

JESUS THE CHRIST

By the same Author

PROBLEMS WHICH PERPLEX
THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE
POWER AND THE GLORY
THE OUTLANDS OF HEAVEN
FACTS AND THE FUTURE LIFE
PAUL AND ALBERT
ON TOUR IN U.S.A.
WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH
HOW SPIRITS COMMUNICATE
THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE LAITY
BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT

JESUS

The Christ

by the
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PREFACE

IN the *Church of England Newspaper* of 1st March, 1929, Dean Inge writes :

No real biography of Christ can ever be written ; the materials, unhappily, do not exist. But we are not obliged to agree with the sceptical critics who argue that the historical figure has been lost to us. Personally, I feel more and more strongly the force of the argument that the Synoptic evangelists were intellectually incapable of writing a romance about their Master. Both the character and the teaching, as set forth in these three documents, could not have been invented except by a dramatist of the highest genius ; and the evangelists were simple narrators.

This is my position in the present little book : not to write a "life" of Jesus, but to try to give a portrait of him as he appears to me. And also to explain how certain incidents in his ministry appear in the light of modern psychic research or, to use the more popular word, spiritualism.

With this object in view I cite two or three miracles and parables by way of examples of the rest. I hope sometime soon to write another book on the rest of the Miracles, and perhaps one on the Parables also, when it will be possible to deal with these in more detail. That is, unless someone else with more scholarship than I will undertake this very necessary task. That would be what I would most enjoy to see. Indeed, I have waited for this to happen in regard to the work and ministry of Jesus the Christ. But no one seemed eager to undertake the task ; so I resolved to do what

I could hoping that, perhaps by its very imperfections, my book would arouse someone with the necessary qualifications into a state of activity. The difficulty is that the two essentials—scholarship and spiritual vision—are not often found in the same individual.

A large part of the narrative of the Nativity is taken from a Christmas article which appeared in the *Referee* and is reproduced here with the Editor's kind permission.

Some matters of more or less importance are omitted because I have dealt with them elsewhere and I do not want to make this volume unduly large. References will be found in the Notes at the end of the book.

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JESUS THE CHRIST

CHAPTER I

The Annunciation ; The Nativity ; The Magi

WHEN the two priests had prepared the Altar for the offering of incense they, walking slowly and reverently backward, withdrew and Zacharias was alone in the Holy Place. He saw the shaft of mellow autumn morning light sweep over his shoulder as they parted the curtains at the entrance on retiring. Then darkness again shrouded the Sanctuary, softly relieved by the glow of the seven small flames of the lampstand on his left and a little to the rear. Beyond the Altar hung the great Veil and beyond that was the Holy of Holies, the awful dwelling-place of his God. Only the High Priest might enter there, and that but twice on one day every year.

Silent and motionless he stood there, gazing at the glowing coals which awaited his ministrations. This that he was about to do was the highest honour to which a priest might aspire and it came to each but once in a lifetime. So he stood there with the golden vessel in his hand and prayed that he might be worthy to make this offering on behalf of his afflicted people.

The time was when he, out there in the court with the other waiting priests, used to seize this sacred hour to offer prayer for that which was dearest to his heart :

that he and his young bride might be given a son. But that was years ago and they were now middle-aged people. That hope must go with many other dreams of his early manhood. Now he prayed for others, he who had prayed in vain for himself.

So he approached and sprinkled the incense on the glowing coals. The aromatic smoke ascended with his prayers and over him came a strange mystic uplifting as if he also was in spirit ascending heavenward. Presently his gaze wandered to the right and he drew in a deep breath, for he saw that he was not alone. Beside the Altar stood a man. But he was not as other men. His form was translucent and his countenance indistinct because of the radiance which played about his head.

Zacharias was filled with foreboding, for this was a rare thing which had come upon him. It was said that the High Priest Simon the Just had, for forty years, on the Day of Atonement, seen an angel coming through the Veil into the Holy Place. But that was more than three centuries ago. Also Simon was Pontiff and not a humble member of the priesthood as he. So Zacharias was afraid.

Then the angel spoke in quiet musical tones and, as is the manner of angels, simply and straight to the heart of his hearer. "Do not be afraid, Zacharias," he said. "Those prayers of yours were heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, shall have her son. I want you to call him John for the Lord has indeed been gracious to you. He will be a great man and a great psychic also. He will not walk alone but be filled with the power of a sanctified spirit, even Elijah himself, for it is he who has been appointed the angel guide of the child. He

will help him in preparing the way for the coming of another greater than he."

But this was too tremendous for the simple-hearted priest to accept. The angel stood there, silent now, and waited. At last Zacharias managed to falter: "But, sir, how shall I know that all this is real and not an hallucination? Moreover," he added half to himself, "my wife and I are well on in years now and——"

Then the angel answered him, "I am one whom you know by the name Gabriel. My home is in that high sphere where the purpose of the God of this nation is known. I have been sent to tell you these things and to explain to you the counsel of those High Ones. My message is not of judgement but of blessing. However, you have asked for a sign and that shall be given you. You shall lose the power of speech until you are in a position to speak in testimony of what you have this day experienced, when that which I have foretold to you shall have come to pass."

Zacharias lowered his gaze from the brightness of his visitor and, scarce knowing why, looked for a moment at the Altar. The smoke rose steadily and all was quiet as it should be. He was still in the Holy Place and nothing seemed to have changed. Once again he turned his eyes to the right. The angel was still there, but his form was rapidly fading now, and presently it was gone and beyond where he had stood the dimmed colours of the Veil were seen. Zacharias fell upon his knees and bowed his head to the ground.

There he remained until there came to his ears the murmuring of the crowd outside who were alarmed at his long absence. Weird superstitions were afloat in respect of that secret Shrine of the awful Yahweh.

And Zacharias was much respected by the people. As their murmurs grew louder he rose to his feet and, slowly withdrawing, in doubt whether it was after all just a freak of his own imagination, he approached the entrance. He parted the curtains and went without. For a moment he shaded his eyes from the glare of the morning light and then raised his hand to bless the people according to custom. But no sound came from his lips. And by that token he knew it was indeed true.

He made some signs to them which they tried to interpret. All they could understand was that something had happened in the Holy Place. He had seen something unusual, something he could not explain to them.

Then he went to his robing-room and left the people to their own conjectures.

It was about six months later when Gabriel made his next visit to earth. Living at Nazareth, a country village among the hills of Galilee, there was a young girl named Mary. She was in the house alone, when she saw the door opening. She expected one of the neighbours had come to have a chat, as they often did. But a stranger entered and said with a smile, "Greeting, you fortunate girl!"

She was perplexed. This was no ordinary wayfarer come to ask hospitality for the night. He was very beautiful and his robes, which were simple but of a rich golden hue, bore no trace of travel. Then in the dim light of the room she noticed that there was a glow about him and she understood, for she was clairvoyant and this was not the first visitor from the spirit world she had seen. But none had ever appeared so bright

nor so distinct as this etherialized vision which stood before her now.

She was wondering why one of so high estate in the heavenly realms should come to her, a simple village girl, when he spoke again: "Have no fear, Mary; God is pleased with you. He is going to give you a son. We have chosen a name for him; it is Jesus, for he will grow up to be a great man and people will call him a son of the Highest; and his kingdom will not pass away."

Now there had been many changes in the government lately and one ruler after another had been removed by the powerful Emperor at Rome. And with every new ruler rumours had come to the village of fearful murders and riots and bloodshed. But these matters of high politics and kingship she did not understand. The one thing that concerned her personally was the position in which she would find herself if she, an unmarried girl, were to have a son. She hesitated and then said: "But, sir, I am not married yet."

"No," answered the angel, "that is true. But a sanctified spirit will draw near to you and through him power from that Highest Realm will overshadow you. So what will be born of you will be no disgrace to you, but sanctified and a son of God. Moreover, your kinswoman Elizabeth is with child, although she is middle-aged and was said to be barren. Nothing is impossible with God."

For some minutes Mary thought over this suggestion, while the angel waited. For the final decision must rest with this young maid. Consent to motherhood is the sacred right of every woman, and, even in such a case as this, must be held inviolate. Mary knew what

it meant to her, ostracism on the part of the whole village. And Joseph, her sweetheart to whom she had hoped so shortly to be married—that also, the dearest thing to a Jewish woman's heart, must go. And she would be an outcaste from the society of all decent people, for she could not tell them so unlikely a tale as this. Then she came to her decision. With a sob, she murmured: "Well, then, I am but a humble bondmaid of the Lord. So let it be as you have said." Then she fell upon her knees, hid her face in her hands and wept.

The angel, too, was moved. Gently he laid his hand on her head and a great peace came upon her as she knelt. When again she looked up he was gone.

What did all this mean? Like Zacharias she began to doubt the reality of this experience. All through the night she thought about it. Then there came to her the one tangible item which she could test. She rose early and started off, before the village was awake, on her long walk southward to that other village where Elizabeth lived, about six miles to the west of Jerusalem.

Elizabeth also was psychic and when she heard Mary's greeting she was immediately controlled by her angel-guide who, through her mouth, verified the message which Gabriel had given at Nazareth. It was a great relief to have someone who understood and Mary was loath to leave the quiet security of the priest's house. But there was Joseph. She might, indeed, stay where she was until the child had been born and put out to nurse. Both Zacharias and his wife were good people and they, at least, knew the truth. So she talked it over with them and she came to the conclusion that Joseph ought to know. She would do the straight thing.

She would return to Nazareth to face her trouble. So after a stay of about three months she took her leave of Elizabeth to whom shortly after a son was born as had been promised, and he was named John.

Joseph was delighted to have her back again, for he loved this gentle girl very dearly. She did not tell him her secret. Often she tried to do so, but her courage failed her every time. As for Joseph, he noticed that she was more reserved than formerly and now and then he caught her with a far-away look on her sweet face which he could not understand. But as time went on it gradually became clear to him. He put away the thought. But time confirmed his suspicions. This sweet lovable girl had been unfaithful to him. Then the awful significance came upon him like a thunder-clap. The penalty for such conduct was a shameful public death by stoning. Why had she come back for this? Why had she not stayed away among strangers who would not know?

Joseph was in the depths of despair. He said nothing to Mary about his trouble. One thing stood out clearly: he must shield her as well as he could. The engagement would have to be broken, of course. Indeed, he knew her well enough to be convinced that if he did not take the initiative she would do so. So he made up his mind that it should be made as easy as possible. Engagements were legally binding, but people often broke them off without specifying any particular reason. This would not quite solve the difficulty. But it would remove the worst factor. An unbetrothed girl having a child would incur disgrace; but she could not be stoned as an adulteress.

Then, while he was still trying to think it all out,

one morning he awoke and knew he had, during his sleep-time, been with his angel guide. And here called that interview. So vivid was it that he had not the slightest doubt of its reality. It put a new light on the matter. In his dream the angel had told him that what had happened to Mary was by the operation of a sanctified spirit. The task before him was not a pleasant one, but it must be done. He went to her and told her of his dream. And he found that months ago an angel had used the same words to Mary herself.

For a time they talked over this wonderful thing which had come to pass. Then they came down to earth again. What was to be done? After thinking it out Joseph hit on the solution.

There was a census being taken of the whole of Palestine. During the current year everyone must go and register his or her name on the roll of their ancestral city. It happened that they both were of David's lineage and so their place of registration was the same. This was Bethlehem, a village a few miles south of Jerusalem.

But the first thing to do was to complete the marriage contract so that Mary should become his legal wife. This ceremony was performed without the customary feast. This was unusual but not unique. The neighbours, however, no doubt deeming him the father of the child, would not be much surprised. But they would look askance at the young couple nevertheless. So having given her the protection of his name, he sold up his small property and set out southward. Whither? Probably to the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the only two people in the world who understood the truth of the matter. Here they tarried while Joseph

found work in the neighbourhood, an easy task with a priest for host.

But their sojourn here was only temporary. No doubt both Joseph and Mary felt that their proper home should henceforth be in Bethlehem, their ancestral city. Here the Child, who had been the centre of such unusual transactions, must be born. But for some reason they tarried until it became clear that the time when the birth must take place could not be many days off. Perhaps also the end of the enrolment period drew near. So they bade farewell to their kind host and hostess and, with an ass for Mary to ride upon, made their way southward towards Bethlehem.

The journey was not a long one, but the road was rough and there was many a slip and stumble by the way. When Bethlehem came in sight Mary knew that the time of her delivery had come.

It was late when they arrived at the gate of the khan. This was an oblong enclosure with a platform raised about a foot above the ground along both of the longer sides. This platform was roofed in for the protection of the travellers. The animals were put in the open space in the middle. At the further end, opposite the entrance-gate, was the communal manger or feeding-box on four legs.

Mary and Joseph were late arrivals, and the two platforms were full. There was no available space. So they settled down for the night in the open near the feeding-box. Here the Babe was born and, lest he come to harm in the darkness, the women, whom Joseph had called in a hurry, wrapped him up warmly and put him in the box while they attended to the young mother.

Meanwhile, some shepherds out on the hills suddenly, to their surprise, saw a bright being standing near them. He spoke to them. He was quite objective, for they all saw him, and heard what he said. He told them not to be afraid. The message he brought was friendly, and indeed one of great joy. A Babe had been born in Bethlehem, who would prove to be the long-expected Messiah. In order that they might know that what they saw and heard was not hallucination he gave them a sign. If they would go to Bethlehem they would find the Child in unusual circumstances. They would find him still in his hastily-wrapped bands, lying in the feeding-box.

Then they saw a regiment of the heavenly Chivalry standing near, who raised their voices in an anthem of worship to God and peace to all men. Suddenly as it had come, the vision vanished, and all was silence and darkness once more. They had witnessed what to-day is called a "materialization", but on a grand scale, made possible by the darkness, as is the case with similar occurrences recorded in the Bible.

The shepherds talked over this unusual experience. In the end they decided to go and see whether, after all, it was real or just imaginary. They knew where to go. They made straight for the public khan and found all exactly as the angel had told them.

At about the same time in far-away Persia, a group of psychics had a similar experience. They were Wise Men, of the sacred tribe called "Magi", and were more used to such spiritual intercourse than the shepherds. So when the luminous cloud* appeared

* The Greek word "aster" means any luminous body. The "star" the Magi saw was "His star", i.e., the guardian angel of the Child.

n their midst and they heard the voice from it they knew it was an angel manifesting by partial materialization (or etherialization), and that the commission so given was one that must not be disregarded. They therefore made preparations for the long journey of perhaps seven hundred miles across the desert and set out for Palestine. It was nearly two years later when they actually arrived. Meanwhile Joseph had found work and the little Family had settled down in a house in the village.

The Magi had not seen the angel again in the meantime, but they had been told that the Child born was to be a great Prince. So they went straight to the Palace of the King in the capital city, Jerusalem. Here they found they had been making a mistake.

Herod was an old man and there was no baby prince in the Palace. He was a rank materialist ; also very superstitious. He kept a band of Wise Men of his own. These went in fear of their ferocious master. They did not tell him all they knew. Had they done so they would soon have been disposed of. They knew all about the Child, more than their brethren the Magi knew. But when Herod put the matter to them they fell back upon the Scriptures as a safe medium for their information. They managed to unearth a passage in Micah which suited their purpose. The destination of the Magi was the little village of Bethlehem.

They set out, therefore, for Bethlehem. As they neared the town, to their great joy, the angel appeared again and they saw his light going in front of them. So they followed the light until it came to rest over the house. They then entered and found what they had come so far to seek.

They made their gift of gold and spices. Then, probably acting on a privately-conveyed hint from Herod's Wise Men, they did not return to report to him as he had plausibly invited them to do. They bent their course eastward, got over the border with all speed, and made direct for home and safety.

The reason for these strange proceedings was then made clear to Joseph. After they had retired an angel of the Lord appeared to him while in a trance and told him to take the young Child and his mother and go at once to Egypt. He did so immediately, that same night. He had no time to gather supplies or money for the journey. But that did not matter ; he had the gold which the Magi had left and, when that gave out, he could easily find a market for the spices. So away the little party went down to Egypt and there remained until their enemy Herod had been gathered to his fathers.

