FROTHINGHAM OCTAVIUS BROOKS

THE CRADLE OF THE CHRIST: A STUDY IN PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

Octavius Frothingham

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Содержание

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PREFACE

The literary intention of this volume is sufficiently declared in the opening paragraph, and need not be foreshadowed in a preface; but as the author's deeper motive may be called in question, he takes the liberty to say a word or two in more particular explanation. The thought has occurred to him on reading over what he has written, as a casual reader might, that, in his solicitude to make his positions perfectly clear, and to state his points concisely, he may have laid himself open to the charge of carrying on a controversy under the pretence of explaining a literature. Such a reproach, his heart tells him, would be undeserved. He disclaims all purpose and desire to weaken the moral supports of any form of religion; as little purpose or desire to undermine Christianity, as to revive Judaism. It is his honest belief that no genuine interests of religion are compromised by scientific or literary studies; that religion is independent of history, that Christianity is independent of the New Testament. He is cordially persuaded that the admission of every one of his conclusions would leave the institutions of the church precisely, in every spiritual respect, as they are; and in thus declaring he has no mental reserve, no misty philosophical meaning that preserves expressions while destroying ideas; he uses candid, intelligible speech. The lily's perfect charm suffers no abatement from the chemist's analysis of the slime into which it strikes its slender root; the grape of the Johannisberg vineyards is no less luscious from the fact that the soil has been subjected to the microscope; the fine qualities of the human being, man or woman, are the same on any theory, the bible theory of the perfect Adam, or Darwin's of the anthropoid ape. The hero is hero still, and the saint saint, whatever his ancestry. We reject the inference of writers like Godfrey Higgins, Thomas Inman, and Jules Soury, who would persuade us that Christianity must be a form of nature-worship, because nature-worship was a large constituent element in the faiths from which it sprung; why should we not reject the inference of those who would persuade us that Christianity is doomed because the four gospels are pronounced ungenuine? Christianity is a historical fact; an institution; it stands upon its merits, and must justify its merits by its performances; first demonstrating its power, afterward pressing its claim; vindicating its title to exist by its capacity to meet the actual conditions of existence, and then asking respect the ground of good service. The church that arrogates for itself the right to control the spiritual concerns of the modern world must not plead in justification of its pretension that it satisfied the requirements of devout people of another hemisphere, two thousand years ago. The religion that fails to represent the religious sentiments of living men will not support itself by demonstrating the genuineness of the New Testament, the supernatural birth of Jesus, or the inspiration of Paul. Other questions than these are asked now. When a serious man wishes to know what Christianity has to say in regard to the position of woman in modern society, a quotation from a letter to the christians in the Greek city of Corinth, is not a satisfactory reply. Christianity must prove its adaptation to the hour that now is; its adaptation to days gone by, is not to the purpose.

The church of Rome had a glimpse of this, and revealed it when it took the ground that the New Testament did not contain the whole revelation; that the source of inspiration lay behind that, used that as one of its manifestations, and constantly supplied new suggestions as they were needed. Cardinal Wiseman did not hesitate to admit that the doctrine of trinity was not stated in the New Testament, though undoubtedly a belief of the church. It would have been but a step further in the same direction, if Dr. Newman should declare that the critics might have their way with the early records of the

religion, which, however curious as literary remains, were not essential to the constitution or the work of the church. Strauss and Renan may speculate and welcome; the mission of the church being to bless mankind, their labors are innocent. A church that does not bless mankind cannot be saved by Auguste Nicolas; a church that does bless mankind cannot be injured by Ernest Renan.

Leading protestant minds, without making so much concession as the church of Rome, have practically accepted the position here maintained. It is becoming less common, every day, to base the claims of Christianity on the New Testament. The most learned, earnest, and intelligent commend their faith on its reasonableness, confronting modern problems in a modern way. St. George Mivart quotes no scripture against the doctrine of evolution. No one reading Dr. McCosh on the development hypothesis, would suppose him to be a believer in the inspiration of the bible. He reasons like a reasonable man, meeting argument with argument, feeling disposed to confront facts with something harder than texts. The well instructed christian, if he enters the arena of scientific discussion at all, uses scientific weapons, and follows the rules of scientific warfare. The problems laid before the modern world are new; scarcely one of them was propounded during the first two centuries of our era; not one was propounded in modern terms. The most universal of them, like poverty, vice, the relations of the strong and the weak, present an aspect which neither church, Father, nor Apostle would recognize. Whatever bearing Christianity has on these questions must be timely if it is to be efficacious.

The doctrine of christian development, as it is held now by distinguished teachers of the christian church, implying as it does incompleteness and therefore defect in the antecedent stages of progress points clearly to the apostolic and post apostolic times as ages of rudimental experience, tentative and crude. Why should not the entertainers of this doctrine calmly surrender the records and remains of the preparatory generations to antiquarian scholars who are willing to investigate their character? No discovery they can make will alter the results which the centuries have matured. They will simply more clearly exhibit the process whereby the results have been reached.

We may go further than this, and maintain that the unreserved abandonment to criticism of the literature and men of the early epochs would be a positive advantage to Christianity, for thereby the religion would be relieved from a serious embarrassment. The duty, assumed by christians, of vindicating the truth of whatever is found in the New Testament imposes grave difficulties. It is safe to say that a very large part of the disbelief in Christianity proceeds from doubts raised by Strauss, Renan, and others who have cast discredit on some portions of this literature. Christians have their faith shaken by those authors; and doubtless some who are not christians are prejudiced against the religion by books of rational criticism. The romanist, failing to establish by the New Testament, or by the history of the first two centuries, the primacy of Peter, the supremacy of Rome, the validity of the sacraments, the divine sanction of the episcopacy, loses the convert whom the majestic order of the papacy might attract. The protestant, failing to prove by apostolic texts his cardinal dogmas, pre-destination, atonement, election, must see depart unsatisfied, the inquirer whom a philosophical exposition might have won. The necessity of justifying the account of the miraculous birth of Jesus repels the doubter whom a purely intellectual conception of incarnation might have fascinated; and the obligation to believe the story of a physical resurrection is an added obstacle to the reception of a spiritual faith in immortality. Scholarship has so effectually shown the impossibility of bringing apostolical guarantee for the creed of christendom, that the creed cannot get even common justice done it while it compromises itself with the beliefs of the primitive church. The inspiration of the New Testament is an article that unsettles. Naturally it is the first point of attack, and its extreme vulnerability raises a suspicion of weakness in the whole system. The protestant theology, as held by the more enlightened minds, is capable of philosophical statement and defence; but it cannot be stated in New Testament language, or defended on apostolical authority. The creed really has not a fair chance to be appreciated. Its power to uphold spiritual ideas, and develop spiritual truths; its speculative resources as an antagonist of scientific materialism, animal fatalism, and sensualism, are

rendered all but useless. Powerful minds are fettered, and good scholarship is wasted in the attempt to identify beginnings with results, roots with fruits.

This is a consideration of much weight. When we remember how much time and concern are given to the study of the New Testament for controversial or apologetic purposes, to establish its genuineness, maintain its authority, justify its miracles, explain away its difficulties, reconcile its contradictions, harmonize its differences, read into its texts the thoughts of later generations, and then reflect on the lack of mind bestowed on the important task of recommending religious ideas to a world that is spending enormous sums of intellectual force on the problems of physical science and the arts of material civilization, the close association of the latest with the earliest faith seems a deplorable misfortune. If there ever was a time when the purely spiritual elements in the religion of the foremost races of mankind should be developed and pressed, the time is now; and to miss the opportunity by misplacing the energy that would redeem it is anything but consoling to earnest minds.

