necropolis of Hakeldama, to the south of Jerusalem, and there he lived retired. Such was the state of artless excitement in which the little Church found itself, that, in order to replace him, it was resolved to have recourse to a vote of some sort. In general, in great religious agitations we decide upon this method of coming to a determination, since it is admitted on principle that nothing is fortuitous, that the question in point is the chief object of divine attention, and that God's part in an action is so much the more greater in proportion as that of man's is the more feeble. The sole condition was, that the candidate should be chosen from the groups of the oldest disciples, who had been witnesses of the whole series of events, from the time of the baptism of John. This reduced considerably the number of those eligible. Two only were found in the ranks, Joseph Bar-Saba, who bore the name of Justus, and Matthias. The lot fell upon Matthias, who was accounted as one of the Twelve. But this was the sole instance of such a replacing. The apostles were hitherto regarded as having been nominated, once for all, by Jesus, and not as having successors. The danger of a permanent college, reserving to itself all the life and the strength of the association, was, with extraordinary instinct, discarded for a time. The concentration of the Church into an oligarchy

did not happen until later.

For the rest, it is necessary to guard against the misunderstandings, which the name of "apostle" might provoke, and which it has not failed to occasion. From a very early period, people were led by some passages in the Gospel, and, above all, by the analogy of the life of Saint Paul, to regard the apostles as essentially wandering missionaries, distributing in a kind of way the world in advance, and traversing as conquerors all the kingdoms of the earth. A cycle of legends was founded upon that data, and imposed upon ecclesiastical history. Nothing could be more contrary to the truth. The body of Twelve lived, generally, permanently at Jerusalem. Till about the year 60 the apostles did not leave the holy city except upon temporary missions. This explains the obscurity in which the majority of the members of the central council remained. Very few of them had a rôle. This council was a kind of sacred college or senate, destined only to represent tradition, and a spirit of conservatism. It finished by being relieved of every active function, so that its members had nothing to do but to preach and pray; but as yet the brilliant feats of preaching had not fallen to their lot. Their names were hardly known outside Jerusalem, and about the year 70 or 80 the lists which were given of these chosen Twelve, agreed only in the principal names.

The "brothers of the Lord" appear often by the side of the "apostles," although they were distinct from them. Their authority, however, was equal to that of the apostles. Here two groups constituted, in the nascent Church, a sort of aristocracy, founded solely on the more or less intimate relations that their members had had with the Master. These were the men whom Paul denominated "the pillars" of the Church at Jerusalem. For the rest, we see that no distinctions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy yet existed. The title was nothing; the personal authority was everything. The principle of ecclesiastical celibacy was already established, but it required time to bring all these germs to their complete development. Peter and Philip were married, and had sons and daughters.

The term used to designate the assembly of the faithful was the Hebrew Kahal, which was rendered by the essentially democratic word Ecclesia, which is the convocation of the people in the ancient Grecian cities, the summons to the Pnyx or the Agora. Commencing with the second or the third century before Jesus Christ, the words of the Athenian democracy became a sort of common law in Hellenic language; many of these terms, on account of their having been used in the Greek confraternities, entered into the Christian vocabulary. It was, in reality, the popular life, which; restrained for centuries, resumed its power under forms altogether different. The Primitive Church was, in its way, a little democracy. Even election by lot, a method so dear to the ancient Republics, had sometimes found its way into it. Less harsh, and less suspicious, however, than the ancient cities, the Church voluntarily delegated its authority. Like all theocratic societies, it inclined to abdicate its functions into the hands of a clergy, and it was easy to foresee that one or two centuries would not roll over before all this democracy would resolve itself into an oligarchy.

The power which was ascribed to the Church assembled and to its chiefs was enormous. The Church conferred every mission, and was guided solely in its choice by the signs given by the Spirit. Its authority went as

far as decreeing death. It is recorded that at the voice of Peter, several delinquents had fallen back and expired immediately. Saint Paul, a little later, was not afraid, in excommunicating a fornicator "to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor., v. vii.). Excommunication was held to be equivalent to a sentence of death. It was not doubted that any person whom the apostles or the elders of the Church had cut off from the body of the Saints, and delivered over to the power of evil, was not lost. Satan was considered as the author of diseases. To deliver over to him the corrupted member was to deliver over the latter to the natural executor of the sentence. A premature death was ordinarily held to be the result of these occult sentences, which, according to the expressive Hebrew phrase, "cut off a soul from Israel." The apostles were believed to be invested with supernatural powers. In pronouncing such condemnations, they thought that their anathemas could not fail but be effectual. The terrible impression which their excommunications produced, and the hatred manifested by the brethren against all the members thus cut off, were sufficient, in fact, in many cases, to bring about death, or at least to compel the culprit to expatriate himself. The same terrible ambiguity was found in the ancient law. "Extirpation" implied at once death, expulsion from the community, exile, and a solitary and mysterious demise. So with the apostate, or blasphemer. To destroy his body in order to save his soul came to be looked on as legitimate. It must be remembered that we are treating of the times of zealots, who regarded it as an act of virtue to poignard anyone who failed to obey the Law; and it must not be forgotten that certain Christians were or had been zealots. Accounts like those of the death of Ananias and Saphira did not excite any scruple. The idea of the civil power was so foreign to all that world placed without the pale of the Roman law, people were so persuaded that the Church was a complete society, sufficient in itself, that no person saw, in a miracle leading to death or the mutilation of an individual, an outrage punishable by the civil law. Enthusiasm and faith covered all, excused everything. But the frightful danger which these theocratic maxims laid up in store for the future is readily perceived. The Church is armed with a sword; excommunication is a sentence of death. There was henceforth in the world a power outside that of the state, which disposed of the life of citizens. Certainly, if the Roman authority had limited itself to repressing amongst the Jews precepts so condemnatory, it would have been a thousand times in the right. Only, in its brutality, it confounded the most legitimate of liberties, that of worshipping in one's own manner, with abuses which no society has ever been able to support with impunity.