The one sinister figure in the narrative is this same Herod. When he saw that he had been outwitted, and indeed treated with contempt, by the Magi, he got busy in his customary manner. He murdered all the children that he could lay his hands on in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem under two years of age "according to the time he had carefully inquired of the Magi".

A few years later he died. True to his character to the last, he ordered a massacre at his funeral in order that there should at least be some mourning, a duty which otherwise, as he quite rightly realized, his subjects might have overlooked.

CHAPTER II

The Baptism ; The Temptation

I DO not think there has been in the history of the world so sweet a story as that which the Synoptists tell of the Birth of Jesus. But the superlative beauty of the narrative, told with so much simplicity, restraint and dignity must not be allowed to upset the balance of our appraisal. The significance of the manner of his coming is small when compared with the fact of his Baptism at the hands of John, son of Zacharias. This, I think, is how Mark understood it who begins his narrative with the account of John and his mission.

First in regard to John himself : his greatness, his limitations and his work.

As is the case with all of us, his life-task was carefully considered and planned before his birth. His company of angel-guides were allotted. It was the office of these to guide him in the way which had been marked out—to guide, not to compel ; for freewill is sacred always. The chief of these guides was Elijah. When asked, “Who are you ?” John replied that he was “the voice” of another. That other was Elijah who, from time to time, spoke through the mouth of his ward, his prophet ; to whom John referred as “him who sent me to baptize”.

When John’s followers were concerned at the signs of his decreasing audience, and the simultaneous increase of the crowd who gathered to hear the preaching of the

new Prophet, it was Elijah who explained what probably perplexed John as much as it did his friends. Taking control and speaking through his mouth, Elijah said : "You will bear me out that I told you that I am not the Christ, but that I was sent before him. He must increase in influence while, at the same time, my influence will grow less and less. For he who comes from on high is above us all." It was the Christ of whom Elijah spoke, whose Sphere is the highest of which we have any definite knowledge, the highest sphere in direct, but not immediate, touch with earth.

The effect of this gradual, but steady, withdrawal of the control of Elijah is seen very plainly in an incident which happened a little later.

John was in prison for denouncing the iniquities of the private life of Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, in which we see the difference between his methods and those of Jesus. Jesus was scathing enough in his denunciation of sin but he concentrated on the class rather than on the individual. When such a case came his way he dealt with it when there was any object to be gained by doing so. The gentle reproof to the woman of Sychar at Jacob's well is an instance in point. But he never went out of his way in order to denounce the private sins of anyone. On the contrary he seems to have shrunk from any such action. When a man indicted his brother on a charge of injustice in seizing on the family property there appears to have been some reason for his complaint. But Jesus brushed it aside and gave his hearers a lesson on the iniquity of covetousness instead. John was less restrained and found himself under arrest in consequence. His friends, however, were allowed access to him and brought to

him, from time to time, tidings from the outer world and what was to him the most important of all, news of the doings of the one to whom he had borne testimony. These perplexed him, for preaching and healing were not at all what he had expected. Surely this was not the work for which Messiah was destined. A doubt arose in his mind as to whether, after all, he had not made a mistake. So his friends did the wise thing ; they went straight to Jesus himself and put the difficulty before him.

After they had left, Jesus, with his usual frankness, explained the exact significance of the work of their one-time favourite, whose mission, as it appeared to them, had ended in complete failure. This was not so. John, as every man, had his level. Up to that level he had acted faithfully. Above that level he had not been able to advance. He was the greatest of their prophets up to that time. But he expected Messiah to conform to the traditions of the Church. In this respect the least member of the new order, the Kingdom of the Heavens, was greater than John, even as the ideal of that Kingdom, which Jesus was now propounding, was higher than that of his predecessor.

Then he pointed out the methods of John, which were well-known and could be compared with his own. Since John had come among them the people had been stirred up to enthusiasm and had gone in their thousands to hear him. There was a certain element of violence in it all, and the Kingdom of the Heavens had been subjected to a furious assault.

But that was not the higher way. This higher way he had demonstrated to John's friends and had sent them back with the kindly warning, "Blessed is he to whom this shall not prove a cause of stumbling".

And what was the cause of John's limitations? Well, those who had "ears to hear" would understand. The overshadowing presence, sometimes the very words which John had spoken, were those of Elijah. And this intimate association explains why John adopted the methods he did. They were those of Elijah himself who, coming once again into immediate contact with the earth environment, found himself largely conditioned by his former traits and character.*

What then was the purpose of John's mission? To prepare the way for the mission of Jesus. In what manner? By awakening in the hearts of the multitude the desire for reform. The keynote of his whole teaching was, "Change your individual outlook, re-assess your values. Look at life, so far as you are able, as the angels do, and realize that the Kingdom of the Heavens is not remote, either as to time or place, as your rabbis teach. It is both of the present and also it is near by."

This realistic, and to them startling, truth he dinned into their ears month in, month out. The result was that when Jesus took up his work he found many who were considerably advanced in an earnest desire for a more complete spiritual understanding. From these he chose his pupils, taught them further, and sent them forth to preach, adopting John's text, but illuminating it with deeper meaning.

That Jesus clearly understood the significance of his Baptism is evident from his reply to the representatives of the Sanhedrin who came to demand his credentials. It was during the last week of his earthly life. He was teaching in one of the Porches of the Temple

* This is, as every experienced Spiritualist knows, in accordance with psychic law.

when a deputation composed of representatives of that powerful body approached him. The question they put to him was, "Who gave you your letters of Ordination? By whose authority are you exercising the right to teach and to do what you are doing?"

In this action they were within their legal rights. He had not only been teaching publicly as one who had authority, but had also taken upon himself to clear the Temple Court of whose who, by permission of the High Priest, had been in the habit of setting up their money-tables and stalls for the sale of sheep requisite for the sacrifices. Letters of Orders were granted on the authority of the Sanhedrin by specially deputed officials and they now demanded from whom he had received this necessary authorization.

Most commentators lay stress on the subtilty of his reply which displayed his mental superiority over his adversaries. That was the point of view of those adversaries themselves who were unable to understand his absolute sincerity. This was no mere battle of dialecticians, no setting his own acuteness of wit against that of his adversaries. He frankly confessed himself in a difficulty.

Before he can answer their question it is necessary to clear the ground. This he proceeds to do. He replies, "Now, before I can give you a satisfactory answer to the enquiry which, as guardians of the law, you have a right to make, I must ask you a question. The Baptism of John—do you accept that as a rite conferring grace from above or merely a man-made piece of ritual?"

The deputation retired to confer. They had endeavoured to catch him in their net. He had caught them instead. That was the only point of view possible to

these wily ecclesiastics. Either way they were in a dilemma. Indeed, if they should deny the charismatic nature of John's Baptism they were in imminent danger of being stoned by the people who still regarded John as their hero and revered his memory. So they returned with their reply, "We are sorry, but on the spur of the moment we can come to no conclusion." "Then," Jesus answered, "I cannot, and indeed will not, satisfy your demands."

His meaning should be perfectly clear to those who realize the significance of the Baptism of John. It was on that occasion that the Christ had descended on him and this was the Authority on which he had acted ever since that event.

A few days later this was confirmed by no less than the Christ himself. When the Grecian Jews came and asked for an interview with Jesus, there was heard that rare phenomenon, the direct voice. It was unexpected and caused some confusion. Some said it was thunder. Others, with more understanding, said it was an angel who spoke. And they were right. It was the voice of the Christ. For when Jesus prayed, "Father glorify your Name", the voice of the Christ, Vice-regent of the Father, spoke in his Name, "I did glorify it and will glorify it again."

The first act of the Christ, after his descent upon Jesus, was to impress him to go away from the crowds and to remain alone in the wilderness for a time. In other words, a new element had entered into his life and it was necessary that he should get a clear understanding of its significance.

What followed should have no difficulties for the Spiritualist. We know that whenever we have

undertaken some task for the benefit of our fellow men, immediately we are confronted with opposition on the part of those undeveloped spirits who frequent the earth environment and who view with disfavour any such endeavours. We come into contact with them continually and fight our battles with them and sometimes those battles are very strenuous, the more strenuous in ratio to our own earnestness and the importance of the particular work on which we are engaged.

It was so now with Jesus. The work to which he had put his hand was of superlative importance to mankind. The opposition was co-responsive in its force with the importance of that work.

In order to make clear what exactly happened during the ensuing forty days it is necessary to bear the following in mind. As I have already intimated, we all have a band of angel-guides allotted to us. This band is composed of spirits of various spheres who are organized under a Leader whose sphere is higher than that of those who serve under him. This Leader, in his turn, is deputy for those higher still, who again act under the direction of the Christ himself, who is Vice-regent of the Father.

The opposing bands are not so well organized for the reason that there is no such supreme authority to organize them. They band themselves together from time to time, work out their dark purposes and then become disunited and go their own several ways. Presently another band will form composed of new members with perhaps a sprinkling of the old opponents, unless they have all tired of their quarry.

As we should expect, in the case of Jesus the opposing

forces were exceedingly powerful, exactly how powerful we shall see when we come to consider the events of Holy Week. For the present it will suffice to note that no sooner had the Christ taken charge than the help of one of the more powerful spirits of the darker realms was enlisted who immediately took the lead on the other side. We get glimpses in the Gospels of both of these bands. The brighter ones, under the Christ, ministered to Jesus during his sojourn in the wilderness. The other band was also present under their leader who is nameless. He is designated as the Adversary. Between these two bands stood Jesus, and the trial hinged on the fact that, while help and guidance are permitted, the freewill of the individual is sacred and must never be coerced. The decision must be his and his alone.

So the dark leader of the opposing forces drew near to Jesus who was clairvoyantly and clairaudiently aware of his presence. As I read the account I cannot but admire the qualities of his darkened mind. He is a master, a great archangel gone astray. He waits until his intended victim has been some five weeks in the wilderness, with little or no food, brooding over his problem. Jesus had been claimed as a Son by the Christ. How much did that imply? The Christ was a very high Spirit, a god. But every man is a son of the Father by creation and the son of some angel guide by adoption. What was the particular significance in his own case? Adoption by the Christ was a tremendous thing. Was this indeed what the incident at his baptism really implied?

Then he saw the Adversary before him and heard the words of his friendly greeting, "Well, now, you have

become a son of the God. Why not put your new powers to the test? You are hungry. You know that you have but to say the word and these stones will become loaves."

This was true and, in itself, there was no suggestion of evil. Jesus thought it out, however, and rejected it. His mission was to humanity, not to himself. Psychic powers were given to be used for his fellow men. To use them for the purpose suggested would not be distinctly evil, but it would be taking the lower road, the road of self-satisfaction, without any corresponding benefit to humanity. This he resolved he would not do, and to this resolve he adhered throughout his ministry.

The Adversary agreed with him that this was the true line to take and did not press the matter. Instead, he took Jesus in trance to the top of one of the Temple Porches and made the suggestion that he should come thither some day in the body when the Temple Courts were crowded with worshippers and visitors. He could then float down, alighting among them. He knew that the nation was awaiting some such sign from Heaven as this and it would materially aid his beneficent purpose in leading them to freedom. After such a sign they would undoubtedly follow him in large numbers and his purpose would be achieved.

In this idea also there was no intrinsic evil. Yet, on the other hand, it was again the lower road which was suggested. He felt that his leading must not be that of a mere wonder-worker. Nor would he ever use his psychic powers merely for display. During his ministry we see that to this resolve also he held consistently. He never wrought a miracle except with a beneficent or practically useful object. He never used his gifts

merely for the sake of enlisting public attention. Moreover, it would be putting God to the test, which savoured of irreverence. He therefore rejected this second suggestion.

Now, it is one of the things we learn who study the methods and character of visitants from the Spirit World that, however strong the undeveloped may be, yet there is always an element of weakness in their characters. Sooner or later, if we are patient and fearless, that weakness appears. It was so now, in the third temptation. The Adversary grew impatient and, in doing so, too bold.

The body of Jesus lay in trance, while he himself stood side by side with the Adversary in the sphere bordering on the earth environment. Together they soared upward and made a tour of the civilized world. Ezekiel and others had had similar experiences, but this expedition was on a more extended scale.

At length they alighted on a high mountain peak from which a view of the wide-spread country was visible. Then the Adversary essayed his last endeavour. He stated that his power over these people whose different countries they had just visited was unquestioned. He was willing to place it at the disposal of Jesus in the carrying out of his mission. The one condition was that he should do homage to him as sole ruler and overlord of the world.

Now the account of these temptations must have come from Jesus himself. Probably he related it to his Disciples on one of those occasions when, being alone with them, he expounded the more intimate things which it was not at the time advisable to give to the public. Matthew was one of this inner circle and in his

account there is a little word which has happily survived in our present text. It is the word "then". Then it was that all doubt as to the character of this plausible and clever companion disappeared. The false note had been struck and it grated on the pure soul of Jesus. At once he turned to the Adversary and, to quote Matthew, "Then says Jesus to him, 'Get you away, Adversary, for it is written, "To the Lord your God shall you do homage and Him alone shall you serve"'. "

Then the Adversary departed and, now that Jesus had, on his own initiative, made his choice, it was possible for his band of angel guides to draw near and render to him their beneficent services.

But although the Adversary left him, it was, as Mark notes, only "for the time being".

CHAPTER III

The Ministry

THE Ministry of Jesus has been grievously misunderstood both as to its character and its purpose. For instance, there are eminent scholars who give it as their considered opinion that the miracles of Jesus were a proof of his "divinity", which term they use as an equivalent of "deity".

Others of equal eminence deny these so-called miraculous element altogether and assert that the accounts of the miracles of Jesus are not to be taken as narratives of fact, but more in the nature of parables. They are of value only because of the spiritual teaching they enshrine.

Now there are several things which it would be well to keep in mind if we are in the least degree to hope to understand the sublimity of Jesus or of his ministry. For myself I frankly confess that both are far beyond my comprehension. As I read slowly through these very imperfect records, trying to piece them together as well as I am able, trying to get at the significance which lies underneath, I feel more and more how impossible it all is, how far above me are the elements which went to make up his character, how utterly blinding are the brief flashes of the majesty displayed which from time to time have left me in wonder and in awe.

First, then, let us bear in mind that the word "mystery", which occurs repeatedly in the Gospel

narratives, was deliberately adopted from those Greeks who maintained communion with the World of Spirit by the practice of certain rites which in the present day would be termed a "seance". It shall suffice now to note that these rites were chiefly divided into the Inner or Greater Mysteries and the Outer or Lesser Mysteries, and that the latter alone were given to the world.

So it was with those Mysteries which Jesus taught and practised. In secret he explained many things to the inner circle of his Disciples, as they became able to receive them. To the multitude he gave his teaching in parables. The "pearls" were for those who would appreciate them and for them alone.

Further, it is necessary to distinguish between "deity" and "divinity". We are all divine, inasmuch as we are all of God. Of him we came, in him we live and to him we are returning. Jesus was divine in superlative measure, for he was the highest expression of the majesty and character of the Supreme that has appeared in human flesh. The Christ was one with the Deity, and it is through the Sphere of the Christ that all life and all inspiration proceed. To the Christ it is given to "have life in himself".

The first time Jesus appears in history is at the Annunciation. But the Christ, who now made personal contact with humanity in the person of Jesus, was spiritually present during the wandering in the Wilderness more than a millennium before. As Paul understood, the Israelites unknowing "drank of that spiritual Rock which accompanied them, and that Rock was the Christ."

Broadly speaking, we may say that Jesus, in his life

and works, manifested the divinity of man ; the Christ, through the mouth of Jesus, manifested the Deity, which is Unity and included the Christ within Itself.

So the powers we see in operation through the will of Jesus were such as are given to men to use. They are evidence of man's divinity ; not of Jesus' deity. There is no miracle recorded in the Gospels which has not also been done by others than he, and is being done to-day. Of old these powers were cultivated in many parts of the world. As a rule they were carefully guarded and were used with circumspection and restraint, until the spirituality of those peoples declined, when they were gradually—one might say automatically—withdrawn ; the decline of such powers being in exact ratio to the decline of spirituality in any particular nation. This was especially the case with Israel, Egypt, India, Persia, Greece and Rome.

To-day the ever-deepening materialism of our Western civilization has caused a like withdrawal of these powers until they have become confined to the comparatively few.

