

BARING-GOULD SABINE

**LOST AND HOSTILE
GOSPELS**

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Lost and Hostile Gospels

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Preface

It is advisable, if not necessary, for me, by way of preface, to explain certain topics treated of in this book, which do not come under its title, and which, at first thought, may be taken to have but a remote connection with the ostensible subject of this treatise. These are:

1. The outbreak of Antinomianism which disfigured and distressed primitive Christianity.
2. The opposition of the Nazarene Church to St. Paul.
3. The structure and composition of the Synoptical Gospels.

The consideration of these curious and important topics has forced its way into these pages; for the first two throw great light on the history of those Gospels which have disappeared, and which it is not possible to reconstruct without a knowledge of the religious parties to which they belonged. And these parties were determined by the fundamental question of Law or No-law, as represented by the Petrine and ultra-Pauline Christians. And the third of these topics necessarily bound up with the consideration of the structure and origin of the Lost Gospels, as the reader will see if he cares to follow me in the critical examination of their extant fragments.

Upon each of these points a few preliminary words will not, I hope, come amiss, and may prevent misunderstanding.

1. The history of the Church, as the history of nations, is not to be read with prejudiced eyes, with penknife in hand to erase facts which fight against foregone conclusions.

English Churchmen have long gazed with love on the Primitive Church as the ideal of Christian perfection, the Eden wherein the first fathers of their faith walked blameless before God, and passionless towards each other. To doubt, to dissipate in any way this pleasant dream, may shock and pain certain gentle spirits. Alas! the fruit of the tree of $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$, if it opens the eyes, saddens also and shames the heart.

History, whether sacred or profane, hides her teaching from those who study her through coloured glasses. She only reveals truth to those who look through the cold clear medium of passionless inquiry, who seek the Truth without determining first the masquerade in which alone they will receive it.

It exhibits a strange, a sad want of faith in Truth thus to constrain history to turn out facts according to order, to squeeze it through the sieve of prejudice. And what indeed is Truth in history but the voice of God instructing the world through the vices, follies, errors of the past?

A calm, patient spirit of inquiry is an attitude of the modern mind alone. To this mind History has made strange disclosures which she kept locked up through former ages. The world of Nature lay before the men of the past, but they could not, would not read it, save from left to right, or right to left, as their prejudices ran. The wise and learned had to cast aside their formulae, and sit meekly at the feet of Nature, as little children, before they learned her laws. Nor will History submit to hectoring. Only now is she unfolding the hidden truth in her ancient scrolls.

It is too late to go back to conclusions of an uncritical age, though it was that of our fathers; the time for denying the facts revealed by careful criticism is passed away as truly as is the time for explaining the shadows in the moon by the story of the Sabbath-breaker and his faggot of sticks.

And criticism has put a lens to our eyes, and disclosed to us on the shining, remote face of primitive Christianity rents and craters undreamt of in our old simplicity.

That there was, in the breast of the new-born Church, an element of antinomianism, not latent, but in virulent activity, is a fact as capable of demonstration as any conclusion in a science which is not exact.

In the apostolic canonical writings we see the beginning of the trouble; the texture of the Gospels is tinged by it; the Epistles of Paul on one side, of Jude and Peter on the other, show it in energetic operation; ecclesiastical history reveals it in full fragrance a century later.

Whence came the spark? what material ignited? These are questions that must be answered. We cannot point to the blaze in the sub-apostolic age, and protest that it was an instantaneous combustion, with no smouldering train leading up to it, – to the rank crop of weeds, and argue that they sprang from no seed. We shall have to look up the stream to the fountains whence the flood was poured.

The existence of antinomianism in the Churches of Greece and Asia Minor, synchronizing with their foundation, transpires from the Epistles of St. Paul. It was an open sore in the life-time of the Twelve; it was a sorrow weighing daily on the great soul of the Apostle of the Gentiles. It called forth the indignant thunder of Jude and Peter, and the awful denunciations in the charges to the Seven Churches.

The apocryphal literature of the sub-apostolic period carries on the sad story. Under St. John's presiding care, the gross scandals which defiled Gentile Christianity were purged out, and antinomian Christianity deserted Asia Minor for Alexandria. There it made head again, as revealed to us by the controversialists of the third century. And there it disappeared for a while.

Yet the disease was never eradicated. Its poison still lurked in the veins of the Church, and again and again throughout the Middle Ages heretics emerged fitfully, true successors of Nicolas, Cerdo, Marcion and Valentine, shaking off the trammels of the moral law, and seeking justification through mystic exaltation or spiritual emotion. The Papacy trod down these ugly heretics with ruthless heel. But at the Reformation, when the restraint was removed, the disease broke forth in a multitude of obscene sects spotting the fair face of Protestantism.

Nor has the virus exhausted itself. Its baleful workings, if indistinct, are still present and threatening.

But how comes it that Christianity has thus its dark shadow constantly haunting it? The cause is to be sought in the constitution of man. Man, moving in his little orbit, has ever a face turned away from the earth and all that is material, looking out into infinity, – a dark, unknown side, about whose complexion we may speculate, but which we can never map. It is a face which must ever remain mysterious, and ever radiate into mystery. As the eye and ear are bundles of nerves through which the inner man goes out into, and receives impressions from, the material world, so is the soul a marvellous tissue of fibres through which man is placed *en rapport* with the spiritual world, God and infinity. It is the existence of this face, these fibres – take which simile you like – which has constituted mystics in every age all over the world: Schamans in frozen Siberia, Fakirs in burning India, absorbed Buddhists, ecstatic Saints, Essenes, Witches, Anchorites, Swedenborgians, modern Spiritualists.

Man, double-faced by nature, is placed by Revelation under a sharp, precise external rule, controlling his actions and his thoughts.

To this rule spirit and body are summoned to do homage. But the spirit has an inherent tendency towards the unlimited, by virtue of its nature, which places it on the confines of the infinite. Consequently it is never easy under a rule which is imposed on it conjointly with the body; it strains after emancipation, strives to assert its independence of what is external, and to establish its claim to obey only the movements in the spiritual world. It throbs sympathetically with the auroral flashes in that realm of mystery, like the flake of gold-leaf in the magnetometer.

To be bound to the body, subjected to its laws, is degrading; to be unbounded, unconditioned, is its aspiration and supreme felicity.

Thus the incessant effort of the spirit is to establish its law in the inner world of feeling, and remove it from the material world without.

Moreover, inasmuch as the spirit melts into the infinite, cut off from it by no sharply-defined line, it is disposed to regard itself as a part of God, a creek of the great Ocean of Divinity, and to suppose that all its emotions are the pulsations of the tide in the all-embracing Spirit. It loses the consciousness of its individuality; it deifies itself.

A Sufee fable representing God and the human soul illustrates this well. "One knocked at the Beloved's door, and a voice from within cried, 'Who is there?' Then the soul answered, 'It is I.' And the voice of God said, 'This house will not hold me and thee.' So the door remained shut. Then the soul went away into a wilderness, and after long fasting and prayer it returned, and knocked once again at the door. And again the voice demanded 'Who is there?' Then he said, 'It is Thou,' and at once the door opened to him."

Thus the mystic always regards his unregulated wishes as divine revelations, his random impulses as heavenly inspirations. He has no law but his own will; and therefore, in mysticism, there, is no curb against the grossest licence.

The existence of that evil which, knowing the constitution of man, we should expect to find prevalent in mysticism, the experience of all ages has shown following, dogging its steps inevitably. So slight is the film that separates religious from sensual passion, that uncontrolled spiritual fervour roars readily into a blaze of licentiousness.

It is this which makes revivalism of every description so dangerous. It is a two-edged weapon that cuts the hand which holds it.

Yet the spiritual, religious element in man is that which is most beautiful and pure, when passionless. It is like those placid tarns, crystal clear and icy cold, in Auvergne and the Eifel, which lie in the sleeping vents of old volcanoes. We love to linger by them, yet never with security, for we know that a throb, a shock, may at any moment convert them into boiling geysirs or raging craters.

So well is this fact known in the Roman Church, that a mystic is inexorably shut up in a convent, or cast out as a heretic.

The more spiritual a religion is, the more apt it is to lurch and let in a rush of immorality; for its tendency is to substitute an internal for the external law, and the internal impulse is too often a hidden jog from the carnal appetite. In a highly spiritual religion, a written revelation is supplemented or superseded by one which is within.

This was eminently the case with the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. When plied with texts by the Lutheran divines, they coldly answered that they walked not after the letter, but after the spirit; that to those who are in Christ Jesus, there is an inner illumination directing their conduct, before which that which is without grew pale and waned. The horrible licence into which this internal light plunged them is matter of history.

One lesson history enforces inexorably – that there lies a danger to morals in placing reliance on the spirit as an independent guide.

The spirit has its proper function and its true security; its function, the perception of the infinite, the divine; its security, the observance of the marriage-tie which binds it to the body.

God has joined body and spirit in sacred wedlock, and subjected both to a revealed external law; in the maintenance of this union, and submission to this law, man's safety lies. The spirit supreme, the body a bond-maid, is no marriage; it is a concubinage, bringing with it a train of attendant evils.

Man stands, so to speak, at the bisection of two circles, the material and the spiritual, in each of which he has a part, and to the centres of each of which he feels a gravitation. Absorption in either realm is fatal to the well-being of the entire man.

And this leads us to the consideration of the marvellous aptitude to human nature of the Incarnation, welding together into indissoluble union spirit and matter, the infinite and the finite. The religion which flows from that source cannot dissociate soul from body. Its law is the marriage of that which is spiritual to that which is material; the soul cannot shake off the responsibilities of the body; everything spiritual is clothed, and every material object is a sacrament conveying a ray of divinity.

There can be no evasion, no abrasion and rupture of the tie by either party, without lesion of the chain which binds to the Incarnation; and it is a fact worthy of note, that mysticism has always a tendency to obscure this fundamental dogma, and that the immoral sects of ancient times and of the present day hang loosely by, or openly deny, this great verity.

St. Paul had a natural bias towards mysticism. His trances and revelations betoken a nature branching out into the spiritual realm; and throughout his letters we see the inevitable consequence – a struggle to displace the centre of obedience, to transfer it from without and enthrone it within, to make the internal revelation the governing principle of action, in the room of submission to an external law.

But, like St. Theresa, who never relinquished her common sense whilst yielding up her spirit to the most incoherent raptures; like Mohammad, who, however he might soar in ecstasy above the moon, never lost sight of the principles which would ensure a very material success; like Ignatius Loyola, who, in the midst of fantastic visions, elaborated a system of government full of the maturest judgment, – so St. Paul never surrendered himself unconditionally to the promptings of his spirit. Like the angel of the Apocalypse, if he stood with one foot in the vague sea, he kept the other on the solid land.

That thorn in the flesh, whose presence he deplored, kept him from forgetting the body and its obligations; the moral disorders breaking out wherever he preached his gospel, warned him in time not to relax too far the restraint imposed by the law without. As the revolt of the Anabaptists checked Luther, so did the excesses of the Gentile Christians arrest Paul. Both saw and obeyed the warning finger of Providence signalling a retreat.

Divinely inspired St. Paul was. But inspiration never obscures and obliterates human characteristics. It directs and utilizes them for its own purpose, leaving free margin beyond that purpose for the exercise of individual proclivities uncontrolled.

Paul's natural tendency is unmistakable; and we may see evidence of divine guidance in the fact of his having refused to give the rein to his natural propensities, and of being prepared to turn all his energies to the repairing of those dykes against the ocean which in a moment of impatience he had set his hand to tear down.

As Socrates was by nature prone to become the most vicious of men, so was Paul naturally disposed to become the most dangerous of heresiarchs. But the moral sense of Socrates mastered his passions and converted him into a philosopher; and the guiding spirit of God made of Paul the mystic an apostle of righteousness.

Christianity, as the religion of the Incarnation, has its external form and its internal spirit, and it is impossible to dissociate one from the other without peril. Mere formalism and naked spirituality are alike and equally pernicious. Formalism, the resolution of religion into ceremonial acts only, void of spirit, is like the octopus, lacing its thousand filaments about the soul and drawing it into the abyss; and mysticism, pure spirituality, like the magnet mountain in Sinbad's voyage, draws the nails out of the vessel – the rivets of moral law – and the Christian character goes to pieces.

The history of the Church is the history of her leaning first towards one side, then towards the other, of advance amid perpetual recoils from either peril.

2. The alarm caused in Jerusalem amidst the elder apostles and the Nazarene Church at the immorality which disfigured Pauline Christianity, was not the only cause of the mistrust wherewith they viewed him and his teaching. Other causes existed which I have not touched on in my text, lest I should distract attention from the main points of my argument, but they are deserving of notice here.

And the first of these was the intense prejudice which existed among the Jews of Palestine against Greek modes of thought, manners, culture, even against the Greek language.

The second was the jealousy with which the Palestinian Jews regarded the Alexandrine Jews, their mode of interpreting Scripture, and their system of theology.

St. Paul, an accomplished Greek scholar, brought up at Tarsus amidst Hellenistic Jews, adopted the theology and exegesis in vogue at Alexandria, and on both these accounts excited the suspicion and dislike of the national party at Jerusalem. The Nazarenes were imbued with the prejudices they had acquired in their childhood, in the midst of which they had grown up, and they could not but regard Paul with alarm when he turned without disguise to the Greeks, and introduced into the Church the theological system and scriptural interpretations of a Jewish community they had always regarded as of questionable orthodoxy.

First let us consider the causes which contributed to the creation of the prejudice against the Hellenizers. Judaea had served as the battle-field of the Greek kings of Egypt and Syria. Whether Judaea fell under the dominion of Syria or Egypt it mattered not; Ptolemies and Seleucides alike were intolerable oppressors. But it was especially the latter who excited to its last exasperation the fanaticism of the Jews, and called forth in their breasts an ineffaceable antipathy towards everything that was Greek.

The temple was pillaged by them, the sanctuary was violated, the high-priesthood degraded. Antiochus Epiphanes entertained the audacious design of completely overthrowing the religion of the Jews, of forcibly Hellenizing them. For this purpose he forbade the celebration of the Sabbaths and feasts, drenched the sanctuary with blood to pollute it, the sacrifices were not permitted, circumcision was made illegal. The sufferings of the Jews, driven into deserts and remote hiding-places in the mountains, are described in the first book of the Maccabees.

Yet there was a party disposed to acquiesce in this attempt at changing the whole current of their nation's life, ready to undo the work of Ezra, break with their past, and fling themselves into the tide of Greek civilization and philosophic thought. These men set up a gymnasium in Jerusalem, Graecised their names, openly scoffed at the Law, ignored the Sabbath, and neglected circumcision.¹ At the head of this party stood the high-priests Jason and Menelaus. The author of the first book of the Maccabees styles these conformists to the state policy, "evil men, seducing many to despise the Law." Josephus designates them as "wicked" and "impious."²

The memory of the miseries endured in the persecution of Antiochus did not fade out of the Jewish mind, neither did the party disappear which was disposed to symbolize with Greek culture, and was opposed to Jewish prejudice. Nor did the abhorrence in which it was held lose its intensity.