Thus might reason a full believer in the creed of christendom, a devoted member of the church; Greek, Roman, German, English. The man of letters viewing the situation from his own point, will, of course, feel less intensely the mischiefs entailed by the error; but the error will be to him no less evident. It is sometimes, in war, an advantage to lose outworks that cannot be defended without fatally weakening the line, drawing the strength of the garrison away from vulnerable points, and exposing the centre to formidable assault. The present writer, though no friend to the christian system, believes himself to be a friend of spiritual beliefs, and would gladly feel that he is, by his essay, rather strengthening than weakening the cause of faith, by whatever class of men maintained.

I.
FALSE POSITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The original purpose of this little volume was to indicate the place of the New Testament in the literature of the Hebrew people, to show in fact how it is comprehended in the scope of that literature. The plan has been widened to satisfy the demands of a larger class of readers, and to record more fully the work of its leading idea. Still the consideration of the New Testament literature is of primary importance. The writer submits that the New Testament is to be received as a natural product of the Hebrew genius, its contents attesting the creative power of the Jewish mind. He hopes to make it seem probable to unprejudiced people, that its different books merely carry to the last point of attenuation, and finally exhaust the capacity of ideas that exerted a controlling influence on the development of that branch of the human family. To profundity of research, or originality of conclusion, he makes no claim. He simply records in compact and summary form, the results of reading and reflection, gathered in the course of many years, kept in note books, revised year by year, tested by use in oral instruction, and reduced to system by often repeated manipulation. The resemblance of his views, in certain particulars, to those set forth by German critics of the school of Strauss or of Baur, he is at no pains to conceal. His deep indebtedness to them, he delights to confess. At the same time he can honestly say that he is a disciple of no special school, writes in the interest of no theory or group of theories, but simply desires to establish a point of literary consequence. All polemic or dogmatical intention he disavows, all disposition to lower the dignity, impair the validity, or weaken the spiritual supports of Christianity. His aim, truly and soberly speaking, is to set certain literary facts in their just relation to one another.

It has not been customary, nor is it now customary to assign to the New Testament a place among the literary productions of the human mind. The collection of books bearing that name has been, and still is regarded by advocates of one or another theory of inspiration, as of exceptional origin, in that they express the divine, not the human mind; being writings super-human in substance if not in form, containing thoughts that could not have occurred to the unaided intelligence of man, neither are amenable to the judgment of uninspired reason. To read this volume as other volumes are read is forbidden; to apply to it ordinary critical methods is held to be an impertinence; to detect errors or flaws in it, as in Homer, Plato, Thucydides, is pronounced an unpardonable arrogance. A book that contains revelations of the supreme wisdom and will must be accepted and revered, must not be arraigned.

Criticism has therefore, among believers chiefly we may almost say solely, been occupied with the task of establishing the genuineness and authenticity of the writings, harmonizing their teachings, arranging their contents, explaining texts in accordance with the preconceived theory of a divine origin, vindicating doubtful passages against the objections of skeptics, and extracting from chapter and verse the sense required by the creed. Literature has been permitted to illustrate or confirm points, but has not been called in to correct, for that would be to judge the infinite by the finite mind.

In accordance with this accepted view of the New Testament as a miraculous book, students of it have fallen into the way of surveying it as a detached field, unconnected by organic elements with the surrounding territory of mind; have examined it as if it made no part of an extensive geological formation, as men formerly took up an aërolite or measured a boulder. The materials of knowledge respecting the book have been sought within the volume itself, neither Greek, Roman, German nor Englishman presuming to think that a beam from the outside world could illumine a book

> Which gives a light to every age,
> Which gives, but borrows none.

The rationalists it is needless to say, avoided this error, but they betrayed a sense of the peril arising from it, in the polemical spirit that characterized much of their writing. In Germany, the tone of rationalism was more sober and scientific than elsewhere, because biblical questions were there discussed in the scholastic seclusion of the University, in lectures delivered by learned professors to students engaged in pursuits purely intellectual. The lectures were not addressed to an excitable multitude, as such discourses are, to a certain extent, in France or England, and particularly in America, and consequently stirred no religious passions. The books published were read by a small class of specialists who studied them as they would treatises in any other department of ancient literature. Nearly half a century ago the disbelief in miracles, portents, and supernatural interventions, was entertained and published by German university professors; stories of prodigies were discredited on the general ground of their incredibility, and the books that reported them were set down as untrustworthy, whatever might be the evidence of their genuineness. A miraculous narrative was on the face of it unauthentic. Efforts were accordingly made to bring the New Testament writings within the categories of literature. Criticism began the task by applying rules of "natural" interpretation to the legendary portions, thus abolishing the supernatural peculiarity and leaving the merely human parts to justify themselves. The method was the best that offered, but it was unscientific; "unnaturally natural;" confused from the necessity of supplementing knowledge by conjecture, and faulty through the amount of arbitrary supposition that had to be introduced. Attention was directed to the historical or biographical aspect of the books, and only incidentally to their literary character, as productions of their age.

The method pursued by Strauss was strictly scientific and literary, though on the surface it seemed to be concerned with biographical details. By treating the narratives of miracles as mythical rather than as legendary, as intellectual and dogmatic rather than as fanciful or imaginary creations, and by tracing their origin to the traditionary beliefs of the Old Testament, he ran both literatures together as one, showing the new to be a continuation or reproduction of the old. The construction, otherwise, of the New Testament literature concerned him but incidentally. The first "Life of Jesus," published in part in 1835, was devoted to the discussion of the gospels as books of history. The second – a revision – was published in 1864, contained a much larger proportion of literary matter in the form of documentary discussion, made frequent references to Baur, and other writers of the Tübingen School, and attached great weight to their conclusions. In the "Old and the New Faith," published nearly ten years later, the main conclusions of Baur are adopted as the legitimate issue of literary criticism, though without attempt at formal reconciliation with his own original view.

Baur's method was original with himself. He finds the key to the secret of the composition of the first three Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and portions of other books, in the quarrel between Paul and Peter feelingly described in the second chapter of the letter to the Galatians. The "synoptical" Gospels, he contends, and with singular ingenuity argues, are the results of that controversy between the broad and the narrow churches; are not, therefore, writings of historical value or biographical moment, but books of a doctrinal character, not controversial or polemical, – mediatorial and conciliatory rather than aggressive, – but written in a controversial interest, and intelligible only when read by a controversial light. Baur called his the "historical" method, as distinguished from the dogmatical, the textual, the negative; because his starting point was a historical fact, namely, the actual dispute recorded, in language of passionate earnestness, by one of the parties to it, and distinctly confessed in the attitude of the other. But Baur's method has a still better title to be called literary, for it is concerned with the literary composition of the New Testament writings, and with the dispute as accounting for their existence and form. His studies on the fourth Gospel, and on the life and writings of the Apostle Paul, are admirable examples of the unprejudiced literary method; by far the most intelligent, comprehensive and consistent ever made; simply invaluable in their kind. They contain all that is necessary for a complete *rationale* of the New Testament literature. These,

taken in connection with his "History of the First Three Centuries," his "Origin of the Episcopate," his "Dogmengeschichte," put the patient and attentive student in possession of the full case. But Baur lacked constructive talent of a high order, and has been less successful than inferior men in embracing details in a wide generalization.