But they were never altogether lost and at the present time we are in the midst of a great and widespread revival. The effect of this revival is seen in the perplexity exhibited by the general public, consequent on the unfamiliarity of the phenomena. This perplexity shows itself in various ways ; in the active opposition of ecclesiastical and scientific orthodoxy, in the misuse of these gifts owing to ignorance of their particular properties, in the incredulity on the part of the general public. Similar effects on the popular mind were produced when a like outpouring of spiritual powers was

decreed by the high Councils of the Heavens in the time of Moses, of Jesus, and in the Renaissance of the Middle Ages of our era. But these movements persisted in spite of all opposition, and the particular purpose behind them was achieved.

There are certain rules in connection with these powers which are absolutely rigid and inflexible. As we have seen in the last chapter they must never be used merely for the benefit of oneself, never for revenge or the injuring of anyone, nor for the acquisition of worldly riches or power or for self-aggrandisement, for show, for vanity, nor for any purpose which may be achieved by ordinary means. They may be used for the help of another, but only to the extent necessary and no more. If any of these rules are transgressed then disaster ensues. In the more flagrant cases of such misuse the consequences are sometimes swift and terrible, not in consequence of the vengeance of an angry God but in consequence of the operation of natural law.

A word here in respect of such incidents as the withering of the unfruitful fig-tree. This has caused much perplexity and not a little criticism. I have even seen it designated as the outcome of mere irritation or petulance on the part of Jesus. Those who so appraise his action do so in ignorance. Such an act would automatically, as it were, have stripped him of every vestige of psychic power thereafter. It is not my purpose here to enter into any lengthy explanation of this incident now. Suffice it to say that there was a real danger in the vicinity of that tree. It was apparent to him by reason of his clairvoyance. It was incumbent on him to remove it and he did so effectively. The

incident should be read with the explanation which I give later on in respect of the Gadarine demoniac.

The psychic faculties are developed and perfected by training and practice. It is evident that Jesus had acquired this perfection. Whence? Certainly not from among his own people. There is no sign in the whole of the Gospel record that any of those with whom he came in contact understood either him or his wonderful psychic gifts.* Those who should have had charge of the Mysteries for the benefit of the nation ascribed his miracles to the darker powers of the hells. Caiaphas and his clique knew nothing of them, from the inside anyway, for they were Sadducees—some in name, all in practice.

Generally speaking, the scrappy remnants which have come down to us of his teaching are still sufficient to show that Jesus had a wide and intimate knowledge of law, both ecclesiastical and civil, of the history of his nation past and contemporaneous, farming and its kindred occupations, and also of the Mysteries. All of which would be perfectly in keeping with the equipment of a widely-travelled student. On the other hand, amid all the illustrations and similes in which he enshrines his teaching, there are none drawn from a carpenter's workshop, which some of the older prophets found so rich in such similes.

There are traditions which say that during the years preceding his Baptism Jesus travelled widely. Among the countries he visited was Egypt where that other great adept Moses received his training. India is also mentioned. I do not know. But it was probably from

* Nicodemus is a case in point. St. John iii. 10.

one of these, or both, that he received his training and initiation ; maybe he went to other countries also. We do know that his outlook was that of a true mystic who knows no boundaries to the Father's love, no exclusive election to grace either national or ecclesiastical.

His immediate purpose, however, was with the simple peasants of Palestine and it is not surprising that in all his dealings with them he was very guarded. Glimpses of the true initiate do emerge, however, as when he told his hearers, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold." And in the Gospel which bears the name of John the mystical teaching is there, for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

The more I realize this deep understanding of the things which matter on the part of Jesus, the more do I marvel at his power of restraint. The strain on him must have been enormous and I do not wonder that he found it necessary, from time to time, to go apart for communion with the One who alone could understand, as even those who were constantly with him were unable to do.

Nevertheless, his very nature made it impossible for him to dissemble and this, in its turn, unfitted him for the congenial fellowship of what passed as cultured society at that time in Palestine. Were he with us in the flesh to-day it would be the same. There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who reads the Gospel accounts with a detached outlook, free from the conventional idea of what constitutes "respectability" in, say, a London drawing-room, that his presence there would not find acceptance among the polite society of to-day.

Take the narrative of his dining by invitation with Simon the Pharisee, bring your imagination to bear, clothe the people in modern clothes, translate their words into modern English, give the customs of those times their present-day equivalence, then ask yourself whether one who so acted and so addressed his host, in the presence of the assembled guests, would be asked again to dinner. As to the remarks and the elevations of the eyebrows which would be exchanged among those polite people after his welcome departure, and the sigh of relief when they saw his back disappearing through the door, I do not greatly affect the task of reconstructing the scene here. Briefly, there were then, as now, "things which are not done"—and he did them.

On the other hand, we cannot get away from the fact that, while he did hold the surface conventions as worthy of stern condemnation, there is no doubt that, in the company of the poor and unlettered, he was happy and "at home". Those who know the poor will understand. Their sins are many, sometimes gross, but they love much, and it is love that matters. It was love that mattered to him.

Look at the flustered, uplifted Levi, bustling about the house, sweating and hustling to make a good show in the eyes of those who had hitherto despised him, rightly despised him, too. Oh well, never mind that now, this great teacher about whom everyone was talking in and around the town had come to dinner. And in the midst of all this vulgarity, all this defiant bustling, sat Jesus, smiling because he had given pleasure to this outcaste who at heart was not so really bad after all. Such vulgarity did not offend him ; it was vulgar, but it had only a surface value and did not go very deep. Not like

the pride of Simon the Pharisee. And be it remembered that it was the well-behaved, rich elder son who, in the parable, was left outside when that parable closes.

But do not mistake. It was not the uncouthness of these people which appealed to Jesus, for he himself was never uncouth. No one can read the narrative of his life without realizing the calm and simple dignity which was his. Even when stirred to indignation by the greed and hypocrisy, with which he came into contact so often, his anger was tinged with that same innate sense of the dignity of his cause. I have read what commentators have to say about the Cleansing of the Temple. A similar appraisal of that action is depicted by Michael Angelo in pictorial form when in his famous cartoon he portrays Jesus in a fury lashing his fellow men with a whip of cords. He did not do that. The whip was for the sheep, not for the human transgressors. For them were the words he uttered, and they were dignified and coherent.

There is no doubt that the whole life and teaching of Jesus appealed to the poor much more than they did to the rich and powerful. His teaching was continuously informed with other-world values. He brought all to the test of eternity. As in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, so in his messages to the Seven Churches, given after his Ascension, he tore away all outward obscurantism and laid bare reality in all its uncompromising awfulness.

Take, as an instance, the message to the members of the Church at Laodicea. They were in the habit of thinking themselves very fortunate people, well-off, with plenty of money, plenty of fine clothes, moving in very respectable society, not of the common sort by

any means. In short, they were of the elite. "What !" he cried. "Tell them that I KNOW." He saw those people of Laodicea not as they themselves saw one another. He viewed them from his own world, on the spirit side. As he looked at them he saw their spirit bodies which in themselves exhibited the real personality. And this is as they appeared to him—and would one day, when they had put off their earth bodies, appear to each other : miserable creatures, pitiful to look at, poverty-stricken, dim-eyed, ragged. He sent to them his advice, which was to get their spiritual eyes opened that they might see themselves as he saw them.

In all of which we see that his outlook when in the flesh and afterwards in the spirit was identical. Truly the rich and cultured people were not, and are not, all of this character ; the poor have no monopoly of true nobility. But, taking things all round, the readjustment which lies beyond the gate of death has more comfort and assurance for the poor than it has for the rich who, in this respect at least, are at a great disadvantage.

There was another important and powerful class with which he was brought into contact : the ecclesiastical. We have already seen that he treated these officials with respect. They sat in Moses' seat and as such had their proper duties and responsibilities. Their office he respected and always supported, as, for instance, when he bade the cleansed lepers to go and do what the Law enjoined. It was the hollowness and the hypocrisy of the clergy which he condemned, and that with stern denunciation.

For this he gave the reason why : it was because those who should have helped the people to lead a good life had imposed a system of ritual and dogma on them

which had the reverse effect, while it helped to fill the coffers of Caiaphas and of the inferior clergy. And how did those clergy receive his straight talk? Did they try to see whether what he said was true and, if not true, to rebut his charges? No, they employed other methods. You will find a good example in the transactions related in John ix. This is the miracle of the Healing of the man who was born blind.

Here we have a poor sufferer, one born blind, healed by unorthodox methods, by an itinerant preacher who, so his followers believed, has remarkable psychic faculties, among them that of spiritual healing. This brings him up against the clerical and medical fraternity which in those days were both related to the ecclesiastical authority. Read that chapter in the light of the present-day and of the general attitude of the clergy and medical profession to those who are doing what Jesus did and bade his followers do. It might have been written last week, so far as the substance goes.

So the Minister reads it, apparently with approval of the act of Jesus and of the stalwart championship of the simple soul whose sight had been restored. Indeed there is sublimity in that story. But what of the scathing indictment implicit in that chapter of those who despise the unorthodox preacher and healer to-day!

"Here endeth the second lesson," concludes the reader and closes the book with a contented mind. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people," sings the choir, and all seems quite in order. The scathing indictment has passed over the heads of clergy and congregation harmlessly. But I am disturbed in my mind for still ringing in my ears is

our Lord's comment on the incident : "It is for judgment—such as this—I came into the world ; that they who see not might see, and they who—profess to—see might become blind."

We are told that as Jesus grew older he also increased in wisdom. This progress continued after his Baptism, all through his ministry. As he gained experience he modified his methods accordingly. One thing he adapted was his method of teaching. At first he spoke more or less openly of the mysteries which lay beneath the surface of his remarks. By "mysteries", in this connection I do not mean the rites which accompanied the exercise of communion with the Spirit World but those truths which were learned by these methods.

But he found that he was casting pearls before swine. The people did not understand and naturally treated those things, which were to him most sacred, in a way which pained him. So he began to use parables. By so doing he could give the crowds good sound moral advice in a form they were accustomed to. But underneath many of these parables there lay the deeper truths connected with the Spirit World and the Hierarchies and Powers therein, and also things concerning the spheres of darkness. When such matters were touched upon in the course of his teaching he used a formula, "He who has ears to hear let him understand." Then, as I have already mentioned, when he was alone with his Disciples he explained those inner truths.

Another matter on which events exercised their modifying influence was in respect of the exercise of his psychic gifts. Like all truly great mystics and psychics the wonder and amazement which the exercise of these

gifts would inevitably call forth were repugnant to him, for such reception showed only too plainly a lack of understanding of what the possession of such gifts implied. I believe he began his ministry resolved that he would not use these powers at all in public, but only in secret when he should have found a few individuals whose spirituality would warrant his imparting of those mysteries to them, in greater or lesser measure, thus conforming to ancient procedure.

But as he went about he met with cases, such as that at the marriage in Cana, where he could do a kindness by the use of his psychic powers. Above all was his great heart touched with compassion by the cases of bodily suffering he witnessed and which he knew he could heal. Therefore he laid his hands on them and healed them. His fame as a healer soon spread and the sick were brought to him in ever-increasing numbers.

In regard to these same cases of healing, there is a tendency on the part of some commentators to think that either Jesus or his biographers, or both, ascribe all diseases to the direct operations of so-called "evil" spirits. As a matter of fact we hear little of evil spirits in the Gospels. They are mostly the "uncleansed" spirits, that is, the earthbound. And these do affect people more than is realized by the medical profession. If you will compare the cases of healing in the Gospels you will see that they are carefully and consistently classified. Moreover, both diagnosis and treatment, so far as these are specified in the narrative, agree with the findings of modern psychic science.

John the Baptist had pursued the usual course of choosing a circle of Disciples and Jesus found that it would be necessary for him to do the same. His faculty

of clairvoyance enabled him to single out those among his hearers who were possessed of the necessary qualifications. So, one after another, he called these to him until he had about a hundred at his service. These he trained, as opportunity offered itself, quickened into activity the faculties of healing, exorcism and inspirational speaking, such gifts, in short, as were necessary for the purpose in hand ; but withholding those greater powers which he himself had acquired, but which were unnecessary to the work his followers would be given to do. Seventy of these qualified psychics he sent forth into the districts where at the moment he himself was unable to go, with the command to heal in his name. They did so and were astonished at the result.

Twelve of these trained Disciples he kept at hand to help in his immediate work. They came to be called Apostles and their names are given in the Gospels. These were selected on account of their greater psychic qualifications. And, of these, three were pre-eminent over the rest : Peter, James and John. On these three he called for help when a more than usually strenuous task confronted him. Their presence increased the necessary power on which he could draw to supplement his own. It was not that he could not have performed these works of his own power. But he had in mind his training and the injunctions which went with it. One of these was that in the exercise of psychic faculties economy of energy must be observed.

Take the incident of the raising of the daughter of Jairus. This might be accomplished in one of two ways, both legitimate. One was by calling on the Hierarchies resident in the higher spheres who would thereupon direct a stream of power upon him and through him

upon the body of the child. The other was to form a circle, in this case of four, with himself as the focal point, the instrument through whom the vivifying stream should be concentrated on the little patient. He chose the latter method as being more in accordance with the principle of economy of energy. In other words, the case did not warrant the employment of the other more exceptional method. It was sufficient to use the material at hand.

We find a similar instance when Paul was stoned at Lystra. The Disciples, we read, went to the place where he lay and "formed a circle round him and he, having risen up, entered the city."

In the next two chapters will be found examples of our Lord's methods of working which will serve to illustrate what I have written above.

CHAPTER IV

Miracles : the Paralytic ; the Gadarene Demoniac

It was in the early days of the ministry of Jesus but his fame as a healer had already spread abroad. One day he was teaching the people in Capernaum where Peter lived. He was sitting on the veranda in front of the house and the crowd filled the courtyard and even overflowed into the street beyond the gate. There was a little group of ecclesiastics standing not far away from him. They had evidently been in counsel and had come with the intention of testing his orthodoxy. That was the only thing which concerned them : whether he was orthodox. As for his healing that mattered little. The wild rumours of his powers in that respect might or might not have some foundation in fact. But the one thing of pre-eminent importance was his orthodoxy.

As he taught the people there drew near the gate a little party of four men who carried another on a mattress. This was a friend of theirs who had been stricken with paralysis. They found it to be impossible to get anywhere near Jesus and so, going round to the side of the house, they ascended the outside steps to the roof. Then they managed to hoist the patient up after them and, approaching the parapet, carefully lowered him down in front of Jesus. He paused in his teaching, glanced up at the roof and at once understood.

It might have been considered unseemly to interrupt a teacher in the course of his public work in such a

manner. But these simple souls had no scruples on that score. Their one thought was to get their friend cured and they knew he could do it. So they waved all ceremony aside. They did not wait for permission. They were taking no risks of refusal. They gave him no choice. Here was a sick man and he could heal him. So there he was, in front of him.

As Jesus glanced up at their eager faces, flushed with their exertions, looking down upon him, not without a tinge of doubt as to how he would take it all, he could not repress a smile at the naïve humour of the situation. But there was something deeper here. They themselves saw no humour in their action. They were in dead earnest. Jesus was greatly touched at their simple childlike faith both in his powers and also in his goodness of heart.

Then he looked on the invalid and, by means of his clairvoyant gift, diagnosed his state. This man was sick both in body and soul. He was worrying about his sins and did not realize that his repentance had already put them away. So he said to him, "My son, your sins are already forgiven." Immediately there was a slight stir in the vicinity of the clerical group. Jesus, ever sensitive to psychic impressions, paused and gazed intently in their direction. He saw the disturbance in their aura and immediately knew something was wrong. "What are you reasoning about, over there?" he asked. Then he saw what it was; they had interpreted his words as a claim to forgive sins, which prerogative belonged alone to God.

He did not correct their impression for, although that was not the real import of his words to the paralytic, yet it raised another question. He met the

challenge. "Very well," he said, "now, which is the easier—to forgive or to heal? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to put away sins—watch!" Then to the invalid he said, "Get up, take your mattress with you and go home."