From the date of the Antiochian persecution, the names of "Greek" or "friend of the Greeks" were used as synonymous with "traitor" and "apostate."

Seventy years before Christ, whilst Hyrcanus was besieging Aristobulus in Jerusalem, the besiegers furnished the besieged daily with lambs for the sacrifice. An old Jew, belonging to the anti-national party, warned Hyrcanus that as long as the city was supplied with animals for the altar, so long it would hold out. On the morrow, in place of a lamb, a pig was flung over the walls. The earth shuddered at the impiety, and the heads of the synagogue solemnly cursed from thenceforth whosoever of their nation should for the future teach the Greek tongue to his sons.³ Whether this incident be true or not, it proves that a century after Antiochus Epiphanes the Jews entertained a hatred of that Greek culture which they regarded as a source of incredulity and impiety.

The son of Duma asked his uncle Israel if, after having learned the whole Law, he might not study the philosophy of the Greeks. "The Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.' These are the words of God" (Josh. i. 8), said the old man; "find me an hour which is neither day nor night, and in that study your Greek philosophy."⁴

¹ Joseph. Antiq. xii. 5; 1 Maccab. i. 11-15, 43, 52; 2 Maccab. iv. 9-16.

² πονήροισι, ἄσεβεσις. – Antiq. xiii. 4, xii. 10.

³ Baba-Kama, fol. 82; Menachoth, fol. 64; Sota, fol. 49; San-Baba, fol. 90.

⁴ Menachoth, fol. 99.

Gamaliel, the teacher of St. Paul, was well versed in Greek literature; that this caused uneasiness in his day is probable; and indeed the Gemara labours to explain the fact of his knowledge of Greek, and apologizes for it.⁵ Consequently Saul, the disciple of Gamaliel, also a Greek scholar, would be likely to incur the same suspicion, as one leaning away from strict Judaism towards Gentile culture.

The Jews of Palestine viewed the Alexandrine Jews with dislike, and mistrusted the translation into Greek of their sacred books. They said it was a day of sin and blasphemy when the version of the Septuagint was made, equal only in wickedness to that on which their fathers had made the golden calf.⁶

The loudly-proclaimed intention of Paul to turn to the Gentiles, his attitude of hostility towards the Law, the abrogation of the Sabbath and substitution for it of the Lord's-day, his denunciation of circumcision, his abandonment of his Jewish name for a Gentile one, led to his being identified by the Jews of Palestine with the abhorred Hellenistic party; and the Nazarene Christians shared to the full in the national prejudices.

The Jews, at the time of the first spread of Christianity, were dispersed over the whole world; and in Greece and Asia Minor occupied a quarter, and exercised influence, in every town. The Seleucides had given the right of citizenship to these Asiatic Jews, and had extended to them some sort of protection. The close association of these Jews with Greeks necessarily led to the adoption of some of their ideas. Since Ezra, the dominant principle of the Palestinian and Babylonish rabbis had been to create a "hedge of the Law," to constitute of the legal prescriptions a net lacing those over whom it was cast with minute yet tough fibres, stifling spontaneity. Whilst rabbinism was narrowing the Jewish horizon, Greek philosophy was widening man's range of vision. The tendencies of Jewish theology and Greek philosophy were radically opposed. The Alexandrine Jews never submitted to be involved in the meshes of rabbinism. They produced a school of thinkers, of whom Aristobulus was the first known exponent, and Philo the last expression, which sought to combine Mosaism with Platonism, to explain the Pentateuch as the foundation of a philosophic system closely related to the highest and best theories of the Greeks.

In the Holy Land, routine, the uniform repetition of prescribed forms, the absence of all alien currents of thought, tended insensibly to transform religion into formalism, and to identify it with the ceremonies which are its exterior manifestation.

In Egypt, on the other hand, the Alexandrine Jews, ambitious to give to the Greeks an exalted idea of their religion, strove to bring into prominence its great doctrines of the Unity of the Godhead, of Creation, and Providence. All secondary points were allegorized or slurred over. As Palestinian rabbinism became essentially ceremonial, Alexandrine Judaism became essentially spiritual. The streams of life and thought in these members of the same race were diametrically opposed.

The Jews settled in Asia Minor, subjected to the same influences, actuated by the same motives, as the Egyptian Jews, looked to Alexandria rather than to Jerusalem or Babylon for guidance, and were consequently involved in the same jealous dislike which fell on the Jews of Egypt.⁷

There can be no doubt that St. Paul was acquainted with, and influenced by, the views of the Alexandrine school. That he had read some of Philo's works is more than probable. How much he drew from the writings of Aristobulus the Peripatetic cannot be told, as none of the books of that learned but eclectic Jew have been preserved.⁸

In more than one point Paul departs from the traditional methods of the Palestinian rabbis, to adopt those of the Alexandrines. The Jews of Palestine did not admit the allegorical interpretation

⁵ Baba-Kama, fol. 63.

⁶ Mass. Sopherim, c. i. in Othonis Lexicon Rabbin. p. 329.

⁷ Philo is not mentioned by name once in the Talmud, nor has a single sentiment or interpretation of an Alexandrine Jew been admitted into the Jerusalem or Babylonish Talmud.

⁸ Aristobulus wrote a book to prove that the Greek sages drew their philosophy from Moses, and addressed his book to Ptolemy Philometor.

of Scripture. Paul, on two occasions, follows the Hellenistic mode of allegorizing the sacred text. On one of these occasions he uses an allegory of Philo, while slightly varying its application.⁹

The Palestinian Jews knew of no seven orders of angels; the classification of the celestial hierarchy was adopted by Paul¹⁰ from Philo and his school. The identification of idols with demons¹¹ was also distinctively Alexandrine.

But what is far more remarkable is to find in Philo, born between thirty and forty years before Christ, the key to most of Paul's theology, – the doctrines of the all-sufficiency of faith, of the worthlessness of good works, of the imputation of righteousness, of grace, mediation, atonement.

But in Philo, these doctrines drift purposeless. Paul took them and applied them to Christ, and at once they fell into their ranks and places. What was in suspension in Philo, crystallized in Paul. What the Baptist was to the Judæan Jews, that Philo was to the Hellenistic Jews; his thoughts, his theories, were —

“In the flecker'd dawning
The glitterance of Christ.”¹²

The Fathers, perplexed at finding Pauline words, expressions, ideas, in the writings of Philo, and unwilling to admit that Paul had derived them from Philo, invented a myth that the Alexandrine Jew came to Rome and was there converted to the Christian faith. Chronology and a critical examination of the writings of the Jewish Plato have burst that bubble.¹³

The fact that Paul was deeply saturated with the philosophy of the Alexandrine Jews has given rise also to two obstinate Christian legends, – that Dionysius the Areopagite, author of the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the *Divine Names*, &c., was the disciple of St. Paul, and that Seneca the philosopher was also his convert and pupil. Dionysius took Philo's system of the universe and emanations from the Godhead and Christianized them. The influence of Philo on the system of Dionysius *saute aux yeux*, as the French would say. And Dionysius protests, again and again, in his writings that he learned his doctrine from St. Paul.

From a very early age, the Fathers insisted on Seneca having been a convert of St. Paul; they pointed out the striking analogies in their writings, the similarity in their thoughts. How was this explicable unless one had been the pupil of the other? But Seneca, we know, lived some time in Alexandria with his uncle, Severus, prefect of Egypt; and at that time the young Roman, there can be little question, became acquainted with the writings of Philo.¹⁴

Thus St. Paul, by adopting the mode of Biblical interpretation of a rival school to that dominant in Judæa, by absorbing its philosophy, applying it to the person of Christ and the moral governance of the Church, by associating with Asiatic Jews, known to be infected with Greek philosophic heresies, and by his open invocation to the Gentiles to come into and share in all the plenitude of the privileges of the gospel, incurred the suspicion, distrust, dislike of the believers in Jerusalem, who had grown up in the midst of national prejudices which Paul shocked.

3. It has been argued with much plausibility, that because certain of the primitive Fathers were unacquainted with the four Gospels now accounted Canonical, that therefore those Gospels are compositions subsequent to their date, and that therefore also their authority as testimonies to the acts and sayings of Jesus is sensibly weakened, if not wholly overthrown. It is true that there were certain Fathers of the first two centuries who were unacquainted with our Gospels, but the above conclusions drawn from this fact are unsound.

⁹ Gal. iv. 24, 25.

¹⁰ Col. i. 16.

¹¹ 1 Cor. x. 21.

¹² Dante, *Parad.* xiv.

¹³ See the question carefully discussed in M. F. Delaunay's *Moines et Sibylles*; Paris, 1874, pp. 28 sq.

¹⁴ See, on this curious topic, C. Aubertin: *Sénèque et St. Paul*; Paris, 1872.

This treatise will, I hope, establish the fact that at the close of the first century almost every Church had its own Gospel, with which alone it was acquainted. But it does not follow that these Gospels were not as trustworthy, as genuine records, as the four which we now alone recognize.

It is possible, from what has been preserved of some of these lost Gospels, to form an estimate of their scope and character. We find that they bore a very close resemblance to the extant Synoptical Gospels, though they were by no means identical with them.

We find that they contained most of what exists in our three first Evangelists, in exactly the same words; but that some were fuller, others less complete, than the accepted Synoptics.

If we discover whole paragraphs absolutely identical in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, of the Hebrews, of the Clementines, of the Lord, it goes far to prove that all the Evangelists drew upon a common fund. And if we see that, though using the same material, they arranged it differently, we are forced to the conclusion that this material they incorporated in their biographies existed in *anecdota*, not in a consecutive narrative.

Some, at least, of the Gospels were in existence at the close of the first century; but the documents of which they were composed were then old and accepted.

And though it is indisputable that in the second century the Four had not acquired that supremacy which brought about the disappearance of the other Gospels, and were therefore not quoted by the Fathers in preference to them, it is also certain that all the material out of which both the extant and the lost Synoptics were composed was then in existence, and was received in the Church as true and canonical.

Admitting fully the force of modern Biblical criticism, I cannot admit all its most sweeping conclusions, for they are often, I think, more sweeping than just.

The material out of which all the Synoptical Gospels, extant or, lost, were composed, was in existence and in circulation in the Churches in the first century. That material is – the sayings of Christ on various occasions, and the incidents in his life. These sayings and doings of the Lord, I see no reason to doubt, were written down from the mouths of apostles and eye-witnesses, in order that the teaching and example of Christ might be read to believers in every Church during the celebration of the Eucharist.

The early Church followed with remarkable fidelity the customs of the Essenes, so faithfully that, as I have shown, Josephus mistook the Nazarenes for members of the Essene sect; and in the third century Eusebius was convinced that the Therapeutae, their Egyptian counterparts, were actually primitive Christians.¹⁵

The Essenes assembled on the Sabbath for a solemn feast, in white robes, and, with faces turned to the East, sang antiphonal hymns, broke bread and drank together of the cup of love. During this solemn celebration the president read portions from the sacred Scriptures, and the exhortations of the elders. At the Christian Eucharist the ceremonial was identical;¹⁶ Pliny's description of a Christian assembly might be a paragraph from Josephus or Philo describing an Essene or Therapeutic

¹⁵ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. ii. 17. The Bishop of Caesarea is quoting from Philo's account of the Therapeutae, and argues that these Alexandrine Jews must have been Christians, because their manner of life, religious customs and doctrines, were identical with those of Christians. "Their meetings, the distinction of the sexes at these meetings, the religious exercises performed at them, *are still in vogue among us at the present day*, and, especially at the commemoration of the Saviour's passion, we, like them, pass the time in fasting and vigil, and in the study of the divine word. All these the above-named author (Philo) has accurately described in his writings, and *are the same customs that are observed by us alone*, at the present day, particularly the vigils of the great Feast, and the exercises in them, and the hymns that are commonly recited among us. He states that, whilst one sings gracefully with a certain measure, the others, listening in silence, join in at the final clauses of the hymns; also that, on the above-named days, they lie on straw spread on the ground, and, to use his own words, abstain altogether from wine and from flesh. Water is their only drink, and the relish of their bread salt and hyssop. Besides this, he describes the grades of dignity among those who administer the ecclesiastical functions committed to them, those of deacons, and the presidencies of the episcopate as the highest. Therefore," Eusebius concludes, "it is obvious to all that Philo, when he wrote these statements, *had in view the first heralds of the gospel, and the original practices handed down from the apostles.*"

¹⁶ It is deserving of remark that the turning to the East for prayer, common to the Essenes and primitive Christians, was forbidden by the Mosaic Law and denounced by prophets. When the Essenes diverged from the Law, the Christians followed their lead.

celebration. In place of the record of the wanderings of the Israelites and the wars of their kings being read at their conventions, the president read the journeys of the Lord, his discourses and miracles.

No sooner was a Church founded by an apostle than there rose a demand for this sort of instruction, and it was supplied by the jottings-down of reminiscences of the Lord and his teaching, orally given by those who had companied with him.

Thus there sprang into existence an abundant crop of memorials of the Lord, surrounded by every possible guarantee of their truth. And these fragmentary records passed from one Church to another. The pious zeal of an Antiochian community furnished with the memorials of Peter would borrow of Jerusalem the memorials of James and Matthew. One of the traditions of John found its way into the Hebrew Gospel – that of the visit of Nicodemus; but it never came into the possession of the compiler of the first Gospel or of St. Luke.

After a while, each Church set to work to string the *anecdota* it possessed into a consecutive story, and thus the Synoptical Gospels came into being.

Of these, some were more complete than others, some were composed of more unique material than the others.

The second Gospel, if we may trust Papias, and I see no reason for doubting his testimony, is the composition of Mark, the disciple of St. Peter, and consists exclusively of the recollections of St. Peter. This Gospel was not co-ordinated probably till late, till long after the disjointed memorabilia were in circulation. It first circulated in Egypt; but in at least one of the Petrine Churches – that of Rhossus – the recollections of St. Peter had already been arranged in a consecutive memoir, and, in A.D. 190, Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, found the Church of Rhossus holding exclusively to this book as a Gospel of traditional authority, received from the prince of the apostles.

The Gospel of St. Matthew, on the other hand, is a diatessaron composed of four independent collections of memorabilia. Its groundwork is a book by Matthew the apostle, a collection of the discourses of the Lord. Whether Matthew wrote also a collection of the acts of the Lord, or contributed disconnected anecdotes of the Lord to Churches of his founding, and these were woven in with his work on the Lord's discourses, is possible, but is conjectural only.