Renan adopts the method of the early rationalists, but applies it with a freedom and facility of which they were incapable. He takes up the Gospels as history, and sifts the literature in order to get at the history. He claims to possess the historical sense, by virtue of which he is able to separate the genuine from the ungenuine portions of the Gospels. It is a point with him to show how the character of Jesus was moulded by the spirit of his age, and by the literature on which he was nurtured; but his treatment of the evangelical narratives as a mass of biographical notes reflecting, with more or less correctness, the personality of Jesus, is not quite compatible with a rational or even a literary treatment of them as a continuation of the traditions of the Hebrew people. The constructive force being centred in Jesus himself, the full recognition of the creative genius of the Hebrew mind, which was illustrated in Jesus and his age, was precluded. Renan is in a measure compelled to make Jesus a prodigy – an exceptional person, who baffles ordinary standards of judgment; and in so doing distorts the connection between him, the generations that went before, and the generations that came after. Strauss does more justice to the New Testament literature, in attempting only its partial explanation. Baur does more justice to it in seeking a literary explanation of the writings as they are. Renan picks and chooses according to our arbitrary criterion, which capriciously disports itself over a field covered with promiscuous treasures.

Lord Amberley's more recent attempt reveals the weakness of the common procedure. Without the learning of Strauss, the perspicacity of Baur, or the brilliant audacity of Renan, he strays over the field, making suggestions neither profound nor original, and rather obliterating the distinct impressions his predecessors have made than making new ones of his own. His chapter on Jesus will illustrate the confusion that must issue from a false method, which does not deserve to be called a method at all.

Books have been written about the New Testament by the thousand – libraries of books; but they merely supplant and refute one another. Each is entitled to as much consideration as the rest, and to no more. The old materials are turned over and over; the texts are subjected to new cross-examinations; the chapters and incidents are shuffled about with fresh ingenuity; new suppositions are started; new combinations are made; but all with no satisfactory result. Whether it be Auguste Nicolas, who reconstructs the Gospels to justify the predispositions of Romanism; or Edmond de Pressensé, who does the same service for liberal Protestantism; or Henry Ward Beecher, who constructs a Christ out of the elements of an exuberant fancy; or William Henry Furness, who is certain that "naturalness" furnishes the touchstone of historical truth; the conclusion is about equally inconclusive.

The literary method avoids the dogmatical embarrassments incident to the supernatural theory; offers easy solutions of difficult problems; connects incidents with their antecedents; interprets dark sayings by the light of association; and places fragments in the places where they belong. An exhaustive application of this treatment would probably explain every passage in the New Testament writings. A partial application of it like the present will indicate at least some of the capacities of the method.

The literary treatment differs from the dogmatical represented by the older theologians who used the New Testament as a text book of doctrine; from the purely exegetical or critical, which consisted in the impartial examination of its separate parts; from the destructive or decomposing treatment pursued by the so-called "rationalism;" and from the "historical," as employed by Baur and the "Tübingen school." It is in some respects more comprehensive and positive than either of these, while in special points it adopts all but the first. Every other method presents a controversial face, and is something less than scientific, by being to a certain degree inhospitable. This consults only the laws which preside over the literary expression given to human thoughts.

It has been customary with christians to widen as much as possible the gulf between the Old and the New Testaments, in order that Christianity might appear in the light of a fresh and transcendent revelation, supplementing the ancient, but supplanting it. The most favorable view of the Old Testament regards it as a porch to the new edifice, a collection of types and foregleams of a grandeur about to follow. The Old Testament has been and still is held to be preparatory to the New; Moses is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. The contrast of Law with Gospel, Commandment with Beatitude, Justice with Love, has been presented in every form. Christian teachers have delighted to exhibit the essential superiority of Christianity to Judaism, have quoted with triumph the maxims that fell from the lips of Jesus, and which, they surmised, could not be paralleled in the elder Scriptures, and have put the least favorable construction on such passages in the ancient books as seemed to contain the thoughts of evangelists and apostles. A more ingenuous study of the Hebrew Law, according to the oldest traditions, as well as its later interpretations by the prophets, reduces these differences materially by bringing into relief sentiments and precepts whereof the New Testament morality is but an echo. There are passages in Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, even tenderer in their humanity than anything in the gospels. The preacher from the Mount, the prophet of the Beatitudes, does but repeat with persuasive lips what the law-givers of his race proclaimed in mighty tones of command. Such an acquaintance with the later literature of the Jews as is readily obtained now from popular sources, will convince the ordinarily fair mind that the originality of the New Testament has been greatly over-estimated. Even a hasty reading of easily accessible books, makes it clear that Jesus and his disciples were Jews in mind and character as well as by country and race; and will render it at least doubtful whether they ever outgrew the traditions of their birth. Paul's claim to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin," is found to be more than justified by his writings; and even John's exalted spirituality proves to be an aroma from a literature which Christianity disavows. The phrases "Redemption," "Grace," "Faith," "Baptism," "Salvation," "Regeneration," "Son of Man," "Son of God," "Kingdom of Heaven," are native to this literature, and as familiar there as in gospel or epistle. The symbolism of the Apocalypse, Jewish throughout, with its New Jerusalem, its consecration of the number twelve, – twelve foundations, twelve gates, twelve stars, twelve angels, – points to deeper correspondences that do not meet the eye, but occur to reflection. We remember that the New Testament constantly refers to the Old; that great stress is laid on the fulfilment of ancient prophecies; that Jesus explicitly declares, at the opening of his ministry, that he came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to reaffirm and complete them, saying with earnest force "till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle shall in any wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled." We discover that his criticisms bore hard on the casuists who corrupted the law by their glosses, but were made in the interest of the original commandment, which had been caricatured. In a word, so completely is the space between the old dispensation and the new bridged over, that the most delicate and fragile fancies, the lightest imagery, the daintiest fabrics of the intellectual world are transported without rent or fracture, across the gulf opened by the captivity, and the deserts caused by the desolating quarrels that attended the new attempts at reconstruction, while the massive ideas that lie at the foundation of Hebraic thought, wherever found, are landed without risk or confusion in the new territory. Between the Jewish and the Christian scriptures there is not so much as a blank leaf.

If this can be made apparent without over-stating the facts, everything in the New Testament, from the character of Jesus, and the constitution of the primitive church, to the later development by Paul, and the latest by John, must be subjected to a revision, which though fatal to Christianity's claim to be a special revelation, will restore dignity to the Semitic character, and consistency to the development of historic truth. Better still, it will heal the breach between two great religions, and will contribute to that disarmament of faiths from which good hearts anticipate most important results. Of all this hints only can be given in a short essay like this; but if the hints are suggestive in themselves or from their arrangement, a service will be rendered to the cause of truth that may deserve recognition.

II.
THE MESSIAH

The period of the captivity in Babylon, which is commonly regarded as a period of sadness and desolation, a blank space of interruption in the nation's life, was, in reality, a period of intense mental activity; probably the highest spiritual moment in the history of the people. Dispossessed of their own territory, relieved of the burden and freed from the distraction of politics, their disintegrating tribal feuds terminated by foreign conquest, living, as unoppressed exiles, in one of the world's greatest cities, with opportunities for observation and reflection never enjoyed before, having unbroken leisure in the midst of material and intellectual opulence, the true children of Israel devoted themselves to the task of rebuilding spiritually the state that had been politically overthrown. The writings that reflect this period, particularly the later portions of Isaiah, exhibit the soul of the nation in proud resistance against the unbelief, the disloyalty, the worldliness, that were demoralizing the less noble part of their countrymen. The duty was laid on them to support the national character, revive the national faith, restore the national courage, and rebuild the national purpose. To this end they collected the traditions of past glory, gathered up the fragments of legend and song, reanimated the souls of their heroes and saints, developed ideas that existed only in germ, arranged narratives and legislation, and constructed an ideal state. There is reason to believe that the real genius of the people was first called into full exercise, and put on its career of development at this time; that Babylon was a forcing nursery, not a prison cell; creating instead of stifling a nation. The astonishing outburst of intellectual and moral energy that accompanied the return from the Babylonish captivity attests the spiritual activity of that "mysterious and momentous" time. When the hour of deliverance struck, the company of defeated, disheartened, crushed, to all seeming, "reckless, lawless, godless" exiles came forth "transformed into a band of puritans." The books that remain from those generations, Daniel, the Maccabees, Esdras, are charged with an impetuous eloquence and a frenzied zeal.