The sick man hesitated for a moment, then scrambled to his feet, bent down, rolled up his mat and began to walk through the crowd which made way for him. When he had gone a few steps the wonderful thing which had happened suddenly flashed upon him. His paralysis had gone and with it the over-shadowing sense of past sins. The Prophet had indeed made good his words. He turned round, hesitated for a moment and then, with a shout of joy, resumed his way toward the gate, exclaiming excitedly and calling to his friends on the roof, as they gazed in some surprise at the so speedy fulfilment of their desires. These waved their hands to him and then turned and hurried to the steps to meet their friend outside.

The party of clergy were scandalized. But the simple people understood. They glorified God who had delegated such authority to men. "We have seen some wonderful things to-day," said some. "Yes," answered their companions, "we've never seen things like this before, have we?" And so, happy, marvelling and discussing, the crowd gradually broke up and went their ways. But the clergy departed shaking their heads. A dangerous fellow, this. He must be suppressed.

There are several accounts of the casting out of so-called "evil spirits". These do not present much difficulty as a rule to those who have had experience

of rescue circles held especially for the helping of spirits who are earthbound ; it is mostly plain sailing. There is one, however, which does not lend itself to so simple a solution inasmuch as it raises a moral question in regard to the action of our Lord. This is the healing of the Gadarene demoniac. Matthew mentions two who were possessed ; but for the sake of clarity I disregard the minor character and concentrate on the one who was evidently the worse case of the two and who, therefore, became the outstanding personality of the narrative.

Now, the action of Jesus in destroying the drove of swine has been much debated. Has anyone the right to destroy another man's property ? It is a perfectly fair question. To answer, as some commentators have done, that Jesus was God and that, therefore, as God he had a right to take back what he had given is to beg the question entirely. Frankly, to my mind, it is not the honest way to meet the difficulty. For there is a difficulty here ; that, indeed, is why I have chosen this miracle as an example which may throw some light on others of a similar, but less involved, type.

Jesus and his little party of Disciples had just landed on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Here the limestone rocks were honeycombed with caves many of which had been adapted for burial purposes. The whole district was psychically bad. It had become the resort of a large number of earthbound spirits of different degrees of ignorance ; some were actually of the malignant type. These had made their way there from the lower hells and they brought with them their despair, frenzy and resentment which held them bound to their sad condition and prevented their making any progress

towards the brighter realms. Some had almost reached that state, others were still in the depths of darkness.

It was, no doubt, from this district that those darkened spirits with whom Jesus had just been contending on the Lake had come, when he had addressed their Leader with the stern command, "Silence; be muzzled." (Not "Peace; be still.")

Now, our spirit communicators tell us that there is no single spirit in all the hells who is not registered in the books of the guardian angels. No matter how deep in the darkness they may be, their state and actions are all noted. Sooner or later the time comes when, despair and agony having done their beneficent work, they begin to see the uselessness of their obstinacy. Then missionaries are sent to help them in their difficult fight with what remains of evil in their natures, and gradually they are brought into the spheres of light. This process may require centuries to compass, but the end is sure. Meanwhile each spirit is free to choose. That is fundamental to the laws which govern both earth and spirit life. Freewill is for ever sacred. Guidance, but never coercion, is the rule. Restraint, however, is permitted. Otherwise, the earth would be over-run with these darkened souls and our lot would then be a parlous one indeed.

Truly the whole human family is one and this unity is inclusive both of those still in the flesh and those who have passed on into the world of spirit. The ills and troubles which afflict us are the effect of the misuse of freewill by ourselves and our forebears. But so long as we try to live a good life, in God's good time all will be righted. Meanwhile, we must suffer with the family and only he who does not understand what the

Fatherhood of God really implies would have it otherwise.

But in the matter we are at the moment considering there are two classes who suffer more than others. One is that of the mentally afflicted whose lack of self-control opens the door to the entrance of undeveloped spirits. These can be cured by psychic treatment such as Jesus used. The remedy has been placed in our keeping. Where that remedy is not used the patient must await the time when he shall pass over into the spirit land by death. Then things will be soon put right. With this class we have nothing to do in the present instance.

The other is that of people who have lived degraded lives. These automatically attract spirits of like nature who exercise their malevolent influence on them, sometimes even to the degree of obsession of so complete a nature as to render the patient—for that is what he really is—helpless against the control of his tormentor whenever the latter chooses to exercise that power upon him.

There was such a man at hand when Jesus landed on the shore of Gadara. He had been standing on the top of the cliff watching the boat as it made its way towards the beach. He waited until he saw the spot where it was evidently the intention of the crew to disembark and then his spirit tormentor took possession of him. Hastily he scrambled down the cliff until he reached the shore. There he waited for the party to land. He was a desperate character and a great danger to the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns. The authorities had done all they could. They had apprehended him, handcuffed him and fastened him with a chain to the

wall of his dungeon. They had put fetters about his ankles. It was useless. He had wrenched the wrist-chains asunder and had smashed the rings round his ankles, bruising himself in the process. When the warder had gone to give him his food he had rushed out free and made straight for the open country again. No one could tame him. So they left him to his devices and gave him a wide berth. It was the only way.

Now he stood on the shore awaiting the coming of these men, intent on their injury. When they stepped ashore, however, a change came over him. The obsessing spirit had come to that stage when he was almost ripe, but not quite, for the ministration of those angel missionaries who are ever on the watch for such cases as his. So what to others less progressed would have been invisible was not so to him. Around the group he was able to see a luminance which betokened a holiness which to him was almost unknown. He had seen the faint semblance of such light as this when in the hells he had now and then fitfully turned his gaze aloft. Now he was, for the first time, in close proximity with such a light. He perceived that it centred in one who now stepped ashore.

The memory of all the agony he had endured in the hells from which he had managed to snatch a brief respite came over the darkened spirit. He was terrified, but could not tear himself away. Some strange influence drew him forward toward the one whose greater radiance marked him out as the leader of the band. So he approached and then paused, bewildered.

As the man had come towards him Jesus had seen clairvoyantly the obsessing spirit and had already appraised his status. "You are uncleansed," he said. "It is not

permitted that you exercise control of this man. Come out of him."

Thereupon the man fell at his feet and through his mouth the spirit cried, "What is there in common between us? You are one we have heard about but never seen until now. Jesus, son of God, by that God whose servant you are, do not add to my torment. Do not send me back again to the abyss." For he already perceived that Jesus was bringing his power to bear with the intention of breaking the unholy bond between him and his victim.

"What was your name?" asked Jesus. A frown came over the face of the one obsessed as the controlling spirit tried to draw on his darkened and beclouded memory. It was of no avail; he had forgotten. But the question had not been asked without intention. It was part of the treatment and its object had been immediately achieved. The obsessing spirit had been brought to some understanding of his real estate. He answered, "I have forgotten—even my own personality. I have forgotten my name. But I am not the only one who, from time to time, has controlled this man; there is a whole crowd of us. Master, have you come to judge and torture us before the appointed time? Let us go. We have made a home of sorts in this region among the caves and the tombs of the dead. Our only companions in the flesh are the animals of the desert and the droves of swine which, from time to time, are driven here to feed. There is one up there now. If you are determined to cast us out, permit us to herd together with them."

But this was beyond his present purpose which was concerned with the case of the obsessed alone. The man

had been led to him that he might be freed from his servitude. As to the others they would be dealt with by those whose proper work it was, namely, the angel missionaries who watched their opportunity to help when the proper time for that help should come. So he simply said, "Begone, all of you!" and they obeyed.

Freed from the control of the obsessor the light of reason and self-possession slowly dawned in the eyes of the afflicted man. He fell at the feet of his redeemer and bathed them with his tears.

Meanwhile, his sometime tormentors, now powerless to re-enter his environment, hastened away. They made straight for their spirit companions among the tombs. These, awakened to the fact that there was something unusual afoot, came out into the open. When they saw the others coming towards them from the cliff-top, gesticulating and shouting wildly, they rushed toward them to hear what it was all about. The swine nearest them sensed their oncoming presence, raised their eyes and saw them, for animals are all clairvoyant; then, uttering their warning squeals, they turned and bolted away towards the cliff. The rest of the herd also saw the oncoming crowd of spirits and they, too, turned and fled. There was a panic among them which the swineherds were unable either to understand or to cope with. The whole herd went headlong over the cliff into the sea beneath.

The scene I have just tried to reconstruct was that which I surmise to have happened on the spirit side of life. To those in the flesh it was invisible, except in its effect on the animals. Only to the clairvoyant sight would the cause be manifest. The swineherds saw nothing of it. They were dumbfounded at the disaster. They

hurried after their charges and from the top of the cliff saw what had happened to them. Most were already drowned, and the rest were struggling in the waters. Some few probably managed to get to land, but the great majority had been dashed to death from the great height from which they had leapt.

The swineherds saw another sight which filled them with amazement. The homicidal criminal, who had only been warded off by their united numbers, was seated at the feet of a man who, apparently, had just landed with a small party from the boat which was moored there a little distance away from the scene of the disaster. Someone had lent him a cloak and this he was holding about him instead of casting it away as had been his wont hitherto. Evidently he was quite quiet and normal.

They were perplexed. However, there was only one thing for them to do. They at once hurried to their employers and broke the news. On the way they spread the tidings among those they met in the suburbs.

When their masters had heard their story they called a council. This was evidently the stranger they had heard about, Jesus the preacher and healer whom the people across the Lake had made so much of these last few months. Well, what of the case in point? Legally there was nothing to connect him with the destruction of their property. According to the report he had apparently healed this man who had terrorized the town for months past. Simultaneously the swine had been seized with panic and had rushed to their destruction. That coincidence was to be noted. At the least it looked suspicious; very much like witchcraft or black magic. Well, they knew how to deal with wizards. They could

not have their property destroyed in this manner. Ruin faced them as it was. So they made up a strong party and set out to apprehend the transgressor. The rest would be easy.

Meanwhile, Jesus sat there on the beach. When he had seen the first group of animals come over the cliff he had given a startled cry. He knew at once what had happened. But he had not expected this. So intense had been his concentration on the immediate work in hand that he had been oblivious to the possible complementary effects of his action. He had not realized the extent of the evil infecting the region up there beyond the cliff-top. It was much worse than he had suspected. But what could he do? What was the remedy? Was there any remedy? He sat there thinking out the problem.

When the deputation from the town arrived they began to feel less certain of themselves. There was something about this stranger of an unusual character. They had heard of him time and again and of his so-called miracles. Well, here was one before their eyes. The man who had resisted all their efforts sat there at his feet, quiet, clothed and apparently in his right mind. So it ended in their making a rather cold but studiously civil request that he would leave the district. Jesus acceded to their demand. Slowly he climbed over the gunnel into the boat and sat down silently and sadly in the stern. The problem had been solved in a way by the action of the owners, but not to his satisfaction nor to his ease of mind. He knew their loss and that it was the consequence of his action, and he was not able to recompense them. So he sat there with lowered eyes looking upon the waters and the carcasses of the swine.

Still in silence he sat there while his companions, somewhat shamefacedly, made ready to cast off again and sail back the way they had come. They had come there for a rest away from the multitude. And it had resulted in—this.

Then Jesus felt a gentle tug at his sleeve and a whisper, "Master, don't leave me here with these people. Let me be with you." The man was standing in the water, his face, wistful and pleading, just on a level with the gunnel. It brought Jesus back again from his reverie. He replied, "No, my son ; it will be much better for you to go home to your friends and keep quiet for a time. Go and tell them all about this, and how good God has been even to such as you."

So the man went reluctantly away and spread the news of his cure in all the countryside. Indeed he took upon himself to make a tour of the whole Ten Towns, thus unknowingly preparing the ground for his benefactor when he should come that way somewhat later.

CHAPTER V

The Transfiguration

THE Transfiguration stands quite by itself. Its features are unique. In significance it is second only to the appearances after the Resurrection. As a manifestation of psychic power, it transcends them. It was wrought with a definite purpose.

After the death of John the Baptist many rumours came into circulation. This was natural, for he was a great popular hero and the people never forgave Herod for his part in the murder. His connection with Jesus was well known and when, as our Lord's ministry proceeded, accompanied as it was by evidences of great psychic powers, the popular mind began to seek some explanation. John had told them that he himself was inspired by the great Elijah. Now Elijah had worked no miracles through John; yet Elijah himself was known as a great miracle-worker. Had he transferred his operations to Jesus through whom he was now displaying his powers as he had not been able to do through John? Or was it Jeremiah or some other outstanding historical personage?

Opinion was divided, but the rumours reached Herod Antipas and what conscience he possessed awoke. He had his own solution. He was convinced that the one who worked through this new prophet was no other than John who had risen in spirit and was now present working with increased powers through Jesus,

as in his own lifetime Elijah had worked with lesser powers through him. That is why these mighty works were possible.

It was while Jesus and his Disciples were still within the borders of the territory of Herod, near Caesarea Philippi, that these rumours came to them. One day the Master questioned them about it, "What are people saying about me? Who do they think I am, I mean, as a man?" The Disciples repeated the popular surmise. Then he put the question to them directly, "And what is your opinion?" Immediately Peter replied, "The Christ." To which Jesus answered, "You are a blessed man, Simon, for you did not reason that out yourself. That was a direct inspiration from the higher spheres."

But after, as they went on their journeyings day by day, he began to explain to them in what manner that saying was true. As the inspired of the Christ he had gradually risen in spiritual degree so that the unity between the Christ and himself was now very close indeed. Nevertheless, a distinction must still be made. In his human capacity, as a man, he must suffer. In plain words he would be apprehended and killed. But when that came to pass let their faith not fail; it was not the end. He would "rise again from among the dead".

Still they did not understand. So he decided on a demonstration.

Shortly after, he called apart the three most psychic of the Apostles, Peter, James and John, and one afternoon they climbed some distance up Hermon until they had reached an altitude where the atmosphere was rarefied and pure. Also it was a place of solitude.

It was the evening when he bade them halt. Then they began to make their devotions before wrapping themselves in their cloaks for sleep. The three had finished their prayers but Jesus still stood there silent and motionless as if rapt in visions far away in the heavens on high. They watched him and waited, speaking only in whispers one to another, as the night fell and the stars came out one by one in the stillness.

Presently they noticed a change coming over him. His body grew less solid-looking. This continued until it seemed to be rapidly dissolving into the atmosphere. The three felt themselves drawn within the field of some tremendous power and over them came a drowsiness which dimmed their outer senses and inclined them to sleep. Nevertheless, they were aware that they still retained the full possession of their reasoning powers. Then their clairvoyant faculty became operative and they clearly saw that the dissolving of his material body had been complete and that he stood there in his spiritual body alone, which in itself displayed his radiant holiness. True indeed it was that so high was the degree to which he had attained that it was now possible for the Christ to descend and envelop him completely.

Then they saw two others whom they instinctively knew to be Moses and Elijah. Their conversation they were not able to hear very well. These two great ones were evidently confirming and expounding more fully in detail what had already been disclosed to their Master in general. From the few scraps they were able to catch they deduced that he would have to go through with the task which had been allotted him. His exodus was at hand and that must take place at Jerusalem.

The next thing they became aware of was that a cloud of luminous substance was rapidly gathering about them. So intense was the psychic strain upon them as it enveloped them that they became bodily faint and full of fear. The impetuous Peter said something about putting up three tents for Jesus and his two companions, oblivious to the fact that there were no tents at hand. Then, completely overpowered, they sank down in deep trance. Meanwhile, the cloud gathered about the radiant body of Jesus, and condensed upon it until it had once more become the solid body of flesh and blood. Thereupon he went to the others and aroused them. "You have nothing to fear," he said and, looking up, they saw that he was alone, standing near them under the bright stars clothed, not now in radiance, but in his ordinary everyday garment of flesh.

Tired out with this tremendous experience they wrapped their cloaks around them and slept.

In the morning the events of the previous night came back to them again. Were they real, objective? They must have been for all three had seen the vision. They did not all see or hear exactly the same details, but what they were able to remember agreed so well when pieced together that there could be no doubt of its reality. As they were descending the mountain track Jesus said to them, "Now I do not want you to tell anyone about this affair until I have risen again from among the dead."

Then they began to puzzle about this new aspect of the case. He had already hinted fairly plainly that his enemies would be successful in compassing his death. Moses and Elijah also had seemed to endorse that. But now another item came back to their memory.