But what is clear is, that into the first Gospel was incorporated much, not all, of the material used by Mark for the construction of his Gospel, *viz.* the recollections of St. Peter. That the first evangelist did not merely amplify the Mark Gospel appears from his arranging the order of his anecdotes differently; that he did use the same “*anecdota*” is evidenced by the fact of his using them often word for word.

The Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel quoted in the Clementines were composed in precisely the same manner, and of the same materials, but not of all the same.

That the Gospel of St. Matthew, as it stands, was the composition of that apostle, cannot be seriously maintained; yet its authority as a record of facts, not as a record of their chronological sequence, remains undisturbed.

The Gospel of St. Luke went, apparently, through two editions. After the issue of his original Gospel, which, there is reason to believe, is that adopted by Marcion, fresh material came into his hands, and he revised and amplified his book.

That this second edition was not the product of another hand, is shown by the fact that characteristic expressions found in the original text occur also in the additions.

The Pauline character of the Luke Gospel has been frequently commented on. It is curious to observe how much more pronounced this was in the first edition. The third Gospel underwent revision under the influence of the same wave of feeling which moved Luke to write the Christian Odyssey, the Acts, nominally of the Apostles, really of St. Paul. With the imprisonment of Paul the tide turned, and a reconciliatory movement set strongly in. Into this the Apostle of Love threw himself, and he succeeded in directing it.

The Apostolic Church was a well-spring tumultuously gushing forth its superabundance of living waters; there was a clashing of jets, a conflict of ripples; but directly St. John gave to it its definite organization, the flood rushed out between these banks, obedient to a common impulse, the clashing forces produced a resultant, the conflicting ripples blended into rhythmic waves, and the brook became a river, and the river became a sea.

The lost Gospels are no mere literary curiosity, the examination of them no barren study. They furnish us with most precious information on the manner in which all the Gospels were compiled; they enable us in several instances to determine the correct reading in our canonical Matthew and Luke; they even supply us with particulars to fill lacunae which exist, or have been made, in our Synoptics.

The poor stuff that has passed current too long among us as Biblical criticism is altogether unworthy of English scholars and theologians. The great shafts that have been driven into Christian antiquity, the mines that have been opened by the patient labours of German students, have not received sufficient attention at our hands. If some of our commentators timorously venture to their mouths, it is only to shrink back again scared at the gnomes their imagination pictures as haunting those recesses, or at the abysses down which they may be precipitated, that they suppose lie open in those passages.

This spirit is neither courageous nor honest. God's truth is helped by no man's ignorance.

It may be that we are dazzled, bewildered by the light and rush of new ideas exploding around us on every side; but, for all that, a cellar is no safe retreat. The vault will crumble in and bury us.

The new lights that break in on us are not always the lanterns of burglars.

S. Baring-Gould.

East Mersea, Colchester,

November 2nd, 1874.

Part I. The Jewish Anti-Gospels

I. The Silence Of Josephus

It is somewhat remarkable that no contemporary, or even early, account of the life of our Lord exists, except from the pens of Christian writers.

That we have none by Roman or Greek writers is not, perhaps, to be wondered at; but it is singular that neither Philo, Josephus, nor Justus of Tiberias, should have ever alluded to Christ or to primitive Christianity.

The cause of this silence we shall presently investigate. Its existence we must first prove.

Philo was born at Alexandria about twenty years before Christ. In the year A.D. 40, he was sent by the Alexandrine Jews on a mission to Caligula, to entreat the Emperor not to put in force his order that his statue should be erected in the Temple of Jerusalem and in all the synagogues of the Jews.

Philo was a Pharisee. He travelled in Palestine, and speaks of the Essenes he saw there; but he says not a word about Jesus Christ or his followers. It is possible that he may have heard of the new sect, but he probably concluded it was but insignificant, and consisted merely of the disciples, poor and ignorant, of a Galilean Rabbi, whose doctrines he, perhaps, did not stay to inquire into, and supposed that they did not differ fundamentally from the traditional teaching of the rabbis of his day.

Flavius Josephus was born A.D. 37 – consequently only four years after the death of our Lord – at Jerusalem. Till the age of twenty-nine, he lived in Jerusalem, and had, therefore, plenty of opportunity of learning about Christ and early Christianity.

In A.D. 67, Josephus became governor of Galilee, on the occasion of the Jewish insurrection against the Roman domination. After the fall of Jerusalem he passed into the service of Titus, went to Rome, where he rose to honour in the household of Vespasian and of Titus, A.D. 81. The year of his death is not known. He was alive in A.D. 93, for his biography is carried down to that date.

Josephus wrote at Rome his “History of the Jewish War,” in seven books, in his own Aramaic language. This he finished in the year A.D. 75, and then translated it into Greek. On the completion of this work he wrote his “Jewish Antiquities,” a history of the Jews in twenty books, from the beginning of the world to the twelfth year of the reign of Nero, A.D. 66. He completed this work in the year A.D. 93, concluding it with a biography of himself. He also wrote a book against Apion on the antiquity of the Jewish people. A book in praise of the Maccabees has been attributed to him, but without justice. In the first of these works, the larger of the two, the “History of the Jewish War,” he treats of the very period when our Lord lived, and in it he makes no mention of him. But in the shorter work, the “Jewish Antiquities,” in which he goes over briefly the same period of time treated of at length in the other work, we find this passage:

“At this time lived Jesus, a wise man [if indeed he ought to be called a man]; for he performed wonderful works [he was a teacher of men who received the truth with gladness]; and he drew to him many Jews, and also many Greeks. [This was the Christ.] But when Pilate, at the instigation of our chiefs, had condemned him to crucifixion, they who had at first loved him did not cease; [for he appeared to them on the third day again alive; for the divine prophets had foretold this, together with many other wonderful things concerning him], and even to this time the community of Christians, called after him, continues to exist.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς, σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρῆ; ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῆ τ' ἀληθῆ δεχομένων; καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ

That this passage is spurious has been almost universally acknowledged. One may be, perhaps, accused of killing dead birds, if one again examines and discredits the passage; but as the silence of Josephus on the subject which we are treating is a point on which it will be necessary to insist, we cannot omit as brief a discussion as possible of this celebrated passage.

The passage is first quoted by Eusebius (fl. A.D. 315) in two places,¹⁸ but it was unknown to Justin Martyr (fl. A.D. 140), Clement of Alexandria (fl. A.D. 192), Tertullian (fl. A.D. 193), and Origen (fl. A.D. 230). Such a testimony would certainly have been produced by Justin in his *Apology*, or in his *Controversy with Trypho the Jew*, had it existed in the copies of Josephus at his time. The silence of Origen is still more significant. Celsus in his book against Christianity introduces a Jew. Origen attacks the arguments of Celsus and his Jew. He could not have failed to quote the words of Josephus, whose writings he knew, had the passage existed in the genuine text.¹⁹

Again, the paragraph interrupts the chain of ideas in the original text. Before this passage comes an account of how Pilate, seeing there was a want of pure drinking water in Jerusalem, conducted a stream into the city from a spring 200 stadia distant, and ordered that the cost should be defrayed out of the treasury of the Temple. This occasioned a riot. Pilate disguised Roman soldiers as Jews, with swords under their cloaks, and sent them among the rabble, with orders to arrest the ringleaders.

This was done. The Jews finding themselves set upon by other Jews, fell into confusion; one Jew attacked another, and the whole company of rioters melted away. “And in this manner,” says Josephus, “was this insurrection suppressed.” Then follows the paragraph about Jesus, beginning, “At this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man,” &c.

And the passage is immediately followed by, “About this time another misfortune threw the Jews into disturbance; and in Rome an event happened in the temple of Isis which produced great scandal.” And then he tells an indelicate story of religious deception which need not be repeated here. The misfortune which befel the Jews was, as he afterwards relates, that Tiberius drove them out of Rome. The reason of this was, he says, that a noble Roman lady who had become a proselyte had sent gold and purple to the temple at Jerusalem. But this reason is not sufficient. It is clear from what precedes – a story of sacerdotal fraud – that there was some connection between the incidents in the mind of Josephus. Probably the Jews had been guilty of religious deceptions in Rome, and had made a business of performing cures and expelling demons, with talismans and incantations, and for this had obtained rich payment.²⁰

From the connection that exists between the passage about the “other misfortune that befel the Jews” and the former one about the riot suppressed by Pilate, it appears evident that the whole of the paragraph concerning our Lord is an interpolation.

That Josephus could not have written the passage as it stands, is clear enough, for only a Christian would speak of Jesus in the terms employed. Josephus was a Pharisee and a Jewish priest; he shows in all his writings that he believes in Judaism.

It has been suggested that Josephus may have written about Christ as in the passage quoted, but that the portions within brackets are the interpolations of a Christian copyist. But when these portions within brackets are removed, the passage loses all its interest, and is a dry statement utterly unlike the sort of notice Josephus would have been likely to insert. He gives colour to his narratives, his incidents are always sketched with vigour; this account would be meagre beside those of the riot

ἐπιγάγετο. Ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν. Καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν σταυρῷ ἐπιτετιμηκός Πιλάτου, οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο οἱ γε πρῶτον αὐτὸν ἀγαπήσαντες; ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν, τῶν θεῶν προφητῶν ταῦτά τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία θαυμάσια περὶ αὐτοῦ εἰρηκότων; εἰς ἔτι νῦν τῶν χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὀνομασμένων οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φῶλον. – Lib. xviii. c. iii. 3.

¹⁸ Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 11; Demonst. Evang. lib. iii.

¹⁹ He indeed distinctly affirms that Josephus did not believe in Christ, Contr. Cels. i.

²⁰ Juvenal, Satir. vi. 546. “Aere minuto qualiacunque voles Judaei somnia vendunt.” The Emperors, later, issued formal laws against those who charmed away diseases (Digest. lib. i. tit. 13, i. 1). Josephus tells the story of Eleazar dispossessing a demon by incantations. De Bello Jud. lib. vii. 6; Antiq. lib. viii. c. 2.

of the Jews and the rascality of the priests of Isis. Josephus asserts, moreover, that in his time there were four sects among the Jews – the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the sect of Judas of Gamala. He gives tolerably copious particulars about these sects and their teachings, but of the Christian sect he says not a word. Had he wished to write about it, he would have given full details, likely to interest his readers, and not have dismissed the subject in a couple of lines.

It was perhaps felt by the early Christians that the silence of Josephus – so famous an historian, and a Jew – on the life, miracles and death of the Founder of Christianity, was extremely inconvenient; the fact could not fail to be noticed by their adversaries. Some Christian transcriber may have argued, Either Josephus knew nothing of the miracles performed by Christ, – in which case he is a weighty testimony against them, – or he must have heard of Jesus, but not have deemed his acts, as they were related to him, of sufficient importance to find a place in his History. Arguing thus, the copyist took the opportunity of rectifying the omission, written from the standpoint of a Pharisee, and therefore designating the Lord as merely a wise man.

But there is another explanation of this interpolation, which will hardly seem credible to the reader at this stage of the examination, viz. that it was inserted by a Pharisee after the destruction of Jerusalem; and this is the explanation I am inclined to adopt. At that time there was a mutual tendency to sink their differences, and unite, in the Nazarene Church and the Jews. The cause of this will be given further on; sufficient for our purpose that such a tendency did exist. Both Jew and Nazarene were involved in the same exile, crushed by the same blow, united in the same antipathies. The Pharisees were disposed to regret the part they had taken in putting Jesus to death, and to acknowledge that he had been a good and great Rabbi. The Jewish Nazarenes, on their side, made no exalted claims for the Lord as being the incarnate Son of God, and later even, as we learn from the Clementine Homilies, refused to admit his divinity. The question dividing the Nazarene from the Jew gradually became one of whether Christ was to be recognized as a prophet or not; and the Pharisees, or some of them at least, were disposed to allow as much as this.

It was under this conciliatory feeling that I think it probable the interpolation was made, at first by a Jew, but afterwards it was amplified by a Christian. I think this probable, from the fact of its not being the only interpolation of the sort effected. Suidas has an article on the name “Jesus,” in which he tells us that Josephus mentions him, and says that he sacrificed with the priests in the temple. He quoted from an interpolated copy of Josephus, and this interpolation could not have been made by either a Gentile or a Nazarene Christian: not by a Gentile, for such a statement would have been pointless, purposeless to him; and it could not have been made by a Nazarene, for the Nazarenes, as will presently be shown, were strongly opposed to the sacrificial system in the temple. The interpolation must therefore have been made by a Jew, and by a Jew with a conciliatory purpose.

It is curious to note the use made of the interpolation now found in the text. Eusebius, after quoting it, says, “When such testimony as this is transmitted to us by an historian who sprang from the Hebrews themselves, respecting John the Baptist and the Saviour, what subterfuge can be left them to prevent them from being covered with confusion?”²¹

There is one other mention of Christ in the “Antiquities” (lib. xx. c. 9):

“Ananus, the younger, of whom I have related that he had obtained the office of high-priest, was of a rash and daring character; he belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, which, as I have already remarked, exhibited especial severity in the discharge of justice. Being of such a character, Ananus thought the time when Festus was dead, and Albinus was yet upon the road, a fit opportunity for calling a council of judges, and for bringing before them James, the brother of him who is called Christ, and some others: he accused them as transgressors of the law, and had them stoned to death. But the most moderate men of the city, who also were reckoned most learned

²¹ Hist. Eccl. i. 11.

in the law, were offended at this proceeding. They therefore sent privately to the king (Agrippa II.), entreating him to send orders to Ananus not to attempt such a thing again, for he had no right to do it. And some went to meet Albinus, then coming from Alexandria, and put him in mind that Ananus was not justified, without his consent, in assembling a court of justice. Albinus, approving what they said, angrily wrote to Ananus, and threatened him with punishment; and king Agrippa took from him his office of high-priest, and gave it to Jesus, the son of Donnæus.”

This passage is also open to objection.

According to Hegesippus, a Jewish Christian, who wrote a History of the Church about the year A.D. 170, of which fragments have been preserved by Eusebius, St. James was killed in a tumult, and not by sentence of a court. He relates that James, the brother of Jesus, was thrown down from a wing of the temple, stoned, and finally despatched with a fuller's club. Clement of Alexandria confirms this, and is quoted by Eusebius accordingly.

Eusebius quotes the passage from Josephus, without noticing that the two accounts do not agree. According to the statement of Hegesippus, St. James suffered alone; according to that of Josephus, several other victims to the anger or zeal of Ananus perished with him.