The Talmud, that vast treasury of speculation on divine things, had its origin about this period. Recent researches into that wilderness of thought reveal wonders and beauties that were never till recently divulged. The deepest insights, the most bewildering fancies, exist there side by side. The intellectual powers of a race exhausted themselves in efforts to penetrate the mysteries of faith. The fragments of national literature that had been rescued from oblivion, were pondered over, scrutinized, arranged, classified, with a superstitious veneration that would not be satisfied till all the possibilities of interpretation had been tried. The command to "search the scriptures" for in them were the words of eternal life, was accepted and faithfully obeyed. "The Talmud" says Emanuel Deutsch, "is more than a book of laws, it is a microcosm, embracing, even as does the Bible, heaven and earth. It is as if all the prose and poetry, the science, the faith and speculation of the old world were, though only in faint reflections, bound up in it *in nuce*." The theme of discussion, conjecture, speculation, allegory was, from first to last, the same, – the relation between Jehovah and his people, the nature and conditions of salvation, the purport of the law, the bearing of the promises. The entire field of investigation was open, reaching all the way from the number of words in the Bible to the secret of infinite being. No passage was left unexposed with all the keenness that faith aided by culture could supply; and when reason reached the end of its tether, fancy took up the work and threaded with unwearied industry the mazes of allegory.

Among the problems that challenged solution was the one touching the Messiah, his attributes and offices, his nature and his kingdom. This theme had inexhaustible capacities and infinite attraction, for it was but another form of the theme of national deliverance which was uppermost in the Hebrew mind.

The history of the Messianic idea is involved in the obscurity that clouds the early history of Israel; and this again is embarrassed with the extreme difficulty of deciding the antiquity of the Hebrew scriptures. At what moment was Israel fully persuaded of its providential destiny? That is the question. For the germs of the Messianic idea were contained in the bosom of that persuasion. That the idea was slow in forming must be conceded under any estimate of its antiquity; for its development depended on the experiences of the nation, and these experiences underwent in history numerous and violent fluctuations. The hope of a deliverer came with the felt need of deliverance, and the consciousness of this need grew with the soreness of the calamity under which the nation groaned, as the character of it was determined by the character of the calamity. The national expectation was necessarily vague at first. It rested originally on the tradition of a general promise given to Abraham that his descendants should be a great and happy nation, blessing and redeeming the nations of the earth; that their power should be world-wide, their wealth inexhaustible, their peace undisturbed, their moral supremacy gladly acknowledged. "The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face; they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thy hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord, and walk in his ways; and all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord."

As a promise made by Jehovah must be kept, the anticipation of its fulfilment became strong as the prospect of it grew dim. The days of disaster were the days of expectation. The prophets laid stress on the condition, charged the delay upon lukewarmness, and urged the necessity of stricter conformity with the divine will; but the people, oblivious of duty, held to the pledge and cherished the anticipation. When the national hope assumed the concrete form of faith in the advent of an individual, when the conception of the individual became clothed in supernatural attributes, is uncertain. Probably the looked-for deliverer was from the first regarded as more than human. It could hardly be otherwise, as he was to be the representative and agent of Jehovah, an incarnation of his truth and righteousness. The Hebrews easily confounding the human with the super-human, were always tempted to ascribe supernatural qualities to their political and spiritual leaders, believing that they were divinely commissioned, attested and furthered; and the person who was to accomplish what none of them had so much as hopefully undertaken, would naturally be clothed by an enthusiastic imagination, with attributes more than mortal. The poets depicted the stories of the future restoration in language of extraordinary splendor. Joel, some say eight hundred years before Jesus, two hundred years before the first captivity, foreshadows the restoration, but without any portraiture of the victorious Prince. A century and a half later we will suppose, the first Isaiah speaks of the providential child of the nation, on whose shoulder the government shall rest, whose name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty Potentate, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace; whose dominion shall be great, who shall fix and establish the throne and kingdom of David, through justice and equity for ever, and in peace without end; a lineal descendant from David, a sprout from his root.

"The spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him,
"The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
"The spirit of counsel and might,
"The spirit of knowledge and fear of Jehovah.
"Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,
"And faithfulness the girdle of his reins;
"To him shall the nation repair,
"And his dwelling place shall be glorious."

The second Isaiah, supposed to have written during the exile and not long before its termination, associates the hope of restoration and return with king Cyrus, on whose clemency the Jews built great expectations, intimating even that he might be the promised deliverer. "He saith of Cyrus: 'He is my shepherd; he shall perform all my pleasure.' He saith of Jerusalem: 'She shall be built;' and of the temple: 'Her foundation shall be laid.'"

In the book of Daniel, by some supposed to have been written during the captivity, by others as late as Antiochus Epiphanes (B. C., 175), the restoration is described in tremendous language, and the Messiah is portrayed as a supernatural personage, in close relation with Jehovah himself. He is spoken of as a man, yet with such epithets as only a Jewish imagination could use in describing a human being. Heinrich Ewald, in the fifth volume of his history of the people of Israel, devotes twenty-three pages to an account of the development of the national expectation of a Messiah, which he calls "the second preparatory condition of the consummation in Jesus." After alluding to Joel's fervent anticipation, and Isaiah's description of the glory that was to come through the King, in whom the spirit of pure divinity penetrated, animated and glorified everything, so that his human nature was exalted to the God-like power, whose actions, speech, breath even attested deity, he says: "It is not to be questioned that this most exalted form of the conception of the anticipated Messiah appeared in the midst of the latter period of this history, when before the great victory of the Maccabees, the eternal hopes of Israel were disturbed in their foundations along with its political prospects, and the advent of a King of David's line seemed wholly impossible. At this time the deathless hope became more interior and imperishable in this new, glorious, celestial idea, and the Messiah presented himself before prophetic vision as existing from all eternity, along with the indestructible prerogatives of Israel, which were thought of as existing in an ideal realm, ready to manifest themselves visibly when the hour of destiny should come. And we are able, on historical grounds, to assume that the deep-souled author of the book of Daniel, was the man who first sketched the splendid shape of the Messiah, and the superb outline of his kingdom, in his far-reaching, keen, suggestive, luminous phrases; while immediately after him the first composer of our book of Enoch developed the traits furnished him, with an equal warmth of language and a spiritual insight, not deeper perhaps, but quieter and more comprehensive." Ewald supposes the book of Enoch to have been written at various intervals between 144 and 120 (B. C.) and to have been completed in its present form in the first half of the century that preceeded the coming of Christ. The book was regarded as of authority by Tertullian, though Origen and Augustine classed it with apocryphal writings. In it the figure of the Messiah is invested with super-human attributes. He is called "The Son of God," "whose name was spoken before the sun was made;" "who existed from the beginning in the presence of God," that is, was pre-existent. At the same time his human characteristics are insisted on. He is called "Son of Man," even "Son of Woman," "The Anointed," "The Elect," "The Righteous One," after the style of earlier Hebrew anticipation. The doctrines of angelic orders and administrations, of Satan and his legions, of resurrection and the final judgment, though definitely shaped, perhaps by association with Persian mythologies, lay concealed in possibility within the original thought of ultimate supremacy which worked so long and so actively, though so obscurely, in the mind of the Jewish race.