Just before they had lost consciousness they had heard a voice which seemed to come out of the cloud. It was not that of either of the two whom they had seen with Jesus. The voice had said, "This is my dear son. He will explain to you the general meaning of the conversation you have just heard. Listen carefully to what he has to say to you."

So they put the question to him. "Master, you have said that the Kingdom of God will at last be established on earth. You have also told us that your enemies will kill you. You now tell us that, afterwards, you will rise to life again. This we do not understand; perhaps events will make it all more plain to us later on. We, however, have concluded that all these things have some relation to one another. Can you help us further at the present time, or must we wait awhile? For instance, what is the real significance, if any, of this saying which the Scribes have, that Elijah must first come? Has it anything to do with what we saw last night? Or has it some other meaning? Will Elijah perhaps come to our nation as he came to you?"

To these questions Jesus answered, "That saying of the Scribes that Elijah comes first to set things straight is quite correct; it was inspired from the World of Spirit. But have you indeed been so blind that you have not understood? Elijah has already come and they treated him as they wished. They could not kill Elijah, but they disregarded his warnings and killed his instrument. So will they do with me and with my Guide the Christ."

Then they understood that he had been referring to John the Baptist.

CHAPTER VI

The Teaching : the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus the Beggar

IF we ask ourselves what factor is it in the personalities of the great teachers of the ages which is responsible for their pre-eminence, I think there is only one answer. It is their independence. Realizing the degree to which the obscurantism of their age has blinded their fellows to the essential truth, they break away from all traditions and set out on their own course. They go straight to the fountain-head, enter into communion with the angel hierarchies who have the evolution of the race in their care and, bringing back what they learn from those High Ones, give it forth to the world. That, indeed, is the office of the prophet : to listen, to absorb and then to tell out what has, by inspiration, been given to him. This did the Buddha and other great teachers, each in ratio to his spiritual attainment.

This also did Jesus as we have already seen ; he taught the people those truths which he had learned when with his Father. Thus his teaching was tintured with the directness of "authority", as distinct from that of the Scribes, whose instruction was second-hand, based on and hedged around by tradition. In this, as in other respects, Jesus is pre-eminent over all others. There has never been one who has been able to rise to the height to which he attained. He was born a Hebrew and was, in accordance with the Hebrew

rite of Circumcision, duly admitted a member of the Church of his nation. First then as to the attitude which he assumed to that Church.

In regard to the services of the Church I do not find anywhere any condemnation of corporate worship in itself nor of the attendant ritual. Indeed Jesus frequented the services both of the Temple and of the Synagogues. But he did say many very hard things about the insincerity of those who exalted the ritual of the Church to the neglect of the spirit which it was meant to enshrine. As a matter of fact, he sat very loose to the ritual of his day and country, and the reason is not far to seek. It was because it had been emptied of its spiritual content and had become mere formal ceremony. With such he would have nought to do.

And yet he did use ritual, in the literal sense, in his own work. When he laid his hands on the sick, or breathed on his Disciples, these acts were true ritual, and that moreover of a sacramental character, inasmuch as it constituted a vehicle of spiritual power, the effect of which was apparent to those who took their part in it. That, indeed, is what all ritual should be. I must not go off at a tangent here, as I am much tempted to do. I will content myself with the statement that, for instance, the ritual which enshrines the Eucharistic Mystery is one, in all essentials, with that which our Lord used among the crowds of Galilee, or in the bed-chamber of the little daughter of Jairus, and is as effectual as a vehicle of spiritual power as that which Jesus used.

What of the moral standard which he expounded as incumbent on the individual?

Centuries of tradition have made us familiar with what we are in the habit of calling the Christian virtues. But the significance of this term is not very greatly appreciated. These virtues are Christian indeed. They were not the virtues either of the Hebrew or Pagan theology. That is why the teaching of Jesus created so much antagonism. He taught that God was the Father. So did the Greeks and the Romans. But to them the Father of the Gods was a very different personage. He was powerful, vengeful, and subject to the frailties of the human race, not excluding sexual excess. To the Jew he was Father of the Jew alone among the nations, and a very stern Father at that. There was nothing of the love we see in the Father of the Prodigal Son. Truly the more spiritual of the old Prophets had tried to lift the conception on to a higher level, but with little success.

Again, Jesus taught humility. Humility was not unknown ; but the Greek word for humility signifies rather humiliation than humility as we understand it. And the Latin equivalent, *humilitas*, is derived from *humus*, the ground. To the Roman humility meant baseness, meanness, servility.

Now in all his teaching, whether in Galilee, Peræa, Jerusalem or elsewhere Jesus kept before his mind the one grand objective of his life and work : to show the people the reality and the nearness to them of "the Kingdom of the Heavens". This is the theme which John the Baptist had taken as the key-note of his teaching. Jesus adopted it and it informs such expository teaching as we have in the Sermon on the Mount and also in the Parables. Indeed he went further than this. He told his hearers that he had come to inaugurate

a new system of religion. The title he gave to this new community was that which already John had adopted in anticipation of his coming. It was "the Kingdom of the Heavens". That which John had foreshadowed, Jesus established. That was the work he had come to do. Nothing like this had been known before in history : that people wearing a body of flesh should become members of a Kingdom of discarnate spirits here and now. We have become so used to the phrase that it is difficult for us to understand its pristine significance. Let us, therefore, pause awhile to consider what it means.

There had, in the history of the world, been many forms of government ; such as the Republic, Communism, Dictatorship, Triumvirate, Tyranny, Empire, Kingdom. Our Lord might have chosen any of these for the ideal of his new Church. He chose the Kingdom. An ideal kingdom is a community of people whose ruler holds his office as viceroy ; not as one who exercises authority irrespective of the will of the people, but one whose authority, with its inherent power, rests on his people's love and their confidence in his integrity. He is the Father of his people and in his person is focused the kinship of the whole community. This is the model Jesus chose for the community which should bear his name and obey the laws he gave them. Why ?

For some years past I have had the privilege of continual intercourse with those who live in the great Spirit World. This has been most interesting and instructive. I find that the life there has nothing about it of a mechanical nature, nothing of finality. All is in movement. Evolution is in progress there just as it is with us. Under the guidance of those of high degree

the inhabitants have worked out a very perfect system which has eventuated in the segregation of the unprogressed and the exact grading of the progressive inhabitants into spheres according to their spiritual attainment. There is no coercion on the part of the rulers of the different spheres and of the sub-departments of those spheres. Guidance, but never coercion, is the unalterable rule.

On earth we are far behind the spheres in this. Here we are all mixed up, good, bad and indifferent. But we are not un-graded. Each one of us has his own proper status in the spirit world, for we are spirits now as much as ever we will be. During our sleep-time we go into that world of spirit. Then we find ourselves members of that sphere to which we have attained by our endeavours here in the flesh. So we are already members of the spirit world. That is the significance of such passages as the message to the members of the Church of Laodicea, to which I have already referred.* What Jesus did when he instituted his Church was to found a body of people who on earth should definitely claim their inheritance as present members of the Heavenly Community.

In order that this call should be definite and apparent, he adopted a rite already well-known among both Pagans and Hebrews as the ceremony of initiation. The outer sign was that of washing; the inward charisma was the bringing of the initiate into definite contact with his own proper spiritual sphere, or heavenly community, in the Kingdom of the Heavens.

All these heavenly Communities, or Spheres, were

* p. 43.

under the beneficent rule of the Christ Sphere, through which came to them all life, power, love and all that is resident in the heart of the Father himself. The inner grace of Baptism was the transmutation of the spiritual environment of the individual, that environment henceforth being the Christ Sphere and its spiritual dependencies. This is the significance of the phrase "in Christ". Jesus put this in a nutshell when he said "The Kingdom of God is inside you"; and Paul, inversely : "Our citizenship is in (the) heavens". Yet the rite of Baptism was not exclusive. It did not mean that those who were not baptised were to be excluded from the Kingdom. As Jesus told them, he had other sheep who were not of that particular fold. But it did mean that the closer relationship brought about by the receiving of baptism was a real and helpful condition and one which would be met on the other side by angel guardians with their hands full of new blessings.

But he did more than that. He gave them a list of those virtues which qualify a person for membership of that Kingdom. A brief summary of these is found in the Beatitudes, which are more fully explained in the Sermon on the Mount.

Now, when our angel-communicators talk to us about their spheres, or heavens, for our convenience they usually give them numbers. The numeration used is not always the same. Adopting here, for the sake of definiteness, that which was given to me, I find that the standard of personal holiness which Jesus required from the members of his Kingdom answers to that which qualifies a spirit for admission to the Tenth Sphere. This is a very high sphere indeed. Very few while on earth are members of that sphere, nor will they go

straight there when they pass hence by death. In other words, the standard he set us is practically an impossible one. It was the one which he, and he alone, achieved, and indeed surpassed, for he attained to the Christ Sphere itself. Others have risen to great heights of holiness even while in the flesh. But, with the exception of Jesus, none, so far as history records, has ever reached that height.

What has been the consequence of his action in setting up a counsel of perfection for his fellows, such as this? Disaster.

Let us get the thing clear. Here we have a body of truth put forth with the deliberate object of making it the basis and test of human conduct. It was the highest conception of its kind ever put before the human race. Of the general character of the people inhabiting the "world", that is, the Roman Empire, at that time we have a fairly vivid conception from contemporary records. I repeat, the standard was an impossible one—except for one Man whose life did embody and manifest the possibilities of such a life being lived while in the flesh—potentially. We find that, in all his dealings with his fellow men, he treated them on that basis, namely, that potentially they were perfect and eventually would be so actually. But from the records we possess of the life of those who accepted his doctrine and enrolled themselves in his Kingdom we know that no other man or woman attained to his level.

The disaster, consequent on this setting up of an impossible standard of virtue and of conduct for his Church, has attended its progress all along the ages. The Hebrew race, led by its National Church, flatly

rejected his claims and refused to adopt the standard of life and conduct which he advocated. It was possible for a member of the Hebrew Church to stand up face to face with his God and to say, with perfect sincerity and truth, "I have kept your commandments and your testimonies ; for all my ways are before you, O Lord". They preferred this condition, which vouchsafed self-satisfaction and self-respect, to the perilous plunge into a region of ethics which to them was uncharted, vague and altogether without traditional sanction. So, as there were signs of a movement in that dangerous direction on the part of his followers, they killed him as the shortest way out of the difficulty.

Outside Jewry it met with no great acceptance. The Roman world also rejected him and, when the doctrines of his followers began to threaten the established order of things ecclesiastical and social, they killed them also.

But leaven is a live thing and permeates the mass in a very persistent manner. As a whole the original Christians were a sorry crowd. Read such of the Epistles of Paul as have survived to us and you will see that they were the off-scouring of the Mediterranean seaboard who adopted the new religion mostly from motives which at the best were very mixed. But there was ever a nucleus of earnest, devoted souls who did their best to live up to their creed ; and these carried on.

They carried on with varying degrees of success, for about six centuries. Then the whole fabric collapsed. It was too perfect to be practicable and was given up in despair. As Dean Inge says : "It is an incontrovertible fact that Christianity is the least Oriental of the great religions, and that the Semitic race, among which it had its origin, has rejected it with great unanimity."

But he who is the Father of all men views things with eyes other than ours. He raised up another prophet, of inferior grade, who gave to the Eastern world another ideal of life more suitable to the spiritual level of the people. Islam was established and swept over those regions with irresistible force and became the accepted religion of the East, leaving the Christian Church disrupted and scattered as fruit after the shaking of the trees. Islam was a composite of Jewish, Christian and Pagan ideals all adjusted to that lower level of possible attainment which was acceptable to those who had tried the more perfect way and had failed. Thus it is possible for a member of Islam, as it was with the Jew, to say, with perfect sincerity and truth, "I am perfect. I have kept the law."

Let it not be thought that the inspiration of Mohammed was fictitious or in any way an illusion. The creed of Islam is greatly inferior to that which Jesus gave, and the heaven which Mohammed pictured for the faithful is a very different kingdom from that which Jesus described. But the World of Spirit is a vast universe and there is plenty of room there for the Kingdom of the Heavens of Jesus, for the Paradise of the Jew and for the Gardens of Allah. The Heaven of Islam is a real heaven, and, moreover, it is exactly the heaven to which the faithful practice of Islam would lead. Every man goes to his own place, and the place to which the follower of Mohammed goes is just the sphere where he will be able with most success to continue his further advance in the wide Realms of the Kingdom of the One Father of all.

Thus Islam saved the East from utter despair and degradation. And herein we get a faint glimpse of

how the Divine Councils work for the world's salvation. The Only Supreme takes a long, long view of things. He is patient beyond our conception of patience. Also, having put his hand to the plough, he never looks back. He changes his instruments, but never his objective. The effect of all this spiritual warfare was to push Christianity steadily westward, in the direction which progress seems to have taken ever since the far-off days of the traditional Lemuria and Atlantis. The torch of advancing and evolving truth, flickering and in danger of extinction, was taken from the hands of those who were not able to hold it aloft bright and shining. It was handed to the peoples of the West.

We have made a sorry mess of our task, truly. We have never attained to perfection in our social, commercial or religious life as judged by the original standard which Jesus gave us. But there has never been any thought of giving it up. We still hold on, making our very grievous mistakes, stumbling and falling; but always rising again to have another try. The Master holds us in his hand all the while. We have not consciously and deliberately degraded him to an inferior position as did Islam. He is still at the top and we try to stumble up the stairs with wistful faces upturned, to the place where he stands with hands outstretched to help us in our desperate struggle. We know we do him little credit, but we hold on and rather shamefacedly murmur as we continue our stumbling climb: "If only we could—perhaps we shall some day." And there we have to leave it.

On this conception of his Church Jesus based his teaching in regard to prayer. The model which he left us begins with an invocation of the Father who is

“in the Heavens”, and the whole object of that prayer is that we may so become one with the inhabitants of that multiple Realm as to do our task here on earth, which is the lowest department of the heavenly series, as our angel fellow citizens do in their own Heavens of spirit life.

It has been repeatedly said that our Lord told us very little about the Spirit World and that what has been wisely hidden from us we ought not to try to pry into. This has been reiterated so often that it has, by some good church-people, been accepted as a truism with no need of argumentative support. But some of us are not content to accept such statements without enquiry. And, in reference to the above, I am tempted to ask in what way is wisdom shown by hiding any truth from us? Was it, for instance, the wisdom of God which was responsible for the hiding of radium from us for so many centuries? And was the prying on the part of scientists which resulted in its discovery permissible? Surely there is some fallacy here.

The truth seems to lie in the reverse direction. Jesus came to bring life and immortality to light and did so in ratio as men were able to understand his revelation. To the inner circle he expounded the inner truths. To the innermost circle of all he vouchsafed a glimpse of the glories of the heavenly environment on the Mount of the Transfiguration. To the general public he gave the same teaching, as they were able to bear it. The truth is that the whole of his revelation is given from the view-point of the Spirit World. Its values are assessed not on the data supplied by earth economics but by those obtaining in the Kingdom of the Heavens, the title he gave to the Society which should bear his

name. He emphasized the necessity of distinguishing between prophets true and false. The very word "prophet" is a psychic term and links up the world of spirit life with this outer material manifestation.

I have before me a Harmony of the Gospels. Here are a few of the headings under the section "Parables": The Sower, the Candle under a Bushel, the Seed growing secretly, the Wheat and Tares, the Mustard Seed, the Leaven. Every one of these is tinged by the philosophy of the Heavens and could only be given by one who had an intimate knowledge of that great Realm. This fact is brought out again and again and perhaps nowhere more emphatically than in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. So I will take this as a peg on which to hang my argument.

When Dean Stanley visited the Holy Land he found what he considered to be the actual field which figures in the Parable of the Sower. It is almost certain that when our Lord told that story he was describing an incident which was at that moment being enacted before the eyes of his hearers.

I am convinced that this is true of many of the parables. They are not merely imaginary. They are narratives concerning people and their doings, some of them well known to those to whom he spoke. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is a case in point. I am going to treat it as such here.

The Rich Man is commonly called "Dives" for convenience. Whether he was one of the Herods or some other well-known person matters little. His name is not mentioned, evidently out of consideration for the decencies of public procedure. For the same reason Lazarus may not have been the real name of the beggar.