It appears that some of the copies of Josephus were tampered with by copyists, for Theophylact says, “The wrath of God fell on them (the Jews) when their city was taken; and Josephus testifies that these things happened to them on account of the death of Jesus.” But Origen, speaking of Josephus, says, “This writer, though he did not believe Jesus to be the Christ, inquiring into the cause of the overthrow of Jerusalem and the demolition of the temple ... says, ‘These things befel the Jews in vindication of James, called the Just, who was the brother of Jesus, called the Christ, forasmuch as they killed him who was a most righteous man.’”²² Josephus, as we have seen, says nothing of the sort; consequently Origen must have quoted from an interpolated copy. And this interpolation suffered further alteration, by a later hand, by the substitution of the name of Jesus for that of James.

It is therefore by no means unlikely that the name of James, the Lord's brother, may have been inserted in the account of the high-handed dealing of Ananus in place of another name.

However, it is by no means impossible to reconcile the two accounts. The martyrdom of St. James is an historical fact, and it is likely to have taken place during the time when Ananus had the power in his hands.

For fifty years the pontificate had been in the same family, with scarcely an interruption, and Ananus, or Hanan, was the son of Annas, who had condemned Christ. They were Sadducees, and as such were persecuting. St. Paul, by appealing to his Pharisee principles, enlisted the members of that faction in his favour when brought before Ananias.²³

The apostles based their teaching on the Resurrection, the very doctrine most repugnant to the Sadducees; and their accounts of visions of angels repeated among the people must have irritated the dominant faction who denied the existence of these spirits. It can hardly be matter of surprise that the murder of James should have taken place when Ananus was supreme in Jerusalem. If that were the case, Josephus no doubt mentioned James, and perhaps added the words, “The brother of him who is called Christ;” or these words may have been inserted by a transcriber in place of “of Sechania,” or Bar-Joseph.

This is all that Josephus says, or is thought to have said, about Jesus and the early Christians.

At the same time as Josephus, there lived another Jewish historian, Justus of Tiberias, whom Josephus mentions, and blames for not having published his History of the Wars of the Jews during

²² Contr. Cels. i. 47; and again, ii. 13: “This (destruction), as Josephus writes, ‘happened upon account of James the Just, the brother of Jesus, called the Christ;’ but in truth on account of Christ Jesus, the Son of God.”

²³ Acts xxiii.

the life of Vespasian and Titus. St. Jerome includes Justus in his Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers, and Stephen of Byzantium mentions him.

His book, or books, have unfortunately been lost, but Photius had read his History, and was surprised to find that he, also, made no mention of Christ. “This Jewish historian,” says he, “does not make the smallest mention of the appearance of Christ, and says nothing whatever of his deeds and miracles.”²⁴

²⁴ Bibliothec. cod. 33.

II. The Cause Of The Silence Of Josephus

It is necessary to inquire, Why this silence of Philo, Josephus and Justus? at first so inexplicable. It can only be answered by laying before the reader a picture of the Christian Church in the first century. A critical examination of the writings of the first age of the Church reveals unexpected disclosures.

1. It shows us that the Church at Jerusalem, and throughout Palestine and Asia Minor, composed of converted Jews, was to an *external* observer indistinguishable from a modified Essenism.

2. And that the difference between the Gentile Church founded by St. Paul, and the Nazarene Church under St. James and St. Peter, was greater than that which separated the latter from Judaism *externally*, so that to a superficial observer their inner connection was unsuspected.

This applies to the period from the Ascension to the close of the first century, – to the period, that is, in which Josephus and Justus lived, and about which they wrote.

1. Our knowledge of the Essenes and their doctrines is, unfortunately, not as full as we could wish. We are confined to the imperfect accounts of them furnished by Philo and Josephus, neither of whom knew them thoroughly, or was initiated into their secret doctrines.

The Essenes arose about two centuries before the birth of Christ, and peopled the quiet deserts on the west of the Dead Sea, a wilderness to which the Christian monks afterwards seceded from the cities of Palestine. They are thus described by the elder Pliny:

“On the western shore of that lake dwell the Essenes, at a sufficient distance from the water's edge to escape its pestilential exhalations – a race entirely unique, and, beyond every other in the world, deserving of wonder; men living among palm-trees, without wives, without money. Every day their number is replenished by a new troop of settlers, for those join them who have been visited by the reverses of fortune, who are tired of the world and its style of living. Thus happens what might seem incredible, that a community in which no one is born continues to subsist through the lapse of centuries.”²⁵

From this first seat of the Essenes colonies detached themselves, and settled in other parts of Palestine; they settled not only in remote and solitary places, but in the midst of villages and towns. In Samaria they flourished.²⁶ According to Josephus, some of the Essenes were willing to act as magistrates, and it is evident that such as lived in the midst of society could not have followed the strict rule imposed on the solitaries. There must therefore have been various degrees of Essenism, some severer, more exclusive than the others; and Josephus distinguishes four such classes in the sect. Some of the Essenes remained celibates, others married. The more exalted and exclusive Essenes would not touch one of the more lax brethren.²⁷

The Essenes had a common treasury, formed by throwing together the property of such as entered into the society, and by the earnings of each man's labour.²⁸

They wore simple habits – only such clothing as was necessary for covering nakedness and giving protection from the cold or heat.²⁹

They forbade oaths, their conversation being “yea, yea, and nay, nay.”³⁰

²⁵ Plin. Hist. Nat. v. 17; Epiphanius. adv. Haeres. xix. 1.

²⁶ Epiphanius. adv. Haeres. x.

²⁷ For information on the Essenes, the authorities are, Philo, Περὶ τοῦ πάντα σπουδαῖον εἶναι ἐλεύθερον, and Josephus, De Bello Judaico, and Antiquities.

²⁸ Compare Luke x. 4; John xii. 6, xiii. 29; Matt. xix. 21; Acts ii. 44, 45, iv. 32, 34, 37.

²⁹ Compare Matt. vi. 28-34; Luke xii. 22-30.

³⁰ Compare Matt. v. 34.

Their diet was confined to simple nourishing food, and they abstained from delicacies.³¹

They exhibited the greatest respect for the constituted authorities, and refrained from taking any part in the political intrigues, or sharing in the political jealousies, which were rife among the Jews.³²

They fasted, and were incessant at prayer, but without the ostentation that marked the Pharisees.³³

They seem to have greatly devoted themselves to the cure of diseases, and, if we may trust the derivation of their name given by Josephus, they were called Essenes from their being the healers of men's minds and bodies.³⁴

If now we look at our blessed Lord's teaching, we find in it much in common with that of the Essenes. The same insisting before the multitude on purity of thought, disengagement of affections from the world, disregard of wealth and clothing and delicate food, pursuit of inward piety instead of ostentatious formalism.

His miracles of healing also, to the ordinary observer, served to identify him with the sect which made healing the great object of their study.

But these were not the only points of connection between him and the Essenes. The Essenes, instead of holding the narrow prejudices of the Jews against Samaritans and Gentiles, extended their philanthropy to all. They considered that all men had been made in the image of God, that all were rational beings, and that therefore God's care was not confined to the Jewish nation, salvation was not limited to the circumcision.³⁵

The Essenes, moreover, exhibited a peculiar veneration for light. It was their daily custom to turn their faces devoutly towards the rising of the sun, and to chant hymns addressed to that luminary, purporting that his beams ought to fall on nothing impure.

If we look at the Gospels, we cannot fail to note how incessantly Christ recurs in his teaching to light as the symbol of the truth he taught,³⁶ as that in which his disciples were to walk, of which they were to be children, which they were to strive to obtain in all its purity and brilliancy.

The Essenes, moreover, had their esoteric doctrine; to the vulgar they had an esoteric teaching on virtue and disregard of the world, whilst among themselves they had a secret lore, of which, unfortunately, we know nothing certain. In like manner, we find our Lord speaking in parables to the multitude, and privately revealing their interpretation to his chosen disciples. "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."³⁷

The Clementines, moreover, preserve a saying of our Lord, contained in the Gospel in use among the Ebionites, "Keep the mysteries for me, and for the sons of my house."³⁸

The Essenes, though showing great veneration for the Mosaic law, distinguished between its precepts, for some they declared were interpolations, and did not belong to the original revelation; all the glosses and traditions of the Rabbis they repudiated, as making the true Word of none effect.³⁹ Amongst other things that they rejected was the sacrificial system of the Law. They regarded this with the utmost horror, and would not be present at any of the sacrifices. They sent gifts to the Temple, but never any beast, that its blood might be shed. To the ordinary worship of the Temple, apart from the sacrifices, they do not seem to have objected. The Clementine Homilies carry us into the very heart

³¹ Compare Matt. vi. 25, 31; Luke xii. 22, 23.

³² Compare Matt. xv. 15-22.

³³ Compare Matt. vi. 1-18.

³⁴ From ἑσῆς, meaning the same as the Greek Therapeutae.

³⁵ Compare Luke x. 25-37; Mark vii. 26.

³⁶ Matt. iv. 16, v. 14, 16, vi. 22; Luke ii. 32, viii. 16, xi. 23, xvi. 8; John i. 4-9, iii. 19-21, viii. 12, ix. 5, xi. 9, 10, xii. 35-46.

³⁷ Luke viii. 10; Mark iv. 12; Matthew xiii. 11-15.

³⁸ Clem. Homil. xix. 20.

³⁹ Compare Matt. xv. 3, 6.

of Ebionite Christianity in the second, if not the first century, and show us what was the Church of St. James and St. Peter, the Church of the Circumcision, with its peculiarities and prejudices intensified by isolation and opposition. In that curious book we find the same hostility to the sacrificial system of Moses, the same abhorrence of blood-shedding in the service of God. This temper of mind can only be an echo of primitive Nazarene Christianity, for in the second century the Temple and its sacrifices were no more.

Primitive Jewish Christianity, therefore, reproduced what was an essential feature of Essenism – a rejection of the Mosaic sacrifices.

In another point Nazarene Christianity resembled Essenism, in the poverty of its members, their simplicity in dress and in diet, their community of goods. This we learn from Hegesippus, who represents St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, as truly an ascetic as any mediaeval monk; and from the Clementines, which make St. Peter feed on olives and bread only, and wear but one coat. The name of Ebionite, which was given to the Nazarenes, signified “the poor.”

There was one point more of resemblance, or possible resemblance, but this was one not likely to be observed by those without. The Therapeutae in Egypt, who were apparently akin to the Essenes in Palestine, at their sacred feasts ate bread and salt. Salt seems to have been regarded by them with religious superstition, as being an antiseptic, and symbolical of purity.⁴⁰

Perhaps the Essenes of Judaea also thus regarded, and ceremonially used, salt. We have no proof, it is true; but it is not improbable.

Now one of the peculiarities of the Ebionite Church in Palestine, as revealed to us by the Clementines, was the use of salt with the bread in their celebrations of the Holy Communion.⁴¹

But if Christ and the early Church, by their teaching and practice, conformed closely in many things to the doctrine and customs of the Essenes, in some points they differed from them. The Essenes were strict Sabbatarians. On the seventh day they would not move a vessel from one place to another, or satisfy any of the wants of nature. Even the sick and dying, rather than break the Sabbath, abstained from meat and drink on that day. Christ's teaching was very different from this; he ate, walked about, taught, and performed miracles on the Sabbath. But though he relaxed the severity of observance, he did not abrogate the institution; and the Nazarene Church, after the Ascension, continued to venerate and observe the Sabbath as of divine appointment. The observance of the Lord's-day was apparently due to St. Paul alone, and sprang up in the Gentile churches⁴² in Asia Minor and Greece of his founding. When the churches of Peter and Paul were reconciled and fused together at the close of the century, under the influence of St. John, both days were observed side by side; and the Apostolical Constitutions represent St. Peter and St. Paul in concord decreeing, “Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath-day and the Lord's-day let them have leisure to go to church for instruction and piety. We have said that the Sabbath is to be observed on account of the Creation, and the Lord's-day on account of the Resurrection.”⁴³

After the Ascension, the Christian Church in Jerusalem attended the services in the Temple⁴⁴ daily, as did the devout Jews. There is, however, no proof that they assisted at the sacrifices. They continued to circumcise their children; they observed the Mosaic distinction of meats; they abstained from things strangled and from blood.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ The reference to salt as an illustration by Christ (Matt. v. 13; Mark ix. 49, 50; Luke xiv. 34) deserves to be noticed in connection with this.

⁴¹ Clem. Homil. xiv. 1: “Peter came several hours after, and breaking bread for the Eucharist, and putting salt upon it, gave it first to our mother, and after her, to us, her sons.”

⁴² Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 9.

⁴³ Const. Apost. lib. viii. 33.

⁴⁴ Acts ii. 46, iii. 1, v. 42.

⁴⁵ Acts xv.

The doctrine of the apostles after the descent of the Holy Ghost was founded on the Resurrection. They went everywhere preaching the Resurrection; they claimed to be witnesses to it, they declared that Jesus had risen, they had seen him after he had risen, that therefore the resurrection of all men was possible.⁴⁶ The doctrine of the Resurrection was held most zealously by the Pharisees; it was opposed by the Sadducees. This vehement proclamation of the disputed doctrine, this production of evidence which overthrew it, irritated the Sadducees then in power. We are expressly told that they “came upon them (the apostles), being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the Resurrection.” This led to persecution of the apostles. But the apostles, in maintaining the doctrine of the Resurrection, were fighting the battles of the Pharisees, who took their parts against the dominant Sadducee faction,⁴⁷ and many, glad of a proof which would overthrow Sadduceeism, joined the Church.⁴⁸

We can therefore perfectly understand how the Sadducees hated and persecuted the apostles, and how the orthodox Pharisees were disposed to hail them as auxiliaries against the common enemy. And Sadduceeism was at that time in full power and arrogance, exercising intolerable tyranny.

Herod the Great, having fallen in love with Mariamne, daughter of a certain Simon, son of Boethus of Alexandria, desired to marry her, and saw no other means of ennobling his father-in-law than by elevating him to the office of high-priest (B.C. 28). This intriguing family maintained possession of the high-priesthood for thirty-five years. It was like the Papacy in the house of Tusculum, or the primacy of the Irish Church in that of the princes of Armagh. Closely allied to the reigning family, it lost its hold of the high-priesthood on the deposition of Archelaus, but recovered it in A.D. 42. This family, called Boethusim, formed a sacerdotal nobility, filling all the offices of trust and emolument about the Temple, very worldly, supremely indifferent to their religious duties, and defiantly sceptical. They were Sadducees, denying angel, and devil, and resurrection; living in easy self-indulgence; exasperating the Pharisees by their heresy, grieving the Essenes by their irreligion.

In the face of the secularism of the ecclesiastical rulers, the religious zeal of the people was sure to break out in some form of dissent.