The books of Maccabees, belonging, according to Ewald, to the last half century before Christ, contain significant hints of the future beliefs of Israel. In the second chapter of II. Maccabees, verses 4-9, we read: "It is also found in the records that Jeremy the prophet, being warned of God, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go with him, as he went forth into the mountain where Moses climbed up and saw the heritage of God. And when Jeremy came thither he found a hollow cave wherein he laid the tabernacle and the ark and the altar of incense, and then stopped the door. And some of those that followed him came to mark the way, but they could not find it; which, when Jeremy perceived, he blamed them, saying: As for that place it shall be unknown until the time that God gather his people again together, and receive them unto mercy. Then shall the Lord show them these things, and the glory of the Lord shall appear, and the cloud also, as it was showed unto Moses."

Is it a stretch of conjecture on the tenuous thread of fancy to find this reappearance described in Revelations XI., 19, in these words: "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in the temple the ark of his covenant; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail?" In the twenty-first chapter the seer describes himself as "carried away in the spirit to a great and high mountain" and shown "that great city the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven, from God." And he heard a great voice out of heaven, saying: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men; He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, their God." The heavenly Jerusalem that came from the clouds is the heavenly city, the germ whereof was carried up and hidden in the cloud by Jeremy, the prophet. The apocryphal books of the Old Testament lodge the ancient Hebraic idea in the very heart of the New.

The earliest phases of the Messianic hope were the most exalted in spirituality. As the fortunes of the people became entangled with those of other states, and the heavy hand of foreign oppression was laid upon them, the anticipation lost its religious and assumed a political character. The Messiah assumed the aspect of a temporal prince, no other conception of him meeting the requirements of the time. The dark days had come again, and were more threatening than ever. Sixty-three years before the birth of Jesus, Pompey the Great, returning from the East, flushed with victory, approached Jerusalem. The city shut its gates against him, but the resistance, though stubborn, was overcome at last, and Judæa was, with the rest of the world, swept into the mass of the Roman empire. The conqueror, proud but magnanimous, spared the people the last humiliation. He respected no national scruples, perhaps made a point of disregarding them; he even penetrated into the Holy of Holies, a piece of sacrilegious audacity that no Gentile had ventured on before him; but he was considerate of the national spirit in other respects, and left the State, in semblance at least, existing. He quelled the factions that distracted the country, repaired the ruin caused in the city by the siege, restored the injured temple, and departed leaving the country in the hands of native rulers, the Empire being thrown into the background. In the background, however, it lurked, a vast power, holding Judæa dependent and tributary. The Jewish state was closely bounded and sharply defined; a portion of its wealth was absorbed in taxes. An iron arm repressed the insurgent fanaticism that ever and anon broke out in zeal for Jehovah. The loyalty that was kept alive by religious traditions and was only another name for religious enthusiasm, was not allowed expression. Still the even pressure of imperial power was not cruelly felt, and by the better portion of the people was preferred to ceaseless discord and anarchy. The lower orders, easily roused to fanaticism, provoked the Roman rule to more evident and stringent dominion. Julius Cæsar, passing by on his way to Egypt, paused, saw the situation, and increased the authority of Antipater, his representative, whom he raised to the dignity of Procurator of Judæa. The rule of Antipater was, in the main, just, and commended itself to the rational friends of the Jewish State. He rebuilt the wall which the assaults of war had thrown down, pacified the country, and earned by his general moderation the praise of the patriotic. But Antipater, besides being the representative of a Gentile despotism, was of foreign race, an Idumæan, of the abhorred stock of Edom. Spiritual acquiescence in the rule of such a prince was not to be expected.

Antipater was the founder of the Herodian dynasty. Whatever may have been the ulterior designs which the princes of this dynasty had at heart, whether they meditated an Eastern Empire centering in Palestine, Jerusalem being the great metropolis, a purpose kept secret in their breasts till such time as events might justify them in throwing off the dominion of Rome which they had used as an assistance in their period of weakness; or whether they hoped to combine Church and State in Judæa in such a way that each might support the other; or whether, in their passion for splendor, they plotted the subversion of religion by the pomp of pagan civilization; the practical result of their dominion was the exasperation of the Hebrew spirit.

Herod, the son of Antipater, deserved, on several accounts, the title of Great that history has bestowed on him. He was great as a soldier, great as a diplomatist, great as an administrator. Made king in his youth; established in his power by the Roman senate; confirmed in his state by Augustus;

entrusted with all but unlimited powers; absolved from the duty to pay tribute to the empire; his long reign of more than forty years was of great moment to the Jewish state. Internally he corrupted it, but externally he beautified it. The superb temple, one of the wonders and ornaments of the Eastern world, was of his building, and so delicately as well as munificently was it done, that the shock of removing the old edifice to make room for the new was quite avoided. He adorned the city besides, with sumptuous monuments and structures. His palaces, theatres, tombs were of unexampled magnificence. Nor was his attention confined to the city of Jerusalem; Cæsarea was enriched with marble docks and palaces; Joppa was made handsome; Antonia was fortified. Games and feasts relieved the monotony of Eastern life, and gratified the Greek taste for splendid gaiety. But this was all in the interest of paganism. If he rebuilt the temple at Jerusalem, he rebuilt also the temple at Samaria. If he made superb the worship of Jehovah in the holy city, he encouraged heathen worship in the new city of Cæsarea. This introduction of Roman customs deeply offended the religious sense of the nation. Outside the city walls he had an amphitheatre for barbarous games. Inside, he had a theatre for Greek plays and dances. The castle, Antonia, well garrisoned, a castle and a palace combined, commanded the temple square. The Roman eagle, fixed upon the front of the temple, was an affront that no magnificence or munificence could atone for. His private life was not calculated to win the favor of a severely puritanical people, or persuade them of the advantage of being under imperial dominion. The Greek legends on his coins, his ostentatious encouragement of foreign usages and people, his rude treatment of Hebrew prejudices, and his haughty bearing towards the "first families" added bitterness to the misery of foreign sway.

Yet the situation became worse at his death. For his successors had his audacity without his prudence, and were disposed, as he was, to be oppressive, without being, as he was, magnificent. He did keep the nation at peace by his tyranny, if by his cruelty he undermined security and provoked the disaffection that made peace impossible after him. The last acts ascribed to him, the order that the most eminent men of the nation should be put to death at his decease, and that the infants of Bethlehem, the city of David, should be massacred, attest more than the vulgar belief in his cruelty; they bear witness to a conviction that the spirit of the people was not dead, that the despotism of Rome had failed to crush the hope of Israel. The death of Herod, which occurred when Jesus was a little child, was followed by frightful social and political convulsions. For two or three years all the elements of disorder were afoot. Between pretenders to the vacant throne of Herod, and aspirants to the Messianic throne of David, Judæa was torn and devastated. Revolt assumed the wildest form, the higher enthusiasm of faith yielded to the lower fury of fanaticism; the celestial visions of a kingdom of heaven were completely banished by the smoke and flame of political hate. Claimant after claimant of the dangerous supremacy of the Messiah appeared, pitched a camp in the wilderness, raised the banner, gathered a force, was attacked, defeated, banished or crucified; but the frenzy did not abate. Conservative Jews, in their despair, sent an embassy to Rome, praying for tranquility under the equitable reign of law. They wanted no king like Herod, or of Herod's line; they prayed to be delivered from all kings who were not themselves subject to imperial responsibility. The governor of Syria they would acknowledge. The petition was not granted. Herod's three sons, Archelaus, Antipas and Philip divided their father's dominion between them; Judæa was made a Roman province, subject to taxation like any other.