That would have fixed the identity of Dives as conspicuously as if his actual name had been given. Lazarus is another form of Eleazar, which means "one who has God for his help", an appropriate name anyway. The description of both, "a certain rich man" and "a certain beggar", perhaps lends probability to the idea that they were real persons.

We are told that Dives was clothed in costly raiment and lived "making good cheer in splendour daily". He was generous with his friends, lavish in hospitality and good-fellowship. He did his friends well. He did not mind the poor beggar being carried daily to his gate by friends. That was rather a mark of distinction for Dives. It was the custom and the fact that his door was chosen for this purpose showed that his house was much frequented by the elite of the City.

Lazarus, however, did not seem to have benefited much by their bounty. They treated him, as their host did, with good-humoured disregard. As he watched them coming and going with cheery words of greeting or of farewell from their wealthy host, he longed for a few of the pieces of bread which they used at the table to wipe their fingers upon after dipping them in the dishes of choice food. These they threw to the house-dogs who waited for them while they fed. But neither Dives nor his guests had a thought for Lazarus. It was none of their business. These beggars were a necessary ingredient of the City's life. It was not their concern. He was left to the ministration of the dogs which, themselves better fed than Lazarus, strolled forth with the departing guests and made a casual passing visit to the beggar at the gate.

Then "the beggar died and was carried by the angels

to Abraham's bosom'' as the Jews called that part of the Spirit World to which the righteous go. Note the significance of this sentence. There is no full stop after the word "died"; no end of chapter one. The whole story forms but one chapter. "Died" and "was carried" are linked together by the conjunctive particle "and". There is no break. Jesus was speaking of what he knew from actual observation. He may have seen Lazarus and his angel friends clairvoyantly, perhaps from a distance, as he saw Nathaniel under the fig-tree. He may have been actually present at the death-bed of Lazarus.

However that may be, it is true to fact. Many to-day, attending the dying, see similar visions. When death takes place there are always angel-attendants present to help the newly-born into the spirit life. Lazarus fell asleep and, in his sleep, was carried by these angels. It is not invariably the case that the departing soul falls asleep. Often the reverse is true. But in cases such as this sleep does usually follow on the act of dying. His long period of ever-increasing weakness together with that anguish of mind which is twin to poverty had left its effect upon the soul of Lazarus. Sleep was needful. When he awoke he found himself in a pleasant place where he could recover his strength and where the beauty of his soul could unfold itself in its native loveliness.

Then the Rich Man died "and was buried". I can imagine our Lord saying these words slowly and with emphasis as if he would impress on his hearers all the pomp and circumstance which they implied. It was a Rich Man's funeral, done in proper style. Crowds gathered at his gate to see the procession issue forth.

There were the hired mourners, a large crowd of them as befitted his rank. There were his relatives, among whom were five brothers supporting their old father. Then came the friends who would never sit at his sumptuous banquets again. With appropriate music they took their stately way along the street, lined with people come to see how they would bury this wealthy and popular citizen. Down through the City they went and out at the Gate to the family tomb beyond. It was a great funeral.

"And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments."* Often on reading the account of the funeral of some notable public person, I think of these words and wonder musingly. While money was being lavished on his funeral pomp, Dives had not a penny with which to bless himself. His suffering was not inflicted by an angry God. God does not punish anyone. He is too great for that. He has no account to settle like some little creditor who will have his dues paid. The torment of Dives was no punishment ; it was just consequence. He had sowed and was now reaping in a perfectly natural manner. And he knew it. He makes no complaint. This is the first glimmer of nobility in the man. It did not amount to penitence quite. It was remorse for lost opportunity. Remorse is a sorrow which always comes too late. That is the essence of remorse.

So he seeks relief where it may be found. The one who can help him most now is the one he has wronged by his neglect. That also is true to life—the life of the great Spirit World. It there becomes the privilege

* The meaning evidently is that the extreme agony caused his eyeballs involuntarily to turn upward in their sockets and he found his gaze fixed on—Abraham and Lazarus.

of the wronged to help the one who has wronged him, but at the proper time and in the proper way.

Dives looks up to Lazarus—now. He looked down upon him as he swept up the flight of steps into his house, gathering his fine flowing garments about him as he went by. Now he recognizes the one-time beggar and is fain to let it be known that they were not entirely strangers. He is glad to claim his acquaintance. This again is quite true to life. It is continually happening in the spirit world. There are vast estates there and great nobles who rule over them. Lazarus was about to enter into his inheritance. He was now of the nobility. The sometime wealthy and refined Dives was so no longer. He was of the submerged class, a slum-dweller. Not because he had been rich; but because, having been rich, he had not realized that his riches were not his own but given to him in stewardship. He had thought his money was his own to do what he liked with. Death had shown him his great error. He was a pauper.

So he cries to Abraham. There is no reason why Abraham should not have been visible to him. Every nation has its own great Angel Lord as overseer who, in order to do his work effectually, has to keep in actual touch with his own people. This, apparently, was the case with Abraham. So Dives appeals to "Father Abraham" that he will send Lazarus that he may dip even the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue. He could not have asked for much less. Yet it was too much.

Abraham recognizes the relationship and replies: "My child; remember." It is one of the saddest words in the whole of the Bible. To remember—when it is

too late. I have heard such remembrances breathed into my ear by those who, like Dives, did not remember until too late. Only prayer can help such as these ; prayer and its parent love.

"My child," replied Abraham, "remember. In your lifetime you exhausted your pleasures. Likewise, Lazarus exhausted his sufferings. That is why things are as they are now. He is now in comfort while you are in agony. Moreover, there is a great chasm set between us and you, an obstacle which neither you nor Lazarus would be able to cross." This is another statement of fact as we have come to understand from our intercourse with those who come to tell us about the spirit land as they have seen it. They say that it is impossible for any spirit to pass from a lower into a higher sphere until he be qualified by spiritual development so to do. The exception to this rule is when some angel from a higher sphere, for some particular reason, lends of his own power to enable a spirit, for a brief time, to visit a sphere in advance of his own.

The reason why Lazarus could not go down to Dives was that he was so new to the Spirit Land. There are angel missionaries to those dark realms. But these are entrusted with such difficult work only after long and strenuous training. To allow Lazarus, newly-born into the spirit life, even to attempt to penetrate into the gloom where Dives was would have been not only useless but cruel and not without its dangers. Yet the instinct of Dives was true. He knew it was the one whom he had left to starve to death at his door who could help him now. And I will hazard the opinion that long ere this Lazarus has been permitted to do so. For no such cry from the depths ever goes disre-

garded. Meanwhile, Lazarus could help in other ways, especially by prayer.

For Dives was not altogether bad. He had a father and five brothers still alive on earth, which shows incidentally that he and Lazarus had not long passed over. He asks that these brothers might be warned. They had now his money and were spending it as he had done. God help them. They had no more idea than he had had of the consequences of what they were doing. But they knew Lazarus. They had seen him many times when they had come to the feasts which their rich brother had spread for them. If they could see Lazarus now, in his beauty of form and countenance and clad in robes all radiant with heavenly light, that would give them pause.

To which request Abraham replies that they had Moses and the Prophets. Let them give some of the time they were wasting in carousing to quiet meditation instead. Then they would be able to get the true meaning out of the Scriptures. It was there. The one thing needful was willingness to devote some time and trouble to the study of them.

Dives had other ideas. What those orthodox churchmen needed was a shock. If one rose from among the dead and appeared to them, they would take notice. But Abraham had had some two thousand years' experience of human mentality. "If," he answers, "they cannot understand that when they are reading the words of Moses and Elijah and the other prophets, they are reading words of men who are still alive and active; then they would not believe that it was other than the result of a disordered imagination, a delusion, even if one should so rise from among the dead."

And he was entirely right. Another Lazarus did come "from the dead" and the peers of such as Dives met that fact with the resolve to kill both Lazarus and Jesus. Jesus himself came back. The result was the murder of James and the persecution of his fellow Disciples. To-day thousands are coming back from the dead every year. Do the orthodox accept their testimony ?

CHAPTER VII

Palm Sunday and Holy Week

FROM every point of view Holy Week is of tremendous import in history. The drama, as viewed in its external aspect, stands out in its poignancy and grandeur for all to see. It was a week of winnowing and testing. The Nation was on its trial. So were the Disciples. So was Jesus; and he was the only one of them all who came out of that fiery ordeal without blemish or scathe.

As to the inner—that is, the mystical—side of the events which crowded that week, none of us can penetrate very deeply here. We can but catch glimpses of something beyond, something which vibrates through the whole vast Realm of Spirit and finds its objective in the Heart of the Father himself. A few of these glimpses I shall try to capture and, so far as human words will serve, set down here. That indeed is my purpose: not to write a consecutive history of the week, but to select such incidents as to me seem to hold some special significance.

Truly Holy Week has many facets, among these the ecumenical and cosmic, but the centre from which they radiated was definitely localized in Jerusalem and it is on what happened there, and at that time, that our attention must be directed now.

Palm Sunday was the climax of the ages for the Hebrew Nation. The events which followed during the

succeeding week were consequent on what happened on that day. The centuries which had gone before were a period of preparation for the drama which was then staged. John the Baptist was the penultimate prophet who gathered up the graduated teaching which had been given to the nation since the days of Abraham. Jesus carried the task to its completion. During the short period of his Ministry he had placed before the people and their rulers the truth as he conceived it. This body of truth was to be the leaven of the new order which he came to establish.

On Palm Sunday, for the first and only time, openly and indeed deliberately, he assumed the rôle of King, rode into the Capital City in royal state, and challenged the nation's choice : to accept or reject him as their spiritual Leader. His action was deliberately formal and official. The decision lay with the Sanhedrin who, as representatives of the people's will, acted on their behalf. When they tried to temporize, in view of the uncertain attitude of the multitude, he pressed his claim day after day in the very Courts of the Temple itself. Their hands were forced and they took action. They rejected him and put him to death. In this crime the people acquiesced for, while it was the Rulers who piped, it was the people who danced to their piping. They chose Barabbas and urgently demanded the death of Jesus, "and their voices prevailed". That this would be their choice Jesus knew ; but the thing had to be carried through. For the time had come when the next phase of the world's spiritual evolution was due and would brook no further delay. If they would not accept the task then another instrument had to be found for the sake of the world's salvation.

So the balance of accounts was struck that day and the Hebrew nation, chosen of God for that high honour, was found in default and spiritually bankrupt. Being of no further use for the carrying out of the Father's purpose in this matter, some forty years later they were broken up and dispersed. From A.D. 70 there has been no Hebrew nation. The task was transferred to the Roman Empire. That also proved inadequate to the task and in A.D. 410 Alaric the Visigoth took and sacked Rome from which time the Empire waned and passed away.

As I have already shown the East was handed over to Mohammed, while the Gospel of progressive evolution was entrusted to the peoples of the West who are still on their trial. What the outcome will eventually be no one can tell. The end is not yet. We are still struggling between the two opposing forces of good and evil. The one hope is that we do still hold on to the ideal to which our Lord in his own person attained and exemplified and that pre-eminently during that last week of his earthly life. God grant that we may struggle through. If we do not we shall go the way others have gone before us—not, be it noted, in consequence of the resentment of an angry God, but simply as the working out of cosmic laws.

I have said that the events of Holy Week had a mystical side. By that I mean that their significance was not limited to the visible environment. These events had their counterparts in the World of Spirit where time is not the vital factor that it is with us. Past and present and future have there a meaning of their own. Moreover, as considered from the earth point of view, transactions in that realm of causes

antedate their repercussions in this outer environment of matter, which is the realm of effects.

It is important that this basic principle should be understood and borne in mind at all times. The issue of the late war was determined and consummated in the spheres of spirit-life long before the declaration of the Armistice. What was left for us in the flesh to settle was concerned only with this same factor which we call "time". Our freewill was in no way coerced, but on the manner in which that faculty was exercised depended the duration of the war and other matters of minor importance.

To take other instances—these from the mystical Book of the Revelation. In Chapter VI the crowned Rider on the white horse sallies forth "conquering and to conquer". The "conquering" has reference to those present events which the Seer was witnessing in the Heavens. "To conquer" has reference to their future repercussions on the earth environment, to which the action is transferred towards the end of the chapter. The same remarks are also applicable to those transactions which are related in Chapter VIII.

So it was in respect of the events of Holy Week. The whole drama had already been worked through in the heavenly realms. The nation and its church and its rulers had been weighed, found wanting and the verdict pronounced. What followed in and around the earthly Jerusalem seemed intense and real; and so it was. But it was so only inasmuch as it reproduced in the earth environment the counterpart of what had gone before in the Spirit World, which is the Realm of Reality.

That is why our Lord, who was continually in

communion with the Spirit World, was himself able to pronounce the verdict some days previous to that of his condemnation at the hands of Pilate and Caiaphas. The incident to which I refer probably happened on the Tuesday before Good Friday. The actual words in which he passed sentence had reference to the Temple which embodied in itself the very personality of the nation with whose destiny it was identified. The verdict was : "Your House is left to you desolate", a phrase which is again used in Acts i. 20 in the same sense : a house without an inhabitant.

In order to understand the implication inherent in these words it is necessary to glance at the part which was played by the Shekinah in the religious history of the race.

From the earliest times the immediate Presence of the Angel Guardian of the Nation, whose Name was given as Yahweh, was manifest in an effulgence of light. This was the Shekinah. Moses witnessed this phenomenon in Midian in the incident of the "Burning Bush". When the Tabernacle was constructed Yahweh took up his residence in the Holy of Holies in the luminous Cloud visible over the Mercy Seat. Solomon reproduced the Tabernacle in stone in Jerusalem, where it was known as the Temple. At the Dedication the Shekinah again descended into the Holy of Holies with power so great that it overflowed the bounds of its proper habitation and flooded the Holy Place so that the officiating priests had to retreat before it.

As the faith of Israel had waned and materialism had invaded the precincts of the Temple itself so the Shekinah had gradually faded away. Jesus had spoken of the Temple as his Father's House ; but the Presence

had departed. We hear no word of the Shekinah in his day. The House was empty and now he relegated it to its fate. That is the import of his words. The God of Israel who of old had dwelt visibly in the midst of his people now found no habitation there. The Holy of Holies was now without habitation and the screening Veil had no more any use or meaning. So it was rent from top to bottom and the sometime Habitation of Yahweh was exposed to the profane gaze of the outer world.

At the Passover Supper, on the evening of the Thursday following Palm Sunday, Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist. On the inner meaning of this rite I will not dilate here ; it is dealt with in the Notes on this chapter to which I refer the reader. I wish now to say something about another matter which bears on the incidents which immediately were to follow that meal.

It will be remembered that after the Temptation in the Wilderness "The Adversary" left Jesus "for the time being". During the years which ensued he was compassed about with his invisible enemies—invisible to the general mass of the people ; not to him. Nothing of an outstanding nature in the way of disaster happened during this period. In contrast to the subtilty and boldness of the Wilderness episode these machinations may be described as mere pinpricks. Scribes, Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees repeatedly came and tried their skill against him and blundered every time. In other words, there was no master mind present to direct operations. Leaving his underlings to carry on a kind of guerrilla warfare that Prince of Darkness had withdrawn to his own environment in the hells there to make his plans and to gather his forces for the last desperate assault.

The time had now arrived for his plans to be put into operation. On that Thursday he returned and once more resumed the leadership and things at once took on a different aspect. From that moment there was not a blunder or hitch. All through the events of the next twenty-four hours we trace the master mind of The Adversary.

Jesus was aware of his presence at the Supper. One sign was the irritation which displayed itself among the Apostles who, even at that hour when the sacred meal was about to be eaten, could not resist squabbling about who should be the leader. Jesus warned Simon what was transpiring behind the scenes. He said, with some solemnity: "Simon, Simon, The Adversary has demanded to have you all to sift you as wheat is sifted. But I have prayed for you that your own faith may not utterly fail. And," he added significantly, "when you have turned back again, then strengthen your brethren."