Peter had amongst the apostles a certain precedence, derived directly from his zeal and his activity. In these first years, he was hardly ever separate from John, son of Zebedee. They went almost always together, and their amity was doubtless the corner stone of the new faith. James, the brother of the Lord, almost equalled them in authority, at least amongst a fraction of the Church. In regard to certain intimate friends of Jesus, like the Galilean women, and the family of Bethany, we have already remarked that no more mention is made of them. Less solicitous of organizing and of establishing a society, the faithful companions of Jesus were content with loving in death him whom they had loved in life. Absorbed in their expectation, these noble women, who have formed the faith of the world, were almost unknown to the important men of Jerusalem. When they died, the most

important elements of the history of nascent Christianity were put into the tomb with them. Only those who played active parts earned renown. Those who were content to love in secret, remained obscure but assuredly they chose the better part.

It is needless to remark that this little group of simple people had no speculative theology. Jesus wisely kept himself far removed from all metaphysics. He had only one dogma, his own divine sonship and the divinity of his mission. The whole symbol of the primitive church might be embraced in one line: "Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God." This belief rested upon a peremptory argument--the fact of the resurrection, of which the disciples claimed to be witnesses. In reality nobody (not even the Galilean women) said they had seen the resurrection. But the absence of the body and the apparitions which had followed, appeared to be equivalent to the fact itself. To attest the resurrection of Jesus was the task which all considered as being specially imposed upon them. It was, however, very soon put forth that the master had predicted this event. Different sayings of his were recalled, which were represented as having not been well understood, and in which was seen, on second thoughts, an announcement of the resurrection. The belief in the near glorious manifestation of Jesus was universal. The secret word which the brethren used amongst themselves, in order to be recognized and confirmed, was *maran-atha*, the "Lord is at hand." They believed to remember a declaration of Jesus, according to which their preaching would not have time to go over all the cities of Israel, before that the Son of Man appeared in his majesty. In the meanwhile the risen Jesus had seated himself at the right hand of his Father. Here he is to remain until the solemn day on which he shall conic, seated upon the clouds, to judge the quick and the dead.

The idea which they had of Jesus was the one which Jesus had given them of himself. Jesus had been "a prophet, mighty in deed and word," a man chosen of God, having received a special mission on behalf of humanity, a mission which he had proved by his miracles, and especially by his resurrection. God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and had clothed him with power; he passed his time in doing good, and in healing those who were under the power of the devil, for God was with him He is the Son of God; that is to say, a perfect man of God, a representation of God upon earth; he is the Messiah, the Saviour of Israel, announced by the prophets (Acts x. 38). The reading of the books of the Old Testament, especially of the Prophets and the Psalms, was habitual in the sect. They carried into that reading a fixed idea--that of discovering everywhere the type of Jesus. They were persuaded that the ancient Hebrew books were full of him, and from the very first years they formed a collection of texts drawn from the Prophets, the Psalms, and from certain apocryphal books, wherein they were convinced that the life of Jesus was predicted and described in advance. This method of arbitrary interpretation belonged at that time to all the Jewish schools. The Messianic missions were a sort of *jeu d'esprit*, analogous to the allusions which the ancient preachers made of passages of the Bible, diverted from their natural sense and accepted as the simple ornaments of sacred rhetoric.

Jesus with his exquisite tact in religious matters had instituted no new ritual. The new sect had not yet any special ceremonies. The practices of piety were Jewish. The assemblies had, in a strict sense, nothing liturgic. They were the meetings of confraternities, at which

prayers were offered up, devoted themselves to glossolaly or prophecy, and the reading of correspondence. There was nothing yet of sacerdotalism. There was no priest (cohen); the presbyter was the "elder," nothing more. The only priest was Jesus: in another sense, all the faithful were priests. Fasting was considered a very meritorious practice. Baptism was the token of admission to the sect. The rite was the same as administered by John, but it was administered in the name of Jesus. Baptism was, however, considered an insufficient initiation. It had to be followed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were effected by means of a prayer, offered up by the apostles, upon the head of the new convert, accompanied by the imposition of hands.