John the Baptist was the St. Francis of Assisi, the Wesley of his time. If the Baptist was not actually an Essene, he was regarded as one by the indiscriminating public eye, never nice in detecting minute dogmatic differences, judging only by external, broad resemblances of practice.

The ruling worldliness took alarm at his bold denunciations of evil, and his head fell.

Jesus of Nazareth seemed to stand forth occupying the same post, to be the mouthpiece of the long-brooding discontent; and the alarmed party holding the high-priesthood and the rulership of the Sanhedrim compassed his death. To the Sadducean Boethusim, who rose into power again in A.D. 42, Christianity was still obnoxious, but more dangerous; for by falling back on the grand doctrine of Resurrection, it united with it the great sect of the Pharisees.

Under these circumstances the Pharisees began to regret the condemnation and death of Christ as a mistake of policy. Under provocation and exclusion from office, they were glad to unite with the Nazarene Church in combating the heretical sect and family which monopolized the power, just as at the present day in Germany Ultramontanism and Radicalism are fraternizing. Jerusalem fell, and Sadduceeism fell with it, but the link which united Pharisaism and Christianity was not broken as yet; if the Jewish believers and the Pharisees had not a common enemy to fight, they had a common loss to deplore; and when they mingled their tears in banishment, they forgot that they were not wholly one in faith. Christianity had been regarded by them as a modified Essenism, an Essenism gravitating towards Pharisaism, which lent to Pharisaism an element of strength and growth in which it was

⁴⁶ Acts i. 22, iv. 2, 33, xxiii. 6.

⁴⁷ Acts xxiii. 7.

⁴⁸ Acts xv. 5.

naturally deficient – that zeal and spirituality which alone will attract and quicken the popular mind into enthusiasm.

Whilst the Jewish Pharisees and Jewish Nazarenes were forgetting their differences and approximating, the great and growing company of Gentile believers assumed a position of open, obtrusive indifference at first, and then of antagonism, to the Law, not merely to the Law as accepted by the Pharisee, but to the Law as winnowed by the Essene.

The apostles at Jerusalem were not disposed to force the Gentile converts into compliance with all the requirements of that Law, which they regarded as vitiated by human glosses; but they maintained that the converts must abstain from meats offered to idols, from the flesh of such animals as had been strangled, and from blood.⁴⁹ If we may trust the Clementines, which represent the exaggerated Judaizing Christianity of the ensuing century, they insisted also on the religious obligation of personal cleanliness, and on abstention from such meats as had been pronounced unclean by Moses.

To these requirements one more was added, affecting the relations of married people; these were subjected to certain restrictions, the observance of new moons and sabbaths.

“This,” says St. Peter, in the Homilies,⁵⁰ “is the rule of divine appointment. To worship God only, and trust only in the Prophet of Truth, and to be baptized for the remission of sins, to abstain from the table of devils, that is, food offered to idols, from dead carcasses, from animals that have been suffocated or mangled by wild beasts, and from blood; not to live impurely; to be careful to wash when unclean; that the women keep the law of purification; that all be sober-minded, given to good works, refrain from wrong-doing, look for eternal life from the all-powerful God, and ask with prayer and continual supplication that they may win it.”

These simple and not very intolerable requirements nearly produced a schism. St. Paul took the lead in rejecting some of the restraints imposed by the apostles at Jerusalem. He had no patience with their minute prescriptions about meats: “Touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using.”⁵¹ It was inconvenient for the Christian invited to supper to have to make inquiries if the ox had been knocked down, or the fowl had had its neck wrung, before he could eat. What right had the apostles to impose restrictions on conjugal relations? St. Paul waxed hot over this. “Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”⁵² “Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moons, or of the sabbath-days.”⁵³ It was exactly these sabbaths and new moons on which the Nazarene Church imposed restraint on married persons.⁵⁴ As for meat offered in sacrifice to idols, St. Paul relaxed the order of the apostles assembled in council. It was no matter of importance whether men ate sacrificial meat or not, for “an idol is nothing in the world.” Yet with tender care for scrupulous souls, he warned his disciples not to flaunt their liberty in the eyes of the sensitive, and offend weak consciences. He may have thus allowed, in opposition to the apostles at Jerusalem, because his common sense got the better of his prudence. But the result was the widening of the breach that had opened at Antioch when he withstood Peter to the face.

The apostles had abolished circumcision as a rite to be imposed on the Gentile proselytes, but the children of Jewish believers were still submitted by their parents, with the consent of the apostles, to the Mosaic institution. This St. Paul would not endure. He made it a matter of vital importance. “Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of

⁴⁹ Acts xv. 29.

⁵⁰ Clem. Homil. vii. 8.

⁵¹ Col. ii. 21.

⁵² Gal. iv. 10. When it is seen in the Clementines how important the observance of these days was thought, what a fundamental principle it was of Nazarenism, I think it cannot be doubted that it was against this that St. Paul wrote.

⁵³ Col. ii. 16.

⁵⁴ Clement. Homil. xix. 22.

no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”⁵⁵ In a word, to submit to this unpleasant, but otherwise harmless ceremony, was equivalent to renouncing Christ, losing the favour of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit. It was incurring damnation. The blood of Christ, his blessed teaching, his holy example, could “profit nothing” to the unfortunate child which had been submitted to the knife of the circumciser.

The contest was carried on with warmth. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, declared his independence of the Jewish-Christian Church; his Gospel was not that of Peter and James. Those who could not symbolize with him he pronounced “accursed.” The pillar apostles, James, Cephas and John, had given, indeed, the right hand of fellowship to the Apostle of the Gentiles, when they imposed on his converts from heathenism the light rule of abstinence from sacrificial meats, blood and fornication; but it was with the understanding that he was to preach to the Gentiles exclusively, and not to interfere with the labours of St. Peter and St. James among the Jews. But St. Paul was impatient of restraint; he would not be bound to confine his teaching to the uncircumcision, nor would he allow his Jewish converts to be deprived of their right to that full and frank liberty which he supposed the Gospel to proclaim.

Paul's followers assumed a distinct name, arrogated to themselves the exclusive right to be entitled “Christians,” whilst they flung on the old apostolic community of Nazarenes the disdainful title of “the Circumcision.”

An attempt was made to maintain a decent, superficial unity, by the rival systems keeping geographically separate. But such a compromise was impossible. Wherever Jews accepted the doctrine that Christ was the Messiah there would be found old-fashioned people clinging to the customs of their childhood respecting Moses, and reverencing the Law; to whom the defiant use of meats they had been taught to regard as unclean would be ever repulsive, and flippant denial of the Law under which, the patriarchs and prophets had served God must ever prove offensive. Such would naturally form a Judaizing party, – a party not disposed to force their modes of life and prejudices on the Gentile converts, but who did not wish to dissociate Christianity from Mosaism, who would view the Gospel as the sweet flower that had blossomed from the stem of the Law, not as an axe laid at its root.

But the attempt to reconcile both parties was impossible at that time, in the heat, intoxication and extravagance of controversy. In the Epistle to the Galatians we see St. Paul writing in a strain of fiery excitement against those who interfered with the liberty of his converts, imposing on them the light rule of the Council of Jerusalem. The followers of St. Peter and St. James are designated as those who “bewitch” his converts, “remove them from the grace of Christ to another Gospel;” who “trouble” his little Church in its easy liberty, “would pervert the gospel of Christ.” To those only who hold with him in complete emancipation of the believer from vexatious restraints, “to as many as walk according to this rule,” will he accord his benediction, “Peace and mercy.”

He assumed a position of hostility to the Law. He placed the Law on one side and the Gospel on the other; here restraint, there liberty; here discipline, there freedom. A choice must be made between them; an election between Moses and Christ. There was no conciliation possible. To be under the Law was not to be under grace; the Law was a “curse,” from which Christ had redeemed man. Paul says he had not known lust but by the Law which said, Thou shalt not covet. Men under the Law were bound by its requirements, as a woman is bound to a husband as long as he lives, but when the husband is dead she is free, – so those who accept the Gospel are free from the Law and all its requirements. The law which said, Thou shalt not covet, is dead. Sin was the infraction of the law. But the law being dead, sin is no more. “Until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law.” “Where no law is, there is no transgression.” “Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held.”

⁵⁵ Gal. v. 2-4.

Such an attack upon what was revered and observed by the Jewish Christians, and such doctrine which seemed to throw wide the flood-gates of immorality, naturally excited alarm and indignation among those who followed the more temperate teaching of Peter and James and John.

The converts of St. Paul, in their eagerness to manifest their emancipation from the Law, rolled up ceremonial and moral restrictions in one bundle, and flung both clean away.

The Corinthians, to show their freedom under the Gospel, boasted their licence to commit incest “such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles.”⁵⁶ Nicolas, a hot Pauline, and his followers “rushed headlong into fornication without shame;”⁵⁷ he had the effrontery to produce his wife and offer her for promiscuous insult before the assembled apostles;⁵⁸ the later Pauline Christians went further. The law was, it was agreed, utterly bad, but it was promulgated by God; therefore the God of the Law was not the same deity as the God of the Gospel, but another inferior being, the Demiurge, whose province was rule, discipline, restraint, whereas the God of the Gospel was the God of absolute freedom and unrestrained licence.

They refused to acknowledge any Scriptures save the Gospel of St. Luke, or rather the Gospel of the Lord, another recension of that Gospel, drawn up by order of St. Paul, and the Epistles of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

But even in the first age the disorders were terrible. St. Paul's Epistles give glimpses of the wild outbreak of antinomianism that everywhere followed his preaching, – the drunkenness which desecrated the Eucharists, the backbitings, quarrellings, fornication, lasciviousness, which called forth such indignant denunciation from the great apostle.

Yet he was as guiltless of any wish to relax the restraints of morality as was, in later days, his great counterpart Luther. Each rose up against a narrow formalism, and proclaimed the liberty of the Christian from obligation to barren ceremonial; but there were those in the first, as there were those in the sixteenth century, with more zeal than self-control, who found “Justification by Faith only” a very comfortable doctrine, quite capable of accommodating itself to a sensual or careless life.

St. Paul may have seen, and probably did see, that Christianity would never make way if one part of the community was to be fettered by legal restrictions, and the other part was to be free. According to the purpose apparent in the minds of James and Peter, the Jewish converts were to remain Jews, building up Christian faith on the foundation of legal prescriptions, whilst the Gentile converts were to start from a different point. There could be no unity in the Church under this system – all must go under the Law, or all must fling it off. The Church, starting from her cradle with such an element of weakness in her constitution, must die prematurely.

He was right in his view. But it is by no means certain that St. Peter and St. James were as obstinately opposed to the gradual relaxation of legal restrictions, and the final extinction or transformation of the ceremonial Law, as he supposed.

In the heat and noise of controversy, he no doubt used unguarded language, said more than he thought, and his converts were not slow to take him *au pied de la lettre*.

The tone of Paul's letters shows conclusively that not for one moment would he relax moral obligation. With the unsuspectingness of a guileless spirit, he never suspected that his words, taken and acted upon as a practical system, were capable of becoming the charter of antinomianism. Yet it was so. No sooner had he begun to denounce the Law, than he was understood to mean the whole Law, not merely its ceremonial part. When he began to expatiate on the freedom of Grace, he was understood to imply that human effort was overridden. When he proclaimed Justification by Faith only, it was held that he swept away for ever obligation to keep the Commandments.

⁵⁶ 1 Cor. v. 1.

⁵⁷ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. iii. 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

The results were precisely the same in the sixteenth century, when Luther re-affirmed Paulinism, with all his warmth and want of caution. At first he proclaimed his doctrines boldly, without thought of their practical application. When he saw the results, he was staggered, and hastened to provide checks, and qualify his former words:

“Listen to the Papists,” he writes; “the sole argument they use against us is that no good result has come of my doctrine. And, in fact, scarce did I begin to preach my Gospel before the country burst into frightful revolt; schisms and sects tore the Church; everywhere honesty, morality, and good order fell into ruin; every one thought to live independently, and conduct himself after his own fancy and caprices and pleasure, as though the reign of the Gospel drew with it the suppression of all law, right and discipline. Licence and all kinds of vices and turpitudes are carried in all conditions to an extent they never were before. In those days there was some observance of duty, the people especially were decorous; but now, like a wild horse without rein and bridle, without constraint or decency, they rush on the accomplishment of their grossest lusts.”⁵⁹

Gaspard Schwenkfeld saw the result of this teaching, and withdrew from it into what he considered a more spiritual sect, and was one of the founders of Anabaptism, a reaction against the laxity and licentiousness of Lutheranism. “This doctrine,” said he, “is dangerous and scandalous; it fixes us in impiety, and even encourages us in it.”⁶⁰

The Epistles of St. Paul exhibit him grappling with this terrible evil, crying out in anguish against the daily growing scandals, insisting that his converts should leave off their “rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife and envying;” that their bodies were temples of the Spirit of God, not to be defiled with impurity; that it was in vain to deceive themselves by boasting their faith and appealing to the freedom of Grace. “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor coveters, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

And he holds himself up to his Corinthian converts as an example that, though professing liberty, they should walk orderly: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”⁶¹ But apparently all his efforts could only control the most exuberant manifestations of antinomianism, like the incest at Corinth.

The grave Petrine Christians at Jerusalem were startled at the tidings that reached them from Asia Minor and Greece. It was necessary that the breach should be closed. The Church at Jerusalem was poor; a collection was ordered by St. Paul to be made for its necessities. He undertook to carry the money himself to Jerusalem, and at the same time, by conforming to an insignificant legal custom, to recover the regard and confidence of the apostles.

This purpose emerges at every point in the history of St. Paul's last visit to Jerusalem. But it was too late. The alienation of parties was too complete to be salved over with a gift of money and appeased by shaven crowns.⁶²

⁵⁹ “Lies der Papisten Bücher, höre ihre Predigen, so wirst du finden, dass diess ihr einziger Grund ist, darauf sie stehen wider uns pochen und trotzen, da sie vorgeben, es sei nichts Gutes aus unserer Lehre gekommen. Denn alsbald, da unser Evangelium anging und sie hören liess, folgte der gräuliche Aufruhr, es erhuben sich in der Kirche Spaltung und Sekten, es ward Ehrbarkeit, Disziplin und Zucht zerrüttet, und Jedermann wolte vogelfrei seyn und thun, was ihm gelüestet nach allem seinen Muthwillen und Gefallen, als wären alle Gesetze, Rechte und Ordnung gans aufgehoben, wie es denn leider allzu wahr ist. Denn der Muthwille in allen Ständen, mit allerlei Laster, Sünden und Schanden ist jetzt viel grösser denn zuvor, da die Leute, und sonderlich der Pöbel, doch etlichermassen in Furcht und in Zaum gehalten waren, welches nun wie ein zaumlos Pferd lebt und thut Alles, was es nur gelüestet ohne allen Scheu.” – Ed. Walch, v. 114. For a very full account of the disorders that broke out on the preaching of Luther, see Döllinger's *Die Reformation in ihre Entwicklung*. Regensb. 1848.