The best of the three kings was Philip, who received as his portion the North Eastern division, the most remote from the centre of disturbance. He was a quiet, well-disposed man, who staid at home, attended to his own business, developed the resources of his dominion, and showed himself a father to his people. Cæsarea Philippi was built by him; Bethsaida was rebuilt. Antipas, called also Herod, was appointed ruler over Galilee and Peræa; a cunning, unprincipled man, nicknamed "the fox;" despotic and wilful, like his father, and like his father, fond of display. He built Dio Cæsarea, as it was afterwards called, and Tiberias, on the sea of Galilee. He too was a good deal of a pagan, and deeply outraged the Hebrew conscience by repudiating his wife, the daughter of

Aretas, an Arabian king, and marrying the wife of his half-brother, Philip. He was an oriental despot, superstitious, luxurious, sensual, wilful and weak; quite destitute of the statesmanship required in the ruler of a turbulent province, where special care and skill were necessary to reconcile the order of civil government with the aspiration after theocratic supremacy. The spiritual fear, which compelled him to stand in awe of religious enthusiasm, put him on more than half earnest quest of prophetic messengers, made him curious about miracles and signs, and anxious not to offend needlessly the higher powers, was incessantly at war with the self-regarding policy which resented the smallest encroachment on his own authority. To maintain his ducal state, and meet the cost of his public and private extravagance, he imposed heavy taxes, and collected them in an unscrupulous fashion, which made him and the empire he represented extremely unpopular. Jealous of his prerogative, and ambitious of regal rank, he brought himself into disagreeable collision with the aspirations of the people he governed. His immediate neighborhood to the centres of Jewish enthusiasm, – he lived in the very heart of it, for Galilee was the seat and head-quarters of Hebrew radicalism – made his every movement felt. In him the spirit of the Roman empire was, in the belief of the people, incarnate.

The oldest brother, Archelaus, held the chief position, bore the highest title, received the largest tribute, more than a million of dollars, and resided in Judæa, nearer the political centre of the country. His reign was short. His cruelty and lawlessness, his disregard of private and public decencies raised his subjects against him. Augustus, on an appeal to Rome for redress, summoned him to his presence, listened to the charges and the defence, and banished him to Gaul. This was in the year 6 of our era, only three years after the death of Herod. The reign of his brothers, Philip and Antipas, covered the period of the life of Jesus.

The "taxing" which excited the wildest uproar against the Roman power, took place at this period, – A. D. 7, – under Cyrenius or Quirinus, governor of Syria; it was the first general tax laid directly by the imperial government, and it raised a furious storm of opposition. The Hebrew spirit was stung into exasperation; the puritans of the nation, the enthusiasts, fanatics, the zealots of the law, the literal constructionists of prophecy, appealed to the national temper, revived the national faith, and fanned into flame the combustible elements that smouldered in the bosom of the race. A native Hebrew party was formed, on the idea that Judæa was for the Jews; that the rule of the Gentile was ungodly; that all support given to it was disloyalty to Jehovah. The popular feeling broke out in open rebellion; the fanaticism of the "zealots" affected the whole nation. Whoever had the courage to draw the sword in the name of the Messiah was sure of a following, though there was no chance that the uprising would end in anything but blood and worse oppression. The most extravagant expectations were cherished of miraculous furtherance and super-human aid. The popular imagination, inflamed by rhetoric taken from Daniel, Enoch, and other apocryphal books, went beyond all sober limits. The primary conditions of divine assistance, sanctity, fidelity, patience, meekness of trust, reverence for the Lord's will, were neglected and forgotten; the promise alone was kept in view; the word of Jehovah was alone remembered; his command was disregarded. But the Lord's promise was not kept. Every new uprising was followed by fresh impositions; the detestable dominion was fastened upon the people more hopelessly than ever. The temper of the domination became bitter and contemptuous, as it had not been before. The name of Jew was synonymous to Roman ears with vulgar fanaticism.

In place of Archelaus, Augustus sent procurators, as they were called, Coponius, Marcus Ambivius, Annius Rufus. The country was generally tranquil under their short administrations; but the internal feuds were not pacified. The enthusiasm of the Jews provoked the malignity of the Samaritans, who, having been longer wonted to foreign rule, less resented it, and were not unwilling to put themselves in league with the despot to crush an ancient foe. It is related that during the administration of Coponius, some evil-minded Samaritans, stole into the open temple of Jerusalem, on the passover night, and threw human bones into the holy place. The building was desecrated for the season and must be purified by special sacrifices before it could be used again. The dastardly act

was associated, in the minds of the people, with the insulting degradations of the Gentile power, and the spirit of rebellion was exasperated.

Augustus died A. D. 14, and was succeeded by Tiberius, whose policy towards Judæa, was not oppressive so much as contemptuous. He was too merciful to the "sick man" to drive away the carrion flies that were already surfeited, and let in a fresh swarm of blood-suckers. His viceroys enjoyed a long term of office and plundered at leisure. Pontius Pilate was appointed to this position in the year 26, about four years before the public appearance of Jesus, and was kept there till the year 37. He was, in many respects, a good administrator: overbearing, of course, for he was a Roman; his subjects were by nature, irritating, and by reputation, factious. He was greedy of gain, though not rapacious or extortionate; not a man of high principle; not a sympathetic or sentimental man, cold, indifferent, apathetic rather; still, moderate, and, on the whole, just; liable to mistakes through stubbornness and imprudence, but neither cruel, jealous, nor vindictive. The reputation of being all these was easily earned by a man in his position; for the Jews were sensitive, not easily satisfied, and disposed to construe unfavorably any acts of a foreign ruler. As viceroys went, Pilate was not a bad man, nor was he a bad specimen of his class. The smallest imprudence might precipitate riot in Jerusalem. On one occasion, the troops from Samaria, coming to winter at Jerusalem, were allowed to carry, emblazoned on their banner, the image of the emperor, to which the Roman soldiers attached a sacred character. The sight of the idolatrous standard on the morning of its first exhibition created great excitement. A riot broke forth at once; a deputation waited on the governor at Cæsarea, to protest against the outrage and demand the removal of the sacrilege. Pilate firmly withstood the supplicants, thinking the honor of the emperor at stake. Five days and five nights the petitioners stayed, pressing their demand. On the sixth day, the governor, wearied by their importunity and resolved to put an end to the annoyance, had his judgment-seat placed on the race-course, ordered troops to lie concealed in the near neighborhood, and awaited the visit of the Jews. The deputation came as usual with their complaint; at a signal, the soldiers appeared and surrounded the suppliants, while the procurator threatened them with instant death, if they did not at once retire to their homes. The stern puritans, nothing daunted, threw themselves at his feet, stretched out their necks, and cried: 'It were better to die than to submit to insult to our holy laws.' The astonished governor yielded, and the insignia were removed.