This imposition of hands, already as familiar to Jesus, was the sacramental act par excellence. It conferred inspiration, universal illumination, the power to produce prodigies, prophesying, and the speaking of languages. It was what was called the Baptism of the Spirit. It was supposed to recall a saying of Jesus: "John baptised you with water, but as for you, you shall be baptised by the Spirit." Gradually, all these ideas became amalgamated, and baptism was conferred "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But it is not probable that this formula, in the early days in which we now are, was yet employed. We see the simplicity of this primitive Christian worship. Neither Jesus nor the apostles had invented it. Certain Jewish sects had adopted, before them, these grave and solemn ceremonies, which appeared to have come in part from Chaldea, where they are still practised with special liturgies by the Sabaeans or Mandaeanes. The religion of Persia embraced also many rites of the same description.

The beliefs in popular medicine, which constituted a part of the force of Jesus, were continued in his disciples. The power of healing was one of the marvellous gifts conferred by the Spirit. The first Christians, like almost all the Jews of the time, looked upon diseases as the punishment of a transgression, or the work of a malignant demon. The apostles passed, just as Jesus did, for powerful exorcists. People imagined that the anointings of oil administered by the apostles, with imposition of hands, and invocation of the name of Jesus, were all powerful to wash away the sins which were the cause of disease, and to heal the afflicted one. Oil has always been in the East the medicine par excellence. For the rest, the simple imposition of the hands of the apostles was reputed to have the same effect. This imposition was made by immediate contact. Nor is it impossible that, in certain cases, the heat of the hands, being communicated suddenly to the head, insured to the sick person a little relief.

The sect being young and not numerous, the question of deaths was not taken into account until later on. The effect caused by the first demises which took place in the ranks of the brethren was strange. People were troubled by the manner of the deaths. It was asked whether they were less favoured than those who were reserved to see with their eyes the advent of the Son of Man. They came generally to consider the interval between death and the resurrection as a kind of blank in the consciousness of the defunct. The idea set forth in the Phœdon, that the soul existed before and after death, that death was a boon, that it was the philosophical state par excellence, inasmuch as the soul was then free and disengaged; this idea, I say, was by no means settled in

reflection always noticeable in their discourses, of the words of Jesus; it was above all their piety, their gentleness. The attraction of communistic life carried with it also a great deal of force. Their houses were a sort of hospitals, in which all the poor and the forsaken found asylum and succour.

One of the first to affiliate himself with the rising society was a Cypriote, named Joseph Halleui, or the Levite. Like the others, he sold his land and carried the price of it to the feet of the Twelve. He was an intelligent man, with a devotion proof against everything, and a fluent speaker. The apostles attached him closely to themselves and called him Bar-naba, that is to say, "the son of prophesy," or of "preaching." He was accounted, in fact, of the number of the prophets, that is to say, of the inspired preachers. Later on we shall see him play a capital part. Next to Saint Paul, he was the most active missionary of the first century. A certain Mnason, his countryman, was converted about the same time. Cyprus possessed many Jews. Barnabas and Mnason were undoubtedly Jewish by race. The intimate and prolonged relations of Barnabas with the Church at Jerusalem, induces the belief that Syro-Chaldaic was familiar to him.

A conquest, almost as important as that of Barnabas was that of one John, who bore the Roman surname of Marcus. He was a cousin of Barnabas, and was circumcised. His mother, Mary, enjoyed an easy competency; she, was likewise converted, and her dwelling was more than once made the rendezvous of the apostles. These two conversions appear to have been the work of Peter. In any case, Peter was very intimate with mother and son; he regarded himself as at home in their house. Even admitting the hypothesis that John-Mark was not identical with the real or supposed author of the second Gospel, his rôle was, nevertheless, a very considerable one. Later, we shall see him accompanying Paul, Barnabas, and even Peter himself, in their apostolic journeys.

The first flame was thus spread with great rapidity. The men, the most celebrated of the apostolic century, were almost all gained over to the cause in two or three years, by a sort of simultaneous attraction. It was a second Christian generation, similar to that which had been formed five or six years previously, upon the shores of Lake Tiberias. This second generation had not seen Jesus, and could not equal the first in authority. But it was destined to surpass it in activity and in its love for distant missions. One of the best known among the new converts was Stephen, who, before his conversion, appears to have been only a simple proselyte. He was a man full of ardour and of passion. His faith was of the most fervent, and he was considered to be favoured with all the gifts of the Spirit. Philip, who, like Stephen, was a zealous deacon and evangelist, attached himself to the community about the same time. He was often confounded with his namesake, the apostle. Finally, there were converted in this epoch, Andronicus and Junia, probably husband and wife, who, like Aquila and Priscilla, later on, were the model of an apostolic couple, devoted to all the duties of missionary work. They were of the blood of Israel, and were in the closest relations with the apostles.

The new converts, when touched by grace, were all Jews by religion, but they belonged to two very different classes of Jews. The one class was the Hebrews; that is to say, the Jews of Palestine, speaking Hebrew or