⁶⁰ *Epistolas*, 1528, ii. 192.

⁶¹ 1 Cor. xi. 1.

⁶² Acts xxi. 23, 24.

When St. Paul was taken, he made one ineffectual effort to establish his relation to Judaism, by an appeal to the Pharisees. But it failed. He was regarded with undisguised abhorrence by the Jews, with coldness by the Nazarenes. The Jews would have murdered him. We do not hear that a Nazarene visited him.

Further traces of the conflict appear in the Epistles. The authenticity of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been doubted, disputed, and on weighty grounds. It is saturated with Philonism, whole passages of Philo re-appear in the Epistle to the Hebrews, yet I cannot doubt that it is by St. Paul. When the heat of contest was somewhat abated, when he saw how woefully he had been misunderstood by his Jewish and Gentile converts in the matter of the freedom of the Gospel; when he learned how that even the heathen, not very nice about morals, spoke of the scandals that desecrated the assemblies of the Pauline Christians, – then no doubt he saw that it was necessary to lay down a plain, sharp line of demarcation between those portions of the Law which were not binding, and those which were. Following a train of thought suggested by Philo, whose works he had just read, he showed that the ceremonial, sacrificial law was symbolical, and that, as it typified Christ, the coming of the One symbolized abrogated the symbol. But the moral law had no such natural limit, therefore it was permanent. Yet he was anxious not to be thought to abandon his high views of the dignity of Faith; and the Epistle to the Hebrews contains one of the finest passages of his writing, the magnificent eulogy on Faith in the 11th chapter. St. Paul, like Luther, was not a clear thinker, could not follow a thread of argument uninterruptedly to its logical conclusion. Often, when he saw that conclusion looming before him, he hesitated to assert it, and proceeded to weaken the cogency of his former reasoning, or diverged to some collateral or irrelevant topic.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is, I doubt not, a reflex of the mind of Paul under the circumstances indicated.

This Epistle, there can be little question, called forth the counterblast of the Epistle of James, the Lord's brother. But the writer of that Epistle exhibits an unjust appreciation of the character of St. Paul. Paul was urged on by conviction, and not actuated by vanity. Yet the exasperation must have been great which called forth the indignant exclamation, “Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead!”⁶³

The second of the Canonical Epistles attributed to St. Peter,⁶⁴ if not the expression of the opinion of the Prince of the Apostles himself, represents the feelings of Nazarene Christians of the first century. It cautions those who read the writings of St. Paul, “which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

The Nicolaitans, taking advantage of the liberty accorded them in one direction, assumed it in another. In the letter to the Church of Pergamos, in the Apocalypse, they are denounced as “eating things sacrificed to idols, and committing fornication.”⁶⁵ They are referred to as the followers of Balaam, both in that Epistle and in the Epistles of Jude and the 2nd of St. Peter. This is because Balaam has the same significance as Nicolas.⁶⁶ Jude, the brother of James, writes of them: “Certain men are crept in unawares ... ungodly men turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness ... who defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities,” *i. e.* of the apostles; “these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”

⁶³ James ii. 20.

⁶⁴ It is included by Eusebius in the Antilegomena, and, according to St. Jerome, was rejected as a spurious composition by the majority of the Christian world.

⁶⁵ Rev. ii. 1, 14, 15.

⁶⁶ נִיכֹלַיִט, *destruction of the people*, from עֹלֵב, *to swallow up*, and עַם, *people* = Νικόλαος.

And St. Peter wrote in wrath and horror. "It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."⁶⁷

The extreme Pauline party went on their way; Marcion, Valentine, Mark, were its successive high-priests and prophets. It ran from one extravagance to another, till it sank into the preposterous sect of the Cainites; in their frantic hostility to the Law, canonizing Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, Saul, all who are denounced in the Old Testament as having resisted the God of the Law, and deifying the Serpent, the Deceiver, as the God of the Gospel who had first revealed to Eve the secret of liberty, of emancipation from restraint.

But disorders always are on the surface, patent to every one, and cry out for a remedy. Those into which the advanced Pauline party had fallen were so flagrant, so repugnant to the good sense and right feelings of both Jew and Gentile believers, that they forced on a reaction. The most impracticable antinomians on one side, and obstructive Judaizers on the other, were cut off, or cut themselves off, from the Church; and a temper of mutual concession prevailed among the moderate. At the head of this movement stood St. John.

The work of reconciliation was achieved by the Apostle of Love. A happy compromise was effected. The Sabbath and the Lord's-day were both observed, side by side. Nothing was said on one side about distinction in meats, and the sacred obligation of washing; and on the other, the Gentile Christians adopted the Psalms of David and much of the ceremonial of the Temple into their liturgy. The question of circumcision was not mooted. It had died out of exhaustion, and the doctrine of Justification was accepted as a harmless opinion, to be constantly corrected by the moral law and common sense.

A similar compromise took place at the English Reformation. In deference to the dictation of foreign reformers, the Anglican divines adopted their doctrine of Justification by Faith only into the Articles, but took the wise precaution of inserting as an antidote the Decalogue in the Communion Office, and of ordering it to be written up, where every one might read, in the body of the church.

The compromise effected by the influence and authority of St. John was rejected by extreme partisans on the right and the left. The extreme Paulines continued to refuse toleration to the Law and the Old Testament. The Nazarene community had also its impracticable zealots who would not endure the reading of the Pauline Epistles.

The Church, towards the close of the apostolic age, was made up of a preponderance of Gentile converts; in numbers and social position they stood far above the Nazarenes.

Under St. John, the Church assumed a distinctively Gentile character. In its constitution, religious worship, in its religious views, it differed widely from the Nazarene community in Palestine.

With the disappearance from its programme of distinction of meats and circumcision, its connection with Judaism had disappeared. But Nazarenism was not confined to Palestine. In Rome, in Greece, in Asia Minor, there were large communities, not of converted Jews only, but of proselytes from Gentiledom, who regarded themselves as constituting the Church of Christ. The existence of this fact is made patent by the Clementines and the Apostolic Constitutions. St. Peter's successors in the see of Rome have been a matter of perplexity. It has impressed itself on ecclesiastical students that Linus and Cletus ruled simultaneously. I have little doubt it was so. The Judaizing Church was strong in Rome. Probably each of the two communities had its bishop set over it, one by Paul, the other by Peter.

Whilst the "Catholic" Church, the Church of the compromise, grew and prospered, and conquered the world, the narrow Judaizing Church dwindled till it expired, and with its expiration ceased conversion from Judaism. This Jewish Church retained to the last its close relationship with Mosaism. Circumstances, as has been shown, drew the Jewish believer and the Pharisee together.

⁶⁷ 2 Pet. ii. 21.

When Jerusalem fell, the Gentile Church passed without a shudder under the Bethlehem Gate, whereon an image of a swine had been set up in mockery; contemplated the statue of Hadrian on the site of the Temple without despair, and constituted itself under a Gentile bishop, Mark, in *Ælia Capitolina*.

But the old Nazarene community, the Church of James and Symeon, clinging tightly to its old traditions, crouched in exile at Pella, confounded by the Romans in common banishment with the Jew. The guards thrust back Nazarene and Jew alike with their spears, when they ventured to approach the ruins of their prostrate city, the capital of their nation and of their faith.

The Church at Jerusalem under Mark was, to the Nazarene, alien; its bishop an intruder. To the Nazarene, the memory of Paul was still hateful. The Clementine Recognitions speak of him with thinly-disguised aversion, and tell of a personal contest between him, when the persecutor Saul, and St. James their bishop, and of his throwing down stairs, and beating till nearly dead, the brother of the Lord. In the very ancient apocryphal letter of St. Peter to St. James, belonging to the same sect, and dating from the second century, Paul is spoken of as the “enemy preaching a doctrine at once foolish and lawless.”⁶⁸ The Nazarene Christians, as Irenaeus and Theodoret tell us, regarded him as an apostate.⁶⁹ They would not receive his Epistles or the Gospel of St. Luke drawn up under his auspices.

In the Homilies, St. Peter is made to say:

“Our Lord and Prophet, who hath sent us, declared that the Wicked One, having disputed with him forty days, and having prevailed nothing against him, promised that he would send apostles among his subjects to deceive. Wherefore, above all, remember to shun apostle or teacher or prophet who does not first accurately compare his preaching with [that of] James, who was called the Brother of my Lord, and to whom was entrusted the administration of the Church of the Hebrews at Jerusalem. And that, even though he come to you with credentials; lest the wickedness which prevailed nothing when disputing forty days with our Lord should afterwards, like lightning falling from heaven upon earth, send a preacher to your injury, preaching under pretence of truth, like this Simon [Magus], and sowing error.”⁷⁰

The reader has but to study the Clementine Homilies and Recognitions, and his wonder at the silence of Josephus and Justus will disappear.

Those curious books afford us a precious insight into the feelings of the Nazarenes of the first and second centuries, showing us what was the temper of their minds and the colour of their belief. They represent St. James as the supreme head of the Church. He is addressed by St. Peter, “Peter to James, the Lord and Bishop of the Holy Church, under the Father of all.” St. Clement calls him “the Lord and Bishop of bishops, who rules Jerusalem, the Holy Church of the Hebrews, and the Churches everywhere excellently founded by the providence of God.”

Throughout the curious collection of Homilies, Christianity is one with Judaism. It is a reform of Mosaism. It bears the relation to Judaism, that the Anglican Church of the last three centuries, it

⁶⁸ Τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ἀνθρώπου ἄνομον τίνα καὶ φλυαρώδη διδασκαλίαν – Clem. Homil. xx. ed. Dressel, p. 4. The whole passage is sufficiently curious to be quoted. St. Peter writes: “There are some from among the Gentiles who have rejected my legal preaching, attaching themselves to certain lawless and trifling preaching of the man who is my enemy. And these things some have attempted while I am still alive, to transform my words by certain various interpretations, in order to the dissolution of the Law; as though I also myself were of such a mind, but did not freely proclaim it, which God forbid! For such a thing were to act in opposition to the law of God, which was spoken by Moses, and was borne witness to by our Lord in respect of its eternal continuance; for thus he spoke: The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.”

⁶⁹ “Apostolum Paulum recusantes, apostatam eum legis dicentes.” – Iren. Adv. Haeres. i. 26. Τὸν δὲ ἀπόστολον ἀποστάτην καλοῦσι. – Theod. Fabul. Haeret. ii. 1.

⁷⁰ Hom. xi. 85.

is pretended, bears to the Mediaeval Church in England. Everything essential was retained; only the traditions of the elders, the glosses of the lawyers, were rejected.

Christianity is never mentioned by name. A believer is called, not a Christian, but a Jew. Clement describes his own conversion: "I betook myself to the holy God and Law of the Jews, putting my faith in the well-assured conclusion that the Law has been assigned by the righteous judgment of God."⁷¹

Apion the philosopher, is spoken of as hating the Jews; the context informs us that by Jews is meant those whom we should call Christians.

Moses is the first prophet, Jesus the second. Like their spiritual ancestors the Essenes, the Nazarenes protested that the Law was overlaid with inventions of a later date; these Jesus came to efface, that he might re-edit the Law in its ancient integrity. The original Law, as given by God and written by Moses, was lost; it was found again after 300 years, lost again, and then re-written from memory by Ezra. Thus it came to pass that the Old Revelation went through various editions, which altered its meaning, and left it a compound of truths and errors.⁷² It was the mark of a good and wise Jew, instructed by Jesus, to distinguish between what was true and what was false in the Scriptures.

Thus the Nazarene thought himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as an Anglican esteems himself a better Catholic than the Catholics. The Nazarenes would have resented with indignation the imputation that they were a sect alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and, like all communities occupying an uneasy seat between two stools, were doubly, trebly vehement in their denunciation of that sect to which they were thought to bear some relation. They repudiated "Christianity,"⁷³ as a high Anglican repudiates Protestantism; they held aloof from a Pauline believer, as an English Churchman will stand aloof from a Lutheran.

And thus it came to pass that the Jewish historians of the first century said nothing about Christ and the Church he founded.

And yet St. Paul had wrought a work for Christ and the Church which, humanly speaking, none else could have effected.

The Nazarene Church was from its infancy prone to take a low view of the nature of Christ. The Jewish converts were so infected with Messianic notions that they could look on Jesus Christ only as the Messiah, not as incarnate God. They could see in him a prophet, "one like unto Moses," but not one equal to the Father.

The teaching of the apostles seemed powerless at the time to lift the faith of their Jewish converts to high views of the Lord's nature and mission. Their Judaic prejudice strangled, warped their faith. Directly the presence of the apostles was withdrawn, the restraint on this downward gravitation was removed, and Nazarenism settled into heresy on the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. To Gentiles it was in vain to preach Messianism. Messianism implied an earnest longing for a promised deliverer. Gentiles had no such longing, had never been led to expect a deliverer.

The apostle must take other ground. He took that of the Incarnation, the Godhead revealing the Truth to mankind by manifestation of itself among men, in human flesh.

The apostles to the circumcision naturally appealed to the ruling religious passion in the Jewish heart – the passion of hope for the promised Messiah. The Messiah was come. The teaching of the apostles to the circumcision necessarily consisted of an explanation of this truth, and efforts to dissipate the false notions which coloured Jewish Messianic hopes, and interfered with their reception of the truth that Jesus was the one who had been spoken of by the prophets, and to whose coming their fathers had looked.

⁷¹ Hom. iv. 22.

⁷² Clem. Homil. ii. 38-40, 48, iii. 50, 51.

⁷³ Of course I mean the designation given to the Pauline sect, not the religion of Christ.

To the Gentiles, St. Paul preached Christ as the revealer to a dark and ignorant world of the nature of God, the purpose for which He had made man, and the way in which man might serve and please God. The Jews had their revelation, and were satisfied with it. The Gentiles walked in darkness; they had none; their philosophies were the gropings of earnest souls after light. The craving of the Gentile heart was for a revelation. Paul preached to them the truth manifested to the world through Christ.

Thus Pauline teaching on the Incarnation counteracted the downward drag of Nazarene Messianism, which, when left to itself, ended in denying the Godhead of Christ.

If for a century the churches founded by St. Paul were sick with moral disorders, wherewith they were inoculated, the vitality of orthodox belief in the Godhead of Christ proved stronger than moral heresy, cast it out, and left only the scars to tell what they had gone through in their infancy.

Petrine Christianity upheld the standard of morality, Pauline Christianity bore that of orthodoxy.