On another occasion Pilate was made sensible of the inflammable character of the people with whom he had to deal. He had allowed the construction, perhaps only the restoration, of a costly aqueduct to supply the city, but more especially the temple buildings, with pure water. It was built at the instance of the Sanhedrim and the priests, to whom an abundance of water was a prime necessity. In consideration of this fact, as well as of the circumstance that the benefit of the improvement accrued wholly to the Jewish people, it seemed to Pilate no more than just that the expense should be defrayed from moneys in the temple treasury that were set apart for such purposes. There is no evidence that his action was unreasonable or his method of pursuing it offensive; but clamors at once arose against his project, and on occasion of his coming to Jerusalem a tumultuous crowd pressed on him, and insulting epithets were flung at him from the rabble. To still and scatter them soldiers were sent, in ordinary dress, with clubs in their hands, their weapons being concealed, to overawe the malcontents. This failing, and the tumult increasing, the signal of attack was given; the soldiers fell to with a will; blood was shed; innocent and guilty suffered alike. As this occurred on a feast day, near the Prætorium, and not far from the temple itself, it is quite possible that the sacred precincts were disturbed by the uproar, and that the stain of blood touched consecrated pavement. The popular mind, excited and maddened, seized on the occurrence, represented it as a deliberate affront on the part of the governor, and charged him with mingling the blood of innocent people with the sacrifices they were offering to Jehovah. It is not unlikely that the "tower of Siloam" which fell, crushing eighteen citizens, was a part of this very aqueduct wall, and its fall may have been and probably was, regarded as a judgment on the work and on all who countenanced it. That it made a profound impression on the

popular imagination appears in the gospel narratives written many years afterwards. Ewald supposes that this accident happened at an early stage of the work, and was a leading cause of the fanatical outbreak that expressed the popular discontent.

Philo tells a story of Pilate's administration, so characteristic that it deserves repeating, although, as Ewald remarks, it may be another version of the incident of the standards. Ewald, however, is inclined to think it a distinct occurrence. According to this narrative, Pilate, in honor of the emperor, and in accordance with a custom prevalent throughout the empire, especially in the East, caused to be set up in a conspicuous place in Jerusalem, two votive shields of gold, one bearing the name of Tiberius, the other his own. The shields had nothing on them but the names; no image, no inscription, no idolatrous emblem, simply the two names. But even this was resented by the fiery populace who could not endure the lightest intimation of their subjection to a Gentile power. The indignation reached the aristocracy; at least, the force of the movement did; and the sons of Herod, all four of them, accompanied by members of the first families and city officials, formally waited on Pilate to demand the removal of the tablets, and on his refusal went to Rome to lay the matter before Tiberius, who granted, on his part, the request. Be the incident as recorded true or not, the record of it by so near a contemporary and so clear a judge as Philo, throws a strong light on the situation, brings the two parties into bold relief, as they confront one another, and affords a glimpse into the secret workings of Hebrew political motives.

The pressure of the Roman authority was incessant and severe, though the apparatus of it was kept in the background. The governor held his court and head-quarters at Cæsarea, a seaport town on the Mediterranean, about mid-way between Joppa on the south, and the promontory of Carmel on the north, admirably situated with regard to Rome, on the one side, and Palestine on the other. For strategic purposes the place was well chosen. The military force in the country was not large – about a thousand men – but it was effectively disposed. The castle of Antonia, in the city of Jerusalem, contained a garrison judiciously small, but sufficient for an exigency. The viceroy was present in the Holy City on public days when great assemblages of people, gathered together under circumstances provocative of insurrection, required closer watch than usual. He had a residence there, and a judgment-seat on a marble balcony in front of the palace; he exercised regal powers, held the issues of life and death, could depose priests of any order; in short, ruled the subject people with as much consideration as the peculiar circumstances of the case demanded, but no more. The people were never permitted to forget their subject condition. The hated tax-gatherer went his rounds, exacting tribute to the empire. The evolutions of soldiers gave an aspect of omnipresence to the foreign dominion. The hope of deliverance lost its spiritual character, and took on decidedly a political shape. The anticipation of the Messiah became less ideal, but more intense. The armed figure of king David haunted the dreams of fanatics; even the angels that hovered before the imagination of gentler enthusiasts wore breast-plates and had swords in their hands. The kingdom looked for was no reign of truth, mercy, and kindness, but a reign of force, for force alone could meet force.

III.
THE SECTS

The popular aspect of the Messianic hope was political, not religious or moral. The name "Messiah," was synonymous with "King of the Jews;" it suggested political designs and aspirations. The assumption of that character by any individual drew on him the vigilance of the police. In this condition of affairs the public sentiment was divided between the Conservatives and the Radicals. The first party comprised the wealthy, settled, permanent, cautious people whose patriotism was tinged with prudent reflection. They saw the hopelessness of revolt, its inevitable failure, and the worse tyranny that would follow its bloody suppression; they put generous interpretations on the acts and intentions of the imperial power, did justice and a little more than literal justice to acts of clemency or forbearance, appreciated the value of the Roman supremacy in preserving internal quiet and keeping other plunderers at a distance; and had confidence that patience and diplomacy would accomplish what force could not undertake. They were careful, therefore, to maintain a good understanding with the powers that were, and frowned on all attempts to revive the national spirit.

The conservatives were of all shades of opinion, and of all parties; the radicals were, as is usually the case, confined mostly to those who had little to lose, either of wealth, reputation, or social position. The supremacy of Israel, the restoration of the Jewish Commonwealth, the overthrow of the wealthy and powerful, the reinstatement of the poor, the unlettered, the weak, the suffering, the downtrodden "children of Abraham," composed the group of ideas which made up the sum of their intellectual life. The Roman dominion was abhorred not because it was cruel, but because it was sacrilegious. Diplomacy, with these, was another word for time-serving; policy another phrase for cowardice; they detested prudence as ignoble; they distrusted conciliation as apostacy; they put the worst construction on the fairest seeming deeds, dreading nothing so much as agreement between the chief men of Israel and the minions of the empire.

The educated and responsible classes were chiefly conservative. No sect was so entirely, for no sect comprised all of these classes; but some sects were naturally more conservative than others. The Sadducees were, on the whole, the most so; not by reason of their creed particularly, but through the influence of their historical antecedents. After the capture of Jerusalem by Ptolemy, 320 B. C., some hundred thousand Jews went to Egypt and attained consequence there; had their own religious rites and temple. Contact with Greek thought and life there enlarged their minds. Their old-fashioned Hebraism seemed strait and prim by the side of the splendid exuberance of Gentile life in Alexandria. Jerusalem looked, in the distance, like a provincial town; the wealth of pagan literature dwarfed their Scriptures to the dimensions of a single deep but narrow tradition. They were Jews still, but bigoted Jews no longer. How unreasonable seemed now the prejudices of exclusive race! how unwise the attempts to maintain peculiarities of custom! how fanatical the efforts to impose them upon others! The world was large and various: the order of the world followed the track of no one law-giver, prophet or saint.

The sect of Sadducees is supposed to have risen from this pagan soil. It was a sect of rationalists, free-thinkers, skeptics, eclectics; Jews, but not dogmatists of any school. They believed in culture and general progress, and had the characteristic traits of men so believing. They were cool, unimpassioned, scientific; sentimentalism they abjured; enthusiasm to them was folly. They were glad to graft Greek culture on Hebrew thought, and would not have been sorry to see the small Hebrew state absorbed by some world-wide civilization. Moses they revered, and his law; but the aftergrowth, priestly and prophetic, they discarded. No doubt they thought the priests superstitious, the prophets mad, the restorationists a set of fools, the vision of Israel's future supremacy the mischievous nightmare of distempered minds. As a literary class the Sadducees were few and select;

aristocratic in taste, supercilious in manners. They were in favor with the governors placed over the people by Roman authority, on account of their cultured moderation; and in return for social and political support, received offices in the State, and even in the Church. Caiaphas, the high priest in the time of Jesus, was a Sadducee, and was raised to that dignity by Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predecessor in office.