The returning presence of the Evil One cast a gloom over him. He was ill at ease all through the meal. Suddenly the meaning of it was given to him and involuntarily he exclaimed: "One of you is going to betray me!" Dismay immediately seized them. They fell silent and then began to whisper among themselves. As for Jesus, he was in that state of half-trance which is sometimes called ecstasy. He sat silent and absorbed. Meanwhile they continued their murmuring saying one to another, "I wonder whom he means. Not me, I hope."

There was one who did not join them in their surmisings. He also was rapt in thought. It was the unnamed Disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who of

them all came nearest to his Lord. Peter, not daring himself to interrupt his Master's reverie, made signs to the Beloved Disciple that he should ask Jesus who it was. The Disciple leaned towards him and softly asked: "Master, who is it that you have in mind?" And in turn Jesus whispered to him: "The one whom I am about to honour. The one whom I shall invite to dip in the common dish with me."

Shortly afterwards Jesus handed the little ball of meat to Judas who accepted the friendly act. He knew it was done in all sincerity, and that very fact was as the gall of bitterness to his already tormented mind. Immediately he was filled with hatred against the one who thus singled him out for the honour. Jesus saw that this last act of silent pleading had failed. His demeanour changed and quietly, but somewhat sternly, he said: "What you have resolved to do—get it over as soon as possible."

The Adversary had watched and waited for this opportunity. Judas' final rejection of his Master's love had for the moment opened the door. Immediately he slipped in and took control. What Judas did after that was under the domination of that stronger mind. No mistake was made. He went straight to the Rulers, led their emissaries to the Garden, and handed over Jesus into their charge.

Then The Adversary withdrew his control from his miserable dupe. Judas had served his purpose, so he was thrown aside to be dealt with by his underlings. He himself had other work. The control being broken, Judas came to himself once more. When he found what had happened he was filled with dismay. In a frenzy of remorse he rushed to the priests and hurled wild

words at them. "He is not guilty, I tell you," he said to them. "This blood-money is the price paid for the blood of an innocent man."

"That is your business," was the cold reply as they turned away.

So he went out into the night and hanged himself.

From that moment the speed with which events followed one another is surprising. Yet we trace that master-mind, in complete control, all through. All is organized in perfect sequence, every item is in place and the programme is carried out to the end : the trials, the mocking, the scourging, the cynical turnabout of the multitude when their favourite Barabbas was shown to them ; the sentence given by Pilate against his will, the crucifixion, the railing at him while he hung on the cross. Not until Jesus had been done to death did The Adversary loose his hold. Then began his own crucifixion. For after the darkness had gathered and again cleared away, his power waned and his Victim became in his turn the Conqueror.

It is necessary for an adequate understanding of these incidents to go back a few hours.

During the years of his Ministry Jesus was constantly going through his trial. But the second great Temptation recorded took place in Gethsemane. Up to the moment when Judas gave him the kiss of betrayal it was not too late for Jesus to turn back. He could have escaped the extreme agony. That agony was not his death by crucifixion. It was something much more terrible than that.

Having done his work with Judas, who at the Supper had definitely given himself over into the hands of The Adversary, the latter was now free to give his

undivided attention to Jesus himself. On him he brought to bear all his powers. He gathered his dark hosts in support, surrounded Jesus and cast about his soul the miasmic atmosphere of the hells. As in the Wilderness, so now, Jesus had to stand alone. The Christ and his Angels withdrew and left him to fight the battle in his own strength. He began to feel "stupified with amazement" at the tremendous powers of evil which closed him in and battered upon his soul. He became very depressed. He took aside the Three and said to them: "My soul is very, very sorrowful, sorrowful to death. Stay near me and watch with me." But even this help was denied him. They too, being the most psychic of the Twelve, felt the awful depressing agony around them. A dull stupor came over them and they sank into a trance-like sleep. Again and again he came and roused them, and at last understood. "Sleep on," he said and left them to their unconscious slumber.

And so alone, except for the ever-increasing pressure of those dark ones under their Leader about him, he made his choice: "My father, let your will be done, not mine." Baffled at the centre of their assault The Adversary and his host now transferred their energies elsewhere. They took Jerusalem into their charge in order to wreak upon the body of Jesus the hatred which was powerless against his soul. The frenzy of the next nine hours which seized on rulers, soldiers and people alike was due to their activities. Nor did the Disciples themselves escape.

The fight had been between Jesus and his enemies, himself alone against the hosts of the hells, and his alone was the victory—as it had to be. So, the final decision having been taken and the spiritual environ-

ment cleansed by the departure of his adversaries, the way now became open for angelic ministration. A delegate from the Christ Sphere approached and overshadowed him with his benign presence. Henceforth all was peace and calm and clear sailing. Together they viewed the position, the dreadful spiritual conflict in the minds of the people he had come to save and the part which remained for himself to play in the immediate future.

From that moment his course was clear. The records, scrappy as they are, show plainly that through all which followed he was the one man who never lost command of himself. Now, partly because of love for him and partly because of that strange attraction which the morbid has for so many minds, people have dwelt upon his sufferings, thinking that, in doing so, they were paying him their tribute of honour and of gratitude. Well, I do not find one word of self-pity uttered by Jesus during the whole of those proceedings which took place on that Good Friday. Nor do I find evidence of any very great suffering, either bodily or mental. Having made the choice there was no further need. God does not torture his children unnecessarily. It is—or should be—the experience of every one of us that, having made our choice and chosen rightly, the agony passes away with the temptation which we have overcome and joy ensues.

So it was with Jesus. I do not say that, after the great decision in Gethsemane, he entirely ceased to suffer either bodily or spiritually. He did suffer. But I do say that, having passed through his Gethsemane, there was no second Gethsemane for him either in Jerusalem or on Calvary. Angel ministers were

permitted so to use their good offices upon him that whatever was necessary for him to pass through thereafter should be softened and made bearable, to put it at its lowest estimate.

I labour this theme so much because of the disastrous effect which the disregard of this aspect of the case has had on the mind of his followers. For nearly two thousand years past it has filled our Christendom with pictures of a Man bound and bleeding, agonized under the scourging, with eyes upturned in piteous pleading. Pictures these not of a King supreme among weaklings, but of one who in his weakness looks up to Heaven in mute reproach. Pictures and images of a dead Man hanging on a Cross, done to death by the hands of his tormentors, meet us wherever we go. In the streets of our cities, along the country roads, in churchyards, hanging behind our pulpits, even in the Sanctuary itself over the Altar where the rite of his Remembrance is celebrated, these presentations of death meet the eye.

I know that these are held up with good intent. They are said to speak to us of the sublimity of the sacrifice of self, of the fact that by his death life was for ever poured out in a healing stream for the world's salvation. All this would be better and more truly presented by a representation of the Resurrection or of the Ascension or, better still, of the Christ in Glory. Better, because the bodily Scourging and the Crucifixion were for the moment and are past; whereas his Victory is present and eternal.

There is another aspect of the case. Since the war France has admitted into her official language the English word "gentleman" because of the excellence

of the qualities which that word enshrines. I hope I shall not be considered guilty of any irreverence when I say that our Lord Jesus showed us what a gentleman is at his best. He was the most perfect gentleman the world has yet produced. I find that these modern gentlemen, the splendid lads who went through the horrors of the war and suffered so greatly, resent the constant allusion to their individual deeds of heroism. In their forceful way they tell us to "shut up". It hurts them to be put on a pedestal in that way while we bow down and relate their sufferings, their acts of service for us, their loyalty to the best that is in them. What effect, think you, have our similar outpourings on the great Heart of him who so willingly did what he did because the Father permitted him that great privilege? While he accepts our good intentions and blesses our love for him, yet mingled with it all there must be not a little pain.

Far be it from me to say that these things should be no more remembered. My contention is that they should be given their proper place. What that proper place is can be decided by the application of what we designate as "good taste".

And what do the records tell us? When the soldiers came to arrest him he was altogether calm: "If you are after me, then let these friends of mine go their way." To Peter he said: "Put away that sword," and turning to those who were trying to lay hold of him, he continued: "Permit me just this, at least," and touched the wound and healed it. In the presence of Caiaphas and of Pilate he was perfectly self-possessed. On the way to Calvary bodily weakness overcame him, but his placidity of mind was undisturbed, as

his reply to the wailing women shows : "Weep not for me but for yourselves." When they were nailing him to the cross he prayed for their forgiveness.

While hanging on the cross he uttered no word which would lead us to believe that he was suffering any bodily agony whatever. Turning to the penitent robber he said : "You shall be in Paradise with me to-day." To the insults of the bystanders he did not reply. He may not have heard them for his mind was on other things. He did notice some of his friends among the crowd. Two were standing together. "Lady," he said, "see, there is your son !" Then to his favourite Disciple, perhaps with an indicative motion of his head, he said : "See ; there is your mother !" I can even imagine that as he said this he smiled upon them out of his love for these two dear ones.

But his thoughts were mainly elsewhere. Presently, in a strong voice, he cried : "My guide, why have you left me behind ?" There is here no tincture of despair ; only a loving wistfulness and the sure conviction that the Christ has gone on before and that he himself would shortly follow. It was a returning shadow of Gethsemane, but a shadow merely for the extreme agony had passed never to return. He did, however, experience discomfort. "I am thirsty," he exclaimed, as many have exclaimed before and after that time.

Then, realizing that his task had been brought to a successful issue, he said : "It has been accomplished," and with a last triumphant cry : "My Father, I commit my spirit to your care," he passed away from

the body into the bright world where awaited him those whose love and care had never failed him in all his trials and least of all in this last phase when he needed them most.

It is evident that the two who were crucified with him suffered more than he. Their agony was prolonged ; and it was necessary in order that the Jewish sense of the appropriate should not be offended that they should be bludgeoned to death before the hour of the Sabbath supervened. But Jesus was then beyond their power to torture.

In the eyes of his enemies his death was only tragic. We have been too ready to take it at their valuation. In the eyes of the angel world it was the triumphal progress of a conqueror coming home from his war with the forces of evil and bringing with him the trophies of the world's salvation.

And there was at least one man there who came very near to the truth of the matter. In front of the detachment of soldiers, standing-at-ease opposite the three crosses, stood the Centurion ; silent, contemptuous of the sneering priests, doing his duty as his office demanded. Through the long hours he stood there observant, taking in everything ; saying nothing. As time dragged on he became more and more interested in the occupant of the centre cross. This man was not as others whom he had seen in a like situation. No blasphemy came from his lips ; no whining, nothing which implied defeat—which, as a Roman and a soldier, he would have utterly despised. Some of the words he spoke the soldier understood ; others he did not understand. What impressed him was the whole demeanour of the man.

At last, when with a great sigh his head sank on to his shoulder in death, the officer could restrain himself no longer. Transgressing all rules of discipline and throwing diplomacy to the winds he cried : "That man was innocent ! And more than that—he was the son of a god !"

CHAPTER VIII

Good Friday evening to Easter morning

It is quite impossible to construct a narrative of the events which happened on the morning of the Resurrection with any degree of certainty as to their correct sequence. I must refer the reader to the Gospel accounts and leave him to reconstruct the story as he may elect to do. Nevertheless, all the main points are perfectly clear ; also consistent. First in regard to the Tomb. On the north of Jerusalem is the Damascus Gate. Passing out of the gate the road runs north for a few yards and then turns abruptly to the right and proceeds parallel with the city wall. Going along this road, about two minutes' walk from the Gate, you pass on the left a tomb. Beyond, still on the left, there rises a hill from the summit of which practically the whole of the city can be viewed. The distance from the tomb to the summit of the hill is only eighty yards.

Some years ago this tomb was purchased and is to-day maintained by the Jerusalem Garden Tomb Maintenance Fund since it was felt that, even if it was not the actual sepulchre of our Lord, yet it was a good specimen of the kind of tomb which was in the garden of Joseph of Arimathaea. In this same tentative spirit I shall adopt this tomb by way of illustrating the Burial and Resurrection story as told in the Gospels.

In regard to the sepulchre itself, this, as I have said,

lies on the left, that is the north side, of the road going from the Damascus Gate. It is hewn out of the solid rock which to-day abuts on the road which was originally probably merely a garden path. There is an entrance some five feet in height. Before this there is a groove in which the circular stone originally ran. This stone must have been some six feet in diameter, and very heavy. Originally this channel was evidently below the level of the path and to enter you would have had to descend a short flight of steps, or a slope. On the right of the door is a window. It is very small and its base is just about on a level with the top of the door. In order to look through this window you would have had to stoop down, and lean over the space between the path and the face of the rock—the space being necessary to allow the stone to be rolled along the groove when it was needful to uncover the doorway.

Passing within you find yourself in a chamber seven feet six inches high, nine in depth and eleven in width. On the right is a low wall which divides the whole space into two compartments. It has an aperture in the middle to allow passage from one to the other. The door admits into the first, or ante-chamber. The only opening from outside into the inner chamber is the window. In this second chamber beneath the window there is an unfinished loculus, or place for the body to be laid. Against the other wall, opposite to the window, there is another loculus, finished. Along the east wall, between the two loculi and opposite to the break in the dividing-wall, is a shelf, the use of which has not been determined. This shelf hides the head cavity of the finished loculus, carved in the rock itself, from anyone looking in at the window.

I will ask the reader to keep these details in mind while we now turn to consider the events which occurred on that memorable morning and which had so immense an influence on those who were concerned therein.

Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, both members of the Sanhedrin, had been secret followers of Jesus. Not until the climax came did they come forth into the open. Then the former went boldly to Pilate, claimed the body and brought it to this tomb, still unfinished, on his own private estate. Nicodemus accompanied him.

They caused the bier to be carried down the steps into the ante-chamber where the bearers came to rest. Then they bound the body about with linen bands. For the head they used a handkerchief, bound tightly under the chin, leaving the face and neck free. All this took time and when they had finished it was nearly six o'clock, when the Sabbath began. So they carried the swathed body into the inner chamber. They emptied a large sack of myrrh and aloes into the finished loculus on the north side of the tomb and on the top of this they placed the body until they could give it more attention.

While this was going on there stood outside a party of women disciples. These now approached the door and asked if they might enter for a moment for a parting glance at the body of their beloved Lord. Permission was readily granted and they all crowded into the inner chamber and took careful note of all details. They then left the tomb together, the stone was rolled to the entrance and the party broke up and went their several ways.

The women went together, and, as they walked slowly towards the Damascus Gate, they discussed matters. They had noted the temporary, incomplete arrangements and decided that they would come at an early hour, immediately after the Sabbath, bringing with them the necessary sweet unguent with which to anoint the body properly before binding it again. They were determined that their Master should be honoured to their uttermost ability.

Early on the day after the Sabbath the women came again to the sepulchre according to arrangement. It was still dark. As they drew near they wondered how they would manage to get the stone rolled aside from the entrance. If the men had not already arrived they would have to await their coming. Whether they knew anything about the guard and the sealing of the stone, does not appear. If they had spent the Sabbath in Bethany, it is probable they did not.

When they were near enough to see the entrance, however, they saw that the stone was rolled aside and the tomb free for them to enter.* This must have surprised them considerably as apparently there was no one there who could have done it. However, they cautiously drew near and peeped in. They could see nothing at first as it was all dark. Then they heard a sweet soft voice calling to them from the inner chamber : "Come in ; come in and see the place where the body of your Master lay. But it is not lying here now ; neither is he. Do you not remember that he told you

* They would probably think, "So, the men have arrived early, with the same intention as ourselves !" The voice from the sepulchre seemed to confirm this, for the moment.

he would rise again from among the dead? Well, he is risen as he said he would. So come in and see for yourselves."

So they went into the first compartment and, going to the low partition-wall on the right, looked over it. There, sitting one at the head and the other at the foot of the loculus, were two young men. The compartment itself was in complete darkness, or would have been but for the presence of those two beautiful beings whose radiance lit up the interior of the chamber with a soft golden glow.

"Now, go and tell your fellow Disciples all about it," continued the spokesman. "And, by the way, just one other matter. Remind them that their Master has an appointment with them in Galilee. As he meant what he said about rising again, so he meant this to be taken literally also. Do not let them put it aside; he will be there expecting you all."

The women were speechless. They filed out one after another into the garden and stood there in the darkness astounded. Then suddenly they came to themselves. They had been given their orders and they must lose no time in carrying them out.