St. John, in the cool of his old age, was able to give the Church its permanent form. The Gentile converts had learned to reverence the purity, the uprightness, the truthfulness of the Nazarene, and to be ashamed of their excesses; and the Nazarene had seen that his Messianism supplied him with nothing to satisfy the inner yearning of his nature. Both met under the apostle of love to clasp hands and learn of one another, to confess their mutual errors, to place in the treasury of the Church, the one his faith, the other his ethics, to be the perpetual heritage of Christianity.

Some there were still who remained fixed in their prejudices, self-excommunicated, monuments to the Church of the perils she had gone through, the Scylla and Charybdis through which she had passed with difficulty, guided by her Divine pilot.

I have been obliged at some length to show that the early Christian Church in Palestine bore so close a resemblance to the Essene sect, that to the ordinary superficial observer it was indistinguishable from it. And also, that so broad was the schism separating the Nazarene Church consisting of Hebrews, from the Pauline Church consisting of Gentiles that no external observer who had not examined the doctrines of these communities would suppose them to be two forms of the same faith, two religions sprung from the same loins. Their connection was as imperceptible to a Jew, as would be that between Roman Catholicism and Wesleyanism to-day.

Both Nazarene and Jew worshipped in the same temple, observed the same holy days, practised the same rites, shrank with loathing from the same food, and mingled their anathemas against the same apostate, Paul, who had cast aside at once the law in which he had been brought up, and the Hebrew name by which he had been known.

The silence of Josephus and Justus under these circumstances is explicable. They have described Essenism; that description covers Nazarenism as it appeared to the vulgar eye. If they have omitted to speak of Jesus and his death, it is because both wrote at the time when Nazarene and Pharisee were most closely united in sympathy, sorrow and regret for the past. It was not a time to rip up old wounds, and Justus and Josephus were both Pharisees.

That neither should speak of Pauline Christianity is also not remarkable. It was a Gentile religion, believed in only by Greeks and Romans; it had no open *observable* connection with Judaism. It was to them but another of those many religions which rose as mushrooms, to fade away again on the soil of the Roman world, with which the Jewish historians had little interest and no concern.

If this explanation which I have offered is unsatisfactory, I know not whither to look for another which can throw light to the strange silence of Philo, Josephus and Justus.

It is thrown in the teeth of Christians, that history, apart from the Gospels, knows nothing of Christ; that the silence of contemporary, and all but contemporary, Jewish chroniclers, invalidates the testimony of the inspired records.

The reasons which I have given seem to me to explain this silence plausibly, and to show that it arose, not from ignorance of the acts of Christ and the existence of the Church, but from a deliberate purpose.

III. The Jew Of Celsus

Celsus was one of the four first controversial opponents of Christianity. His book has been lost, with the exception of such portions as have been preserved by Origen.

Nothing for certain is known of Celsus. Origen endeavours to make him out to be an Epicurean, as prejudice existed even among the heathen against this school of philosophy, which denied, or left as open questions, the existence of a God, Providence, and the Eternity of the Soul. He says in his first book that he has heard there had existed two Epicureans of the name of Celsus, one who lived in the reign of Nero († A.D. 68), the other under Hadrian († A.D. 138), and it is with this latter that he has to do. But it is clear from passages of Celsus quoted by Origen, that this antagonist of Christianity was no Epicurean, but belonged to that school of Eclectics which based its teaching on Platonism, but adopted modifications from other schools. Origen himself is obliged to admit in several passages of his controversial treatise that the views of Celsus are not Epicurean, but Platonic; but he pretends that Celsus disguised his Epicureanism under a pretence of Platonism. Controversialists in the first days of Christianity were as prompt to discredit their opponents by ungenerous, false accusation, as in these later days.

We know neither the place nor the date of the birth of Celsus. That he lived later than the times of Hadrian is clear from his mention of the Marcionites, who only arose in A.D. 142, and of the Marcellians, named after the woman Marcella, who, according to the testimony of Irenaeus,⁷⁴ first came to Rome in the time of Pope Anicetus, after A.D. 157. As Celsus in two passages remarks that the Christians spread their doctrines secretly, because they were forbidden under pain of death to assemble together for worship, it would appear that he wrote his book *Λόγος ἀληθής* during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (between 161-180), who persecuted the Christians. We may therefore put the date of the book approximately at A.D. 176.

The author is certainly the Celsus to whom Lucian dedicated his writing, “Alexander the False Prophet.” Of the religious opinions of Celsus we are able to form a tolerable conception from the work of Origen. “If the Christians only honoured One God,” says he,⁷⁵ “then the weapons of their controversy with others would not be so weak; but they show to a man, who appeared not long ago, an exaggerated honour, and are of opinion that they are not offending the Godhead, when they show to one of His servants the same reverence that they pay to God Himself.” Celsus acknowledges, with the Platonists, One only, eternal, spiritual God, who cannot be brought into union with impure matter, the world. All that concerns the world, he says, God has left to the dispensation of inferior spirits, which are the gods of heathendom. The welfare of mankind is at the disposal of these inferior gods, and men therefore do well to honour them in moderation; but the human soul is called to escape the chains of matter and strain after perfect purity; and this can only be done by meditation on the One, supreme, almighty God. “God,” says he,⁷⁶ “has not made man in His image, as Christians affirm; for God has not either the appearance of a man, nor indeed any visible form.” In the fourth Book he remarks, in opposition to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, “I will appeal to that which has been held as true in all ages, – that God is good, beautiful, blessed, and possesses in Himself all perfections. If He came down among men, He must have altered His nature; from a good God, He must have become bad; from beautiful, ugly; from blessed, unhappy; and His perfect Being would have become one of imperfection. Who can tolerate such a change? Only transitory things alter their conditions; the intransitory remain ever the same. Therefore it is impossible to conceive that God can have been transformed in such a manner.”

⁷⁴ Adv. Haeres. i. 24.

⁷⁵ Origen, Contr. Cels. lib. viii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* lib. vi.

It is remarkable that Celsus, living in the middle of the second century, and able to make inquiries of aged Jews whose lives had extended from the first century, should have been able to find out next to nothing about Jesus and his disciples, except what he read in the Gospels. This is proof that no traditions concerning Jesus had been preserved by the Jews, apart from those contained in the Gospels, Canonical and Apocryphal.

Origen's answer to Celsus is composed of eight Books. In the first Book a Jew speaks, who is introduced by Celsus as addressing Jesus himself; in the second Book this Jew addresses those of his fellow-countrymen who have embraced Christianity; in the other six Books Celsus speaks for himself. Origen extracts only short passages from the work of Celsus, and then labours to demolish the force of the argument of the opponent of Christianity as best he can.

The arguments of Celsus and the counter-arguments of Origen do not concern us here. All we have to deal with are those traditions or slanders detailed to Celsus by the Jews, which he reproduces. That Celsus was in communication with Jews when he wrote the two first Books is obvious, and the only circumstances he relates which concern the life of our Lord he derived from his Jewish informants. "The Jew (whom Celsus introduces) addresses Jesus, and finds much fault. In the first place, he charges him with having falsely proclaimed himself to be the Son of a Virgin; afterwards, he says that Jesus was born in a poor Jewish village, and that his mother was a poor woman of the country, who supported herself with spinning and needlework; that she was cast off by her betrothed, a carpenter; and that after she was thus rejected by her husband, she wandered about in disgrace and misery till she secretly gave birth to Jesus. Jesus himself was obliged from poverty and necessity to go down as servant into Egypt, where, he learnt some of the secret sciences which are in high honour among the Egyptians; and he placed such confidence in these sciences, that on his return to his native land he gave himself out to be a God."

Origen adds: "The carpenter, as the Jew of Celsus declares, who was betrothed to Mary, put the mother of Jesus from him, because she had broken faith with him, in favour of a soldier named Panthera!"

Again: "Celsus relates from the Gospel of Matthew the flight of Christ into Egypt; but he denies all that is marvellous and supernatural in it, especially that an angel should have appeared to Joseph and ordered him to escape. Instead of seeking whether the departure of Jesus from Judaea and his residence in Egypt had not some spiritual meaning, he has made up a fable concerning it. He admits, indeed, that Jesus may have wrought the miracles which attracted such a multitude of people to him, and induced them to follow him as the Messiah; but he pretends that these miracles were wrought, not by virtue of his divine power, but of his magical knowledge. Jesus, says he, had a bad education; later he went into Egypt and passed into service there, and there learnt some wonderful arts. When he came back to his fatherland, on account of these arts, he gave himself out to be a God."⁷⁷

"The Jew brought forward by Celsus goes on to say, 'I could relate many things more concerning Jesus, all which are true, but which have quite a different character from what his disciples relate touching him; but, I will not now bring these forward.' And what are these facts," answers Origen, "which are not in agreement with the narratives of the Evangelists, and which the Jew refrains from mentioning? Unquestionably, he is using only a rhetorical expression; he pretends that he has in his store abundance of munitions of war to discharge against Jesus and his doctrine, but in fact he knows nothing which can deceive the hearer with the appearance of truth, *except those particulars which he has culled from the the Gospels themselves.*"⁷⁸

This is most important evidence of the utter ignorance of the Jews in the second century of all that related to the history of our Lord. Justus and Josephus had been silent. There was no written

⁷⁷ Contra Cels. lib. i.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* lib. ii.

narrative to which the Jew might turn for information; his traditions were silent. The fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews had broken the thread of their recollections.

It is very necessary to bear this in mind, in order to appreciate the utter worthlessness of the stories told of our Saviour in the Talmud and the Toledoth Jeschu. An attempt has been made to bolster up these late fables, and show that they are deserving of a certain amount of confidence.⁷⁹

But it is clear that the religious movement which our Lord originated in Palestine attracted much less attention at the time than has been usually supposed. The Sanhedrim at first regarded his teaching with the contempt with which, in after times, Leo X. heard of the preaching of Luther. "It is a schoolman's proposition," said the Pope. "A new rabbinical tradition," the elders probably said. Only when their interests and fears were alarmed, did they interfere to procure the condemnation of Christ. And then they thought no more of their victim and his history than they did later of the history of James, the Lord's brother. The preaching and death of Jesus led to no tumultuous outbreak against the Roman government, and therefore excited little interest. The position of Christ as the God-man was not forced on them by the Nazarenes. The Jews noticed the virtues of these men, but ignored their peculiar tenets, till traditions were lost; and when the majesty of Christ, incarnate God, shone out on the world which turned to acknowledge him, they found that they had preserved no records, no recollections of the events in the history of Jesus. That he was said by Christians to have been born of a Virgin, driven into Egypt by King Herod – that he wrought miracles, gathered disciples, died on the cross and rose again – they heard from the Christians; and these facts they made use of to pervert them into fantastic fables, to colour them with malignant inventions. The only trace of independent tradition is in the mention made of Panthera by the Jew produced by Celsus.

It is perhaps worthy of remark that St. Epiphanius, who wrote against heresies at the end of the fourth century, gives the genealogy of Jesus thus:⁸⁰

Jacob, called Panther, married to ?
Offspring:
Mary, married to Joseph
Offspring:
Jesus
Cleophas

It shows that in the fourth century the Jewish stories of Panthera had made such an impression on the Christians, that his name was forced into the pedigree of Jesus.

Had any of the stories found in the Toledoth Jeschu existed in the second century, we should certainly have found them in the book of Celsus.

Origen taunts the Jew with knowing nothing of Christ but what he had found out from the Gospels. He would not have uttered that taunt had any anti-Christian apocryphal biographies of Christ existed in his day. The Talmud, indeed, has the tale of Christ having studied magic in Egypt. Whence this legend, as well as that of Panthera, came, we shall see presently.

⁷⁹ Amongst others, Clemens: *Jesus von Nazareth*, Stuttgart, 1850; Von der Alme: *Die Urtheile heidnischer und jüdischer Schriftsteller*, Leipzig, 1864.

⁸⁰ Adv. Haer. lib. iii; Haer. lxxviii. 7.

IV. The Talmud

The Talmud (*i. e.* the Teaching) consists of two parts, the Mischna and the Gemara.

The Mischna (*i. e.* δευτέρωσις, Second Law, or Recapitulation) is a collection of religious ordinances, interpretations of Old Testament passages, especially of Mosaic rules, which have been given by various illustrious Rabbis from the date of the founding of the second Temple, therefore from about B.C. 400 to the year A.D. 200. These interpretations, which were either written or orally handed down, were collected in the year A.D. 219 by the Rabbi Jehuda the Holy, at Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, into a book to which he gave the name of Mischna, the Recapitulation of the Law. At that time the Jewish Sanhedrim and the Patriarch resided at Tiberias. After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Sanhedrim, which consisted of seventy-one persons, assembled at Jamnia, the ancient Philistine city of Jabne; but on the insurrection of the Jews under Barcochab, A.D. 135, it took up its quarters at Tiberias. There the Sanhedrim met under a hereditary Patriarch of the family of Gamaliel, who bore the title of Nasi, Chief, till A.D. 420, when the last member of the house of Gamaliel died, and the Patriarchate and Sanhedrim departed from Tiberias.

The Mischna is made up of six Orders (Sedarim), which together contain sixty-three Tractates. The first Order or Seder is called Iesaïm, and treats of agriculture. The second, Moed, treats of festivals. The third, Naschim, deals with the rights of women. The fourth, Nezikim, or Jechnoth, treats of cases of law. The fifth, Kodaschim, of holy things. The sixth, Taharoth, of impurity and purifications.

The Orders of Kodaschim and Taharoth are incomplete. The Jerusalem Talmud consists of only the first four, and the tract Nidda, which belongs to the Order Taharoth.

Now it is deserving of remark, that many of the Rabbis whose sayings are recorded in the Mischna lived in the time of our Lord, or shortly after, and yet that not the smallest reference is made to the teaching of Jesus, nor even any allusion to him personally. Although the Mischna was drawn up beside the Sea of Galilee, at Tiberias, near where Jesus lived and wrought miracles and taught, neither he nor his followers are mentioned once throughout the Mischna.

There must be a reason why the Mischna, as well as Josephus and Justus of Tiberias, is silent respecting Jesus of Nazareth. The reason I have already given. The followers of Jesus were regarded as belonging to the sect of the Essenes. Our Lord's teaching made no great impression on the Jews of his time. It was so radically unlike the pedantry and puerilities of their Rabbis, that they did not acknowledge him as a teacher of the Law. He had preached Essene disengagement from the world, conquest of passion. Only when Essene enthusiasm was thought to threaten the powerful families which held possession of and abused the pontifical office, had the high-priest and his party taken alarm, and obtained the condemnation and death of Jesus. Their alarm died away, the political situation altered, the new Essenianism ceased to be suspected, and Nazarene Christianity took its place among the parties of Judaism, attracting little notice and exciting no active hostility.