The Sadducee was a man of the world; not in the bad sense, but in the strict sense of the term. Disbelieving in immortality, he confined his view to the possibilities of the time; disbelieving in angels and special providences, he put confidence in temporal powers; disbelieving the doctrine of divine decrees and manifest destiny, he pursued the calculations of policy and held himself within the reasonable compass of human motives. Compromisers on principle, the Sadducees were unpopular in a community of earnest Jews. They bore bad names, were called epicureans, sensualists, materialists, cold-blooded aristocrats, allies of despotism; but they deserved these abusive appellations no more than men of the same description in modern states deserve them. The abusive epithet was one of the penalties they had to pay for the intellectual and social consequence they enjoyed.

The Pharisees were more numerous, more commonplace and more popular. They were, in fact, the great popular sect. They were of more recent origin than the Sadducees, their history going back only about a century and a half before the time of Jesus. Their name, which means "exclusive" or "elect," "set apart," sufficiently indicates their character. They were the "strait" sect; Hebrews of the Hebrews; Puritans of the Puritans; the quintessence of theocratic fervor and patriotic faith; the true Israel. Strict constructionists they were; friends to the law and the testimony; worshippers of the letter and the form; painstaking preservers of every iota of the written word; firm believers in the destiny of Israel, in the special providence that could accomplish it, in the angelic powers whose agency might be needed to fulfil it, in the future life when it was to be fulfilled. They held to the law, and they held to the prophets, major and minor; they could divide the word of the Lord to a hair.

The Pharisees have usually been called a sect; they were not so much a sect as a party. Church and State being one in the conception of a theocracy, or government of God, the devotee and the politician were the same person; the dogmatist was the democrat; the man of narrowest creed was the man of widest sympathies; the most exclusive theologian was the most popular partisan. To keep Israel true to the faith, and, in consequence of that to save it from political decline, was, from the first, the Pharisee's mission. He never lost it from his view. His eye was steadily fixed on the issues of the day, as they involved the destinies of the future. In order that he might be a patriot, he was anxious to preserve unimpaired his puritanism; and in order that he might preserve his puritanism unimpaired, he attended diligently to the duties of patriotism.

The Pharisee cherished the Messianic hope. It was part of his faith in the destiny of Israel, and the great practical justification of his belief in the resurrection of the dead; he believed in personal immortality, because he believed in the Christ who would come to bestow it. It was an article of the patriot's creed; the joy of the Messianic felicity being the reward for fidelity to Israel. The hope presented to him its political aspect, that being the aspect really fascinating to patriotic contemplation. The moral and spiritual aspects were incidental to this. In fact the moral and spiritual aspects were scarcely thought of. It was reserved for Christianity to develop these when the literal doctrine had lost its interest, and the heavenly kingdom had been transported from the earth to the skies. A thousand and a half of years have not spiritualized the belief with the multitude. Still the Pharisaic doctrine is the accepted faith; a purely rational human faith in immortality is entertained by the philosophical few. The Pharisees constituted a sort of Young Men's Hebrew Association, loosely organized for the maintenance of the faith and the fulfilment of the destiny of Israel.

But while all Pharisees shared the same general beliefs, all were not of the same mind on questions of immediate policy. They were divided into conservative and radical wings. The conservatives, whether from temperament, position, conviction, or selfish interest, deprecated sudden or violent measures which would defeat their own ends and make a bad state of things worse. They

counselled moderation, patience, acquiescence in the actual and inevitable. They discountenanced the open expressions of discontent, advised submission to law, and preached the duty of strict religious observance as the proper preparation, on their part, for the providential advent of the Son of Man. No doubt this policy was prompted in many cases by timidity, and in many cases by time-serving craft; but no doubt it was in many cases suggested by sober statesmanship. The conservative Pharisee was even less popular than the Sadducee; for the Sadducee pretended to no belief in Israel's providential destiny, and to no sympathy with Israel's Messianic hope; while the Pharisee made conspicuous protestation of orthodox zeal. Evidence of the popular dislike of the conservative Pharisee abounds. He was looked upon as a renegade. He was called pretender and hypocrite, wolf in sheep's clothing, a whited sepulchre. He was ridiculed and lampooned. All manner of heartlessness was charged against him, as being a monster of inhumanity. "The Talmud," says Deutsch, "inveighs even more bitterly and caustically than the New Testament, against what it calls 'the plague of Pharisaism;' 'the dyed ones,' 'who do evil deeds, like Zimri, and require a goodly reward, like Phinehas;' 'who preach beautifully, but behave unbeautifully.'" Their artificial interpretations, their divisions and sub-divisions, their attitudes and posturings were parodied and caricatured. The conventional Pharisee was classed under one of six categories: he did the will of God, but from interested motives; he was forever doing the will of God, but never accomplishing it; he performed absurd penances to avoid imaginary sins; he accepted office in the character of saint; he sanctimoniously begged his neighbor to mention some duty he had inadvertently omitted, his design being to seem faithful in all things when he was faithful in nothing; or, if sincerely devout, he was devout from fear. He had no credit given him for his virtues, and more than due discredit for his vices. In time of peril the conservatives out-numbered the radicals, for radicalism was dangerous; and the feeling between the two classes was the bitterer on this account; the conservatives hating the radicals whom they could not disown, the radicals despising the conservatives who were their brothers in faith. Each party compromised the other precisely where misapprehension was most exasperating.

For the radicalism of the time was exclusively, we may say, pharisaic. There was no other of any considerable account. None but believers in the restoration of Israel, in the triumphant vindication of her faith in a new and complete social order and in absolute political independence; none but believers in divine interposition, and a personal resurrection of the faithful for the enjoyment of felicity in the Messianic kingdom; none but devout students of the scripture, recipients of the whole tradition, visionaries of the literal or spiritual order, could entertain so audacious a hope; and all these were Pharisees.

The Essenes, a mystical and secluded sect, dwelt apart, took no interest in public affairs, and exerted no influence on public opinion. Peculiar in their usages, secret in their proceedings, contemplative in their habits, quietists and dreamers, they so transfigured and sublimated the views which they shared with their compatriots, that no point of practical contact was visible. From them no prophet or reformer came. The soul of the Hebrew faith was all they recognized; the body of it they were indifferent to. That in many respects their doctrines, precepts, social usages and religious practices corresponded with those held by conscientious Jews, need not be questioned. It does not follow that they originated or communicated them. Such opinions were simply adopted as a common inheritance. The Essenes rather withdrew than imparted their belief. All the ingenuity of DeQuincey is unavailing to establish a practical relation between the Essenes and any popular movement in Judæa. These movements were led by the more enthusiastic of the Pharisees, and followed by the multitude that shared their ideas.

The "lawyers" and "scribes," Pharisees for the most part by profession, were in consequence of their profession, conservative. Men of learning, well balanced in mind, carefully educated, good linguists, masters often in theology, philosophy, moral science, familiar as any were with natural history, the mathematics, botany, engaged in the study and exposition of the sacred books, they were from the scholastic nature of their pursuits, disinclined to take part in popular reforms. There were

no zealots among them; they were men of moderate opinions and calm tempers, capable of stubborn resistance to the elements of agitation, but incapable of vehement sympathies with enthusiasm.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.