The Mischna was drawn up at the beginning of the third century, when Christianity was spreading rapidly through the Roman empire, and had excited the Roman emperors to fierce persecution of those who professed it. Yet Jehuda the Holy says not a word about Christ or Christianity.

He and those whose sayings he quotes had no suspicion that this religion, which was gaining ground every day among the Gentiles, had sprung from the teaching of a Jew. Christianity ruffled not the surface of Jewdom. The harmless Nazarenes were few, and were as strict observers of the Law as the strictest Pharisees.

And if Christianity was thus a matter of indifference to the Jews, no wonder that every recollection of Jesus of Nazareth, every tradition of his birth, his teaching, his death, had died away,

so that, even at the close of the second century, Origen could charge his Jew opponent with knowing nothing of Jesus save what he had learned from the Gospels.

The Mischna became in turn the subject of commentary and interpretation by the Rabbis. The explanations of famous Rabbis, who taught on the Mischna, were collected, and called Gemara (the Complement), because with it the collection of rabbinical expositions of the Law was completed.

There are two editions of the Gemara, one made in Palestine and called the Jerusalem Gemara, the other made at Babylon.

The Jerusalem Gemara was compiled about A.D. 390, under the direction of the Patriarch of Tiberias. But there was a second Jewish Patriarchate at Babylon, which lasted till A.D. 1038, whereas that of Tiberias was extinguished, as has been already said, in A.D. 420.

Among the Babylonish Jews, under the direction of their Patriarch, an independent school of commentators on the Mischna had arisen. Their opinions were collected about the year A.D. 500, and compose the Babylonish Gemara. This latter Gemara is held by modern Jews in higher esteem than the Jerusalem Gemara.

The Mischna, which is the same to both Gemaras, together with one of the commentaries and glosses, called Mekilta and Massektoth, form either the Jerusalem or the Babylonish Talmud.

All the Jewish historians who speak of the compilation of the Gemara of Babylon, are almost unanimous on three points: that the Rabbi Ashi was the first to begin the compilation, but that death interrupted him before its completion; that he had for his assistant another doctor, the Rabbi Avina; and that a certain Rabbi Jose finished the work seventy-three years after the death of Rabbi Ashi. Rabbi Ashi is believed to have died A.D. 427, consequently the Babylonish Talmud was completed in A.D. 500.

St. Jerome (d. 420) was certainly acquainted with the Mischna, for he mentions it by name.⁸¹

St. Ephraem (d. 378) says:

“The Jews have had four sorts of traditions which they call Repetitions (δευτερώσεις). The first bear the name of Moses the Prophet; they attribute the second to a doctor named Akiba or Bar Akiba. The third pass for being those of a certain Andan or Annan, whom they call also Judas; and they maintain that the sons of Assamonaeus were the authors of the fourth. It is from these four sources that all those doctrines among them are derived, which, however futile they may be, by them are esteemed as the most profound science, and of which they speak with ostentation.”⁸²

From this it appears that St. Ephraem was acquainted not only with the Mischna, but with the Gemara, then in process of formation.

Both the Jerusalem and the Babylonish Gemara, in their interpretations of the Mischna, mention Jesus and the apostles, or, at all events, have been supposed to do so. At the time when both Gemaras were drawn up, Christianity was the ruling religion in the Roman empire, and the Rabbis could hardly ignore any longer the Founder of the new religion. But their statements concerning Jesus are untrustworthy, because so late. Had they occurred in the Mischna, they might have deserved attention.

But before we consider the passages containing allusions to Jesus, it will be well to quote a very singular anecdote in the Jerusalem Gemara:⁸³

⁸¹ “Quantae traditiones Pharisaeorum sint, quas hodie vocant δευτερώσεις et quam aniles fabulae, evolvere nequeo: neque enim libri patitur magnitudo, et pleraque tam turpia sunt ut erubescam dicere.”

⁸² Haeres. xiii.

⁸³ Beracoth, xi. a.

“It happened that the cow of a Jew who was ploughing the ground began to low. An Arab (or a traveller) who was passing, and who understood the language of beasts, on hearing this lowing said to the labourer, ‘Son of a Jew! son of a Jew! loose thine ox and set it free from the plough, for the Temple is fallen.’ But as the ox lowed a second time, he said, ‘Son of a Jew! son of a Jew! yoke thy ox, join her to the plough, for the Messiah is born.’ ‘What is his name?’ asked the Jew. ‘בִּרְבֵּהָסֵי, the Consoler,’ replied the Arab. ‘And what is the name of his father?’ asked the Jew. ‘Hezekiah,’ answered the Arab. ‘And whence comes he?’ ‘From the royal palace of Bethlehem Juda.’ Then the Jew sold his ox and his plough, and becoming a seller of children's clothes went to Bethlehem, where he found the mother of the Consoler afflicted, because that, on the day he was born, the Temple had been destroyed. But the other women, to console her, said that her son, who had caused the ruin of the Temple, would speedily rebuild it. Some days after, she owned to the seller of children's clothes that the Consoler had been ravished from her, and that she knew not what had become of him. Rabbi Bun observes thereupon that there was no need to learn from an Arab that the Messiah would appear at the moment of the fall of the Temple, as the prophet Isaiah had predicted this very thing in the two verses, x. 34 and xi. 1, on the ruin of the Temple, and the cessation of the daily sacrifice, which took place at the siege by the Romans, or by the impious kingdom.”

This is a very curious story, and its appearance in the Talmud is somewhat difficult to understand.

We must now pass on to those passages which have been supposed to refer to our Lord.

In the Babylonish Gemara⁸⁴ it is related that when King Alexander Jannaeus persecuted the Rabbis, the Rabbi Jehoshua, son of Parachias, fled with his disciple Jesus to Alexandria in Egypt, and there both received instruction in Egyptian magic. On their way back to Judaea, both were hospitably lodged by a woman. Next day, as Jehoshua and his disciple were continuing their journey, the master praised the hospitality of their hostess, whereupon his disciple remarked that she was not only a hospitable but a comely woman.

Now as it was forbidden to Rabbis to look with admiration on female beauty, the Rabbi Jehoshua was so angry with his disciple, that he pronounced on him excommunication and a curse. Jesus after this separated from his master, and gave himself up wholly to the study of magic.

The name Jesus is Jehoshua Graecised. Both master and pupil in this legend bore the same name, but that of the pupil is in the Talmud abbreviated into Jeschu.

This story is introduced in the Gemara to illustrate the obligation incumbent on a Rabbi to keep custody over his eyes. It bears no signs of having been forced in so as to give expression to antipathy against Jeschu.

That this Jeschu is our blessed Lord is by no means evident. On the contrary, the balance of probability is that the pupil of Jehoshua Ben Perachia was an entirely different person.

This Jehoshua, son of Perachia, is a known historical personage. He was one of the Sanhedrim in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus. He began to teach as Rabbi in the year of the world 3606, or B.C. 154. Alexander Jannaeus, son of Hyrcanus, was king of the Jews in B.C. 106. The Pharisees could not endure that the royal and high-priestly functions should be united in the same person; they therefore broke out in revolt. The civil war caused the death of some 50,000, according to Josephus. When Alexander had suppressed the revolt, he led 800 prisoners to the fortress of Bethome, and crucified them before the eyes of his concubines at a grand banquet he gave.

⁸⁴ Tract. Sanhedrim, fol. 107, and Sota, fol. 47.

The Pharisees, and those of the Sanhedrim who had not fallen into his hands, sought safety in flight. It was then probably that Jehoshua, son of Perachia, went down into Egypt and was accompanied by Jeschu.

Jehoshua was buried at Chittin, but the exact date of his death is not known.⁸⁵

Alexander Jannaeus died B.C. 79, after a reign of twenty-seven years, whilst besieging the castle of Ragaba on the further side of Jordan.

It will be seen at once that the date of the Talmudic Jeschu is something like a century earlier than that of the Jesus of the Gospels.

Moreover, it cannot be said that Jewish tradition asserts their identity. On the contrary, learned Jewish writers have emphatically denied that the Jeschu of the Talmud is the Jesus of the Gospels.

In the “Disputation” of the Rabbi Jechiels with Nicolas, a convert, occurs this statement. “This (which is related of Jesus and the Rabbi Joshua, son of Perachia) contains no reference to him whom Christians honour as a God;” and then he points out that the impossibility of reconciling the dates is enough to prove that the disciple of Joshua Ben Perachia was a person altogether distinct from the Founder of Christianity.

The Rabbi Lippmann⁸⁶ gives the same denial, and shows that Jesus of the Gospels was a contemporary of Hillel, whereas the Jeschu of the anecdote lived from two to three generations earlier.

The Rabbi Salman Zevi entered into the question with great care in a pamphlet, and produced ten reasons for concluding that the Jeschu of the Talmud was not the Jesus, son of Mary, of the Evangelists.⁸⁷

We can see now how it was that the Jew of Celsus brought against our Lord the charge of having learned magic in Egypt. He had heard in the Rabbinic schools the anecdote of Jeschu, pupil of Jehoshua, son of Perachia, – an anecdote which could scarcely fail to be narrated to all pupils. He at once concluded that this Jeschu was the Jesus of the Christians, without troubling himself with the chronology.

In the Mischna, Tract. Sabbath, fol. 104, it is forbidden to make marks upon the skin. The Babylonish Gemara observes on this passage: “Did not the son of Stada mark the magical arts on his skin, and bring them with him out of Egypt?” This son of Stada is Jeschu, as will presently appear.

In the Mischna of Tract. Sanhedrim, fol. 43, it is ordered that he who shall be condemned to death by stoning shall be led to the place of execution with a herald going before him, who shall proclaim the name of the offender, and shall summon those who have anything to say in mitigation of the sentence to speak before the sentence is put in execution.

On this the Babylonish Gemara remarks, “There exists a tradition: On the rest-day before the Sabbath they crucified Jeschu. For forty days did the herald go before him and proclaim aloud, He is to be stoned to death because he has practised evil, and has led the Israelites astray, and provoked them to schism. Let any one who can bring evidence of his innocence come forward and speak! But as nothing was produced which could establish his innocence, he was crucified on the rest-day of the Passah (*i. e.* the day before the Passover).”

The Mischna of Tract. Sanhedrim, fol. 67, treats of the command in Deut. xiii. 6-11, that any Hebrew who should introduce the worship of other gods should be stoned with stones. On this the Gemara of Babylon relates that, in the city of Lydda, Jeschu was heard through a partition endeavouring to persuade a Jew to worship idols; whereupon he was brought forth and crucified on the eve of the Passover. “None of those who are condemned to death by the Law are spied upon except only those (seducers of the people). How are they dealt with? They light a candle in an inner

⁸⁵ Bartolucci: Bibliotheca Maxima Rabbinica, sub. nom.

⁸⁶ Sepher Nizzachon, n. 337.

⁸⁷ Eisenmenger: Neuentdecktes Judenthum, I. pp. 231-7. Königsberg, 1711.

chamber, and place spies in an outer room, who may watch and listen to him (the accused). But he does not see them. Then he whom the accused had formerly endeavoured to seduce says to him, 'Repeat, I pray you, what you told me before in private.' Then, should he do so, the other will say further, 'But how shall we leave our God in heaven and serve idols?' Now should the accused be converted and repent at this saying, it is well; but if he goes on to say, That is our affair, and so and so ought we to do, then the spies must lead him off to the house of judgment and stone him. This is what was done to the son of Stada at Lud, and they hung him up on the eve of the Passover."⁸⁸ And the Tract. Sanhedrim says, "It is related that on the eve of the Sabbath they crucified Jeschu, a herald going before him," as has been already quoted; and then follows the comment: "Ula said, Will you not judge him to have been the son of destruction, because he is a seducer of the people? For the Merciful says (Deut. xiii. 8), Thou shalt not spare him, neither shalt thou conceal him. But I, Jesus, am heir to the kingdom. Therefore (the herald) went forth proclaiming that he was to be stoned because he had done an evil thing, and had seduced the people, and led them into schism. And (Jeschu) went forth to be stoned with stones because he had done an evil thing, and had seduced the people and led them into schism."

The Babylonish Gemara to the Mischna of Tract. Sabbath gives the following perplexing account of the parents of Jeschu:⁸⁹ "They stoned the son of Stada in Lud (Lydda), and crucified him on the eve of the Passover. This Stada's son was Pandira's son. Rabbi Chasda said Stada's husband was Pandira's master, namely Paphos, son of Jehuda. But how was Stada his mother? His (*i. e.* Pandira's) mother was a woman's hair-dresser. As they say in Pumbeditha (the Babylonish school by the Euphrates), this one went astray (S'tath-da) from her husband."

The Gloss or Paraphrase on this is: "Stada's son was not the son of Paphos, son of Jehuda; No. As Rabbi Chasda observed, Paphos had a servant named Pandira. Well, what has that to do with it? Tell us how it came to pass that this son was born to Stada. Well, it was on this wise. Miriam, the mother of Pandira, used to dress Stada's hair, and . . . Stada became a mother by Pandira, son of Miriam. As they say in Pumbeditha, Stada by name and Stada by nature."⁹⁰

The obscurity of the passage arises from various causes. R. Chasda is a punster, and plays on the double meaning of "Baal" for "husband" and "master." There is also ambiguity in the pronoun "his;" it is difficult to say to whom it always refers. The Paraphrase is late, and is a conjectural explanation of an obscure passage.

It is clear that the Jeschu of the Talmud was the son of one Stada and Pandira. But the name Pandira having the appearance of being a woman's name,⁹¹

⁸⁸ Tract. Sabbath, fol. 67.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* fol. 104.

⁹⁰ The passage is not easy to understand. I give three Latin translations of it, one by Cl. Schickardus, the second quoted from Scheidius (Loca Talm. i. 2). "Filius Satdae, filius Pandirae fuit. Dixit Raf Chasda: Amasius Pandirae, maritus Paphos filius Jehudae fuit. At quomodo mater ejus Satda? Mater ejus Mirjam, comprix mulierum fuit." "Filius Stadae filius Pandirae est. Dixit Rabbi Chasda: Maritus seu procus matris ejus fuit Stada, iniens Pandiram. Maritus Paphus filius Judae ipse est, mater ejus Stada, mater ejus Maria," &c. Lightfoot, Matt. xxvii. 56, thus translates it: "Lapidârunt filium Satdae in Lydda, et suspenderunt eum in vesperâ Paschatis. Hic autem filius Satdae fuit filius Pandirae. Dixit quidem Rabb Chasda, Maritus (matris ejus) fuit Satda, maritus Pandira, maritus Paphus filius Judae: sed tamen dico matrem ejus fuisse Satdam, Mariam videlicet, plicatricem capillorum mulierum: sicut dicunt in Panbeditha, Declinavit ista a marito suo."

⁹¹ הריינב. As a man's name it occurs in 2 Targum, Esther vii.

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