Where they went—whether to Bethany or into the City—we do not know. Anyway, it was Mary Magdalene who found Peter and the Beloved Disciple who had been in hiding in one of the back streets near the Damascus Gate. She told them, not very coherently, what had happened and they, not pausing to consider whether this was some hallucination of an hysterical woman, or whether perchance there might be some substratum of truth in it, set off at once to see for themselves. Putting aside her rather disjointed and not

very comprehensible remarks about seeing angels, they fixed on her one solid assertion—somebody had stolen the body.*

Off they went, cautiously keeping to the wall of the street, both for fear of stumbling in the darkness and also lest, even at that early hour, they be observed and detained as Disciples of Jesus. Thus they came to the Gate, safely made their exit and then broke into a run and, turning aside to the right, came to the garden gate, entered it and made for the tomb. The Beloved Disciple, being the younger man, arrived there just ahead of his older companion. He went to the window and, stooping down, looked into the inner chamber. He could see nothing beyond the middle and lower portion of the white linen wrappings, and these but dimly, for, although there was a faint glimmer of dawn over the hill, his face blocked the window, and what light could find entrance by way of the door was small.

Peter, almost at the same moment, came up and, with his usual impetuosity, stooped down and entered the ante-chamber. The younger man joined him there and found him bending over the low wall looking down at the *loculus* in surprised perplexity. The other, too, was at first perplexed.

What surprised them was this. In the first place there was no face where the face should be. The body was not there. And yet the bands, stiffened with the resinous spices, some of which had been bound with them, had not collapsed but lay there, having the contour of the body, shewing that they had not been

* In her emotional confusion of mind, Mary must have misunderstood the words of the angel at the sepulchre.

unwrapped. Likewise the handkerchief, still folded, lay there separately in the head-cavity. Still gazing at this perplexing phenomenon they slowly went through the gap in the dividing wall and made a closer inspection.

Then immediately the explanation flashed into the mind of the Beloved Disciple. This, then, is what the Master had meant by "rising from among the dead" which he had tried to explain to them several times. The body had been dematerialized and had vanished into space.

The two Disciples left the tomb and, as they passed towards the road, they noticed that Mary had followed them and was standing there in the garden. They gave her a word in confirmation of her story and hurried away towards the Damascus Gate.

But Mary stayed behind in the garden. She could not understand it at all. She thought, as the other women had thought, that she had seen two angels. But had she really done so? Anyway somebody had taken away the body of the one she loved. Peter and his companion had confirmed that at least. She stood at the outer entrance of the tomb and at last could restrain her tears no longer. She took the sleeve of her robe and, covering her eyes, wept bitterly.

Why had neither of those two men mentioned the angels? She wondered whether they were still there. So wiping away her tears she went to the doorway and, stretching as far as she could, peeped over the wall. Yes, there they were. One spoke to her gently: "Why are you weeping, lady?"

"Because someone has taken away my dear Master," she replied between her sobs, "and I can't think where

they may have put him." The angel smiled and was silent.

Just then she heard a movement behind her. She cast a glance over her shoulder. It was still twilight but, in the dim glow of dawn coming over the hill of Calvary, she saw a man standing there, probably the gardener who, however, did not interest her. Still shaking with her sobs she again covered her eyes with the sleeve of her robe and turned away. Then she heard him saying: "Lady, what makes you weep? Are you seeking someone?"

"Yes," she said, "I am—my dear Master. If you have removed him please tell me where you have put him and I will take him away. You shall not be troubled any more with him, if you fear his enemies."

"Mary," he said, and immediately she knew his voice. She turned round quickly, flung herself at his feet, clasping him by the knees and, looking up into his face, murmured: "My Master, my Master, my dear Master!"

Jesus smiled down at her and said gently: "Well now, Mary, do not cling to me so closely; I have not yet ascended to my Father." Then he raised her to her feet and continued: "Now go to my dear brethren and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and their Father, to my God and their God."

Then he faded from her view and she went quickly and told the Disciples what had happened. But they did not believe her. Nor did they believe the other women when they also came in with their report. What they were prepared to give some credence to was that the body had disappeared; that was confirmed by Peter and the other Disciple. But that Jesus had been seen

in a materialized body they would not accept on the testimony of the women alone. In other words, they were very much the human male.

So there the perplexing problem had to be left. Soon they were to have things made more clear to them.

CHAPTER IX

Easter evening to the Ascension : the Great Forty Days

THE accounts of what happened on the first Easter morning, as I have already said, are very much mixed up. But this difficulty does not apply to the subsequent narrative which, from that evening onward, is clear enough. It must not, however, be supposed that we have a complete record of all the appearances of our Lord during the Great Forty Days, as the period between the Resurrection and Ascension is called. For instance, the appearance to Peter is noted in a chance reference and no details are given.

Late in the afternoon two Disciples, one of whom was named Cleophas, went to Emmaus, a village in the country about two hours' walk from the City. The site is not known, but it was probably somewhere towards the west. As they walked along there was only one possible topic of conversation and that was the death of their Master. When a stranger drew near and, after the manner of the East, joined them in their conversation they were surprised that he did not seem to have heard about it. The conversation was a long one and lasted until they came to the village. So impressed were they by his masterly treatment of the theme that they asked him to stay with them that night, for darkness had already fallen. So he went with them and joined them in their evening meal.

When the food was brought in and laid on the table

the stranger, somewhat to their surprise, assumed the duties of host. He took the loaf and began to break it into three portions. As he did so he murmured the blessing in the words he was in the habit of using. Immediately the other two recognized him. Both actions and the formula used were those of their Master. They were startled and amazed. As for their visitor, he instantly faded away. In the expressive phrase which Luke uses, "he became invisible from them". In other words, Jesus was not gone from their presence ; he had merely become invisible to their physical sight ; a very important fact, as will appear later on.

What had really happened was that the violent disturbance in the psychic environment set up by their mental agitation had brought about what Jesus had only just managed to prevent that morning when Mary clasped him so impulsively, the disintegration of the materialized form. This prevented his continuing the meal with them, as was quite evidently his intention.

The two Disciples then determined to return to the city with all haste that they might share their joy with their brethren.

When they arrived at Jerusalem they found them gathered together in a large room. All the Apostles were there, except Thomas, and with them were a number of Disciples, probably including some of the women. The two began to tell their story when they were informed that it was certainly true that their Master was alive, for he had been seen by Peter.

They were still apprehensive, for the action of the Sanhedrin had been attended with complete success —on the surface, at least. In their hearts the Rulers

were by no means at peace. The remarkable report of the soldiers about the strange happenings at the tomb was disturbing. Somebody had managed either to bribe or to intimidate them in some way and had carried away the body. They did not quite know what measures to take. Pilate was by no means pleased with their threatening attitude on the previous Friday when they had forced his hand. A reaction had also set in in the minds of the general public, especially the country people, many of whom had not yet returned north. Also there were others from different parts of the Empire who were by no means so orthodox as those who lived continually under the shadow of the Temple.

Still a sense of fear had also invaded the little band of Disciples, who were in doubt what action the Rulers might take against them. They had just finished their evening meal when the two arrived. The latter now, hungry with their long walk, were eating, while the others sat round, in the dimly-lighted room, talking of the recent events ; especially the report of Peter and also of Cleophas and his companion.

Presently they noticed a luminous cloud gathering in one of the darker corners. This gradually assumed the form of a man who then came forward and took up his station in the middle of the room. Then they recognized him. It was the Master. Joy and amazement invaded the minds of all present.

Then he spoke to them, giving them the beautiful Eastern greeting : "Peace."

Still they were agitated. So he pointed to the remains of their evening meal. "What have you there ?" he asked. "Something to eat ?" One of them thereupon

arose and, taking a piece of fish, handed it to him. Silently they watched while he ate it.

"There," he said, "now you will understand that it is not an illusion you are witnessing. A spirit has no flesh and bones as you see I have. If you are still in doubt feel me, handle me."

At last they were convinced that it was indeed their risen Lord and after a talk with them, as at Emmaus, so now, but more slowly, his form faded away and he became invisible.

Later that night Thomas joined them and they told him of the visit of their Master. But he would not accept their statement, even when the whole assembly gave their corroboration. Said he: "You tell me he appeared to you in his body and you recognized him. Very well. But unless I see that body itself—and more, unless I see the nail-marks and the spear-wound and put my fingers into the holes left by the nails and my fist into the hole in his side, I will not believe you, no, not for a moment."

Thus ended the first Easter Day.

Whether Jesus appeared during the following week we are not told. The next recorded appearance is that which happened on the octave of Easter.

This time Thomas was present and, after his greeting to the assembled company, Jesus at once turned to him and said: "Thomas, come here. Bring your finger here, Thomas; see, here are my hands." Then drawing aside his robe and still looking on Thomas he continued: "And bring your fist here, Thomas, and put it into my side; and do not be so unbelieving."

Thomas was utterly overcome. These were his own words, uttered a week ago when only the Disciples

were present. And yet Jesus had heard him, and now repeated what he had said. "My Lord and my God !" he cried.

"Yes," continued Jesus, "you have believed because you have seen ; you could hardly help doing so. Happy are those others who already believe although they have not seen me as you have done."

The effect of this episode was far-reaching and permanent. From that time onward the Disciples always realized that, even if he were not visibly present, nevertheless he knew all their thoughts and their doings. I believe it was this consciousness of his perpetual presence which gave them the courage to go on their mission, and to stake their all on their conviction, even to prison and to death.

Several other appearances are mentioned, some of them casually, which warrant us in believing that others also may have happened during the Great Forty Days. Paul, writing from report some years later, tells the Corinthians that Jesus appeared to James, but he does not say which James. He also mentions a manifestation to more than five hundred of the Brethren, and adds that some of these were still alive. This may refer to the Galilean appointment to which the Angel of the Tomb had referred.

There was also another appearance in the same neighbourhood which is recorded in the last chapter of John's Gospel. This would never have been written but for the fact that an erroneous rumour had got about that the Beloved Disciple would never die. So this chapter was added to the original account in order to correct that rumour.

Although not essential to the narrative it is interest-

ing on account of the conversation with Peter which took place on this occasion.

After the meal Jesus arose and, beckoning to Peter, the two walked a little apart. As they went Jesus said : "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?"

Remembering what had happened six weeks before Peter said, with some hesitation : "Well, yes, I do value your friendship, very much. You know that, Master."

Then replied Jesus : "Feed my lambs."

After a pause Jesus again asked him : "Simon, son of John, do you indeed love me?"

To which Peter, still more hesitatingly, answered : "You know I do, my Master, you know what your friendship is to me."

"Then," said Jesus, "shepherd my sheep." Then Jesus asked him slowly and emphatically : "Simon, son of John, do you—value my friendship?"

This cut Peter to the heart : that Jesus should now adopt his own phrase and instead of love refer merely to friendship. He replied : "My master, you know everything, and you know what your friendship is to me."

Then the Master said : "Ah, yes, I do. Well then, feed my little sheep." Thus that account was settled, as every account has to be settled either here or beyond. That weakness which had led him first to boast that, whatever others might do, he would stand fast and afterwards to deny his Lord had been on his mind for weeks past, bearing with it remorse and agony. This was now wiped away. Far better thus than had it

remained with him all his life and then accompanied him into the next life to be dealt with there.

Now he had longed to shew that his denial did not come from his real self but was an action of momentary weakness. Well, this opportunity should be given him. Jesus promised him that, when his work was done, he should follow his Lord along the perilous but glorious road to martyrdom.

The last appearance of Jesus by materialization was on the occasion which has come to be called the Ascension. All subsequent manifestations were by other methods. When he appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road it was by clairvoyance and the direct voice. In the first chapter of the Book of the Revelation the seer gives us a description of him as he appears in the Spirit World. This was by trance.

It is necessary that this word "Ascension" should be understood in its proper meaning. We are in the habit of speaking of Heaven as "up there", that is, up somewhere above our heads, "beyond the bright blue sky". This is, of course, altogether erroneous. It is an inheritance from the old Pagan idea which has been incorporated into our theology more than we sometimes realize. Heaven, in the sense in which it is used here, is the Spirit World, and this is all about us, interpenetrating our material environment. While in the flesh we have a twofold correspondence. Our material body has as its environment the material universe. Just as literally the environment of the spirit body, or soul, is the Universe of Spirit. As Jesus once told his hearers: "The Kingdom of God is inside you." When we put off the material body at death we do not go up or down. We just change our condition

and find ourselves inhabitants of the spiritual environment. The Ascension signifies a change of state, not of locality.

So long, however, as this is understood there will be no harm in using the old term "Ascension", although perhaps some such word as "Return" would be better here.

Now in the accounts of this incident there is no mention of Jesus ascending into heaven at all, as a careful study of the original Greek will shew. In Luke xxiv. 51, the words "and was carried up into the heaven" are an interpolation. Mark xvi. 19 is part of that portion of the Gospel which was evidently not in the original text. The fullest account is found in Acts i. and it is that passage which claims our attention now.

The family at Bethany was always dear to the heart of Jesus. It was in their home there that he had found love and rest, from time to time, from the turmoil and strife of the neighbouring city Jerusalem. It was this home he selected as the scene for his parting interview with some of his followers. They met at the house of Lazarus and there once more he materialized in their presence. He had by this time become very efficient in this difficult process. The circle of Disciples had also become attuned and that rendered their co-operation the more powerful. So on this occasion he found it possible to effect a body of such solidity as to enable him to join them in their evening meal.

Late into the night this company sat together and talked over the present and the future. Then the Disciples bade good night to Lazarus and his sisters and prepared to return to the city. On which Jesus also

rose and took leave for the last time of those dear friends and intimated that he would accompany the others on their way. We are given no details of that last farewell. Probably none witnessed it except the family and it was of too affecting, too sacred a nature to allow of them speaking of it very freely.

So the party set off together, Jesus giving them his final directions as they went. Presently he stopped and said farewell. He lifted up his hand and blessed them. As he did this his body began to dematerialize—slowly, for he was loath to leave them. As the process continued it gradually lost its solidity and became lighter in weight until at length it was levitated a few feet from the ground. He could not now utter any vocal sounds, but he still looked wistfully on them as his form grew more and more indistinct.

At length it was no more than a luminous cloud which hovered there on a level with their heads. Him they saw no more. As the original expressively has it, "he was brought back again into the heaven", that is, that Sphere from which he had merged into visibility when he had materialized a few hours earlier.

And yet, stay, it might be possible to see him still. From previous experience they knew that when the materialized form had ceased to be visible he still was there. So they murmured questions to each other, asking if any of them could see him clairvoyantly. They were still gazing intently after him as the cloud slowly dispersed and, in its turn, became invisible.

Then the psychic power, which up to that moment had been used by Jesus, was free for others to use. There had been a company of angels in attendance helping in this manifestation. They now drew to

themselves the released power and used it. The Disciples became aware that they were not alone. Bringing back their thought to earth once more they saw standing near by two young men clad in glowing garments. They were fully materialized and spoke to the startled men words which recalled them to their present duty.

Then they also faded from sight and the Disciples continued their way to Jerusalem, but now with hearts uplifted with a great joy.

EPILOGUE

WE are not without information as to the work of our Lord Jesus in the heavens to-day. Communications from those who live there frequently contain descriptions of his appearance in one or other of the Spheres.

I close this little book with one which was given to me a few years ago. It is the account of the return of a party of missionaries from the darker regions. In the words of my informant :

We were met on the outlying hills by a party of our good friends, who awaited our home-coming with much gladness and with no little eagerness to hear of our adventures. These we told them as we went onward, and then at last we came to the great plain before the Temple of the Holy Mount, and ascended to the Porch thereof. We were led within, and went forward into the great Central Hall of the Sanctuary, and here we found a great concourse of people gathered. They were kneeling in adoration of the Great Unseen, and did not move as we passed quietly within and waited in their rear.

You do not know what silence is on earth. There is on earth no perfect silence. You cannot go where you will leave sound behind. Here in the Tenth Sphere, and at that time, in the Sanctuary was Silence, in all its majesty and awe. Away beyond the earth, if you could go through the air, you would gradually leave the sounds which are upon its surface behind you. But there would still be the atmospheric friction which

would invade silence with a sense of sound. Even beyond all that atmospheric belt there would be, in the ether, sound as a potential element, as planet called to planet in gravitational response.

Beyond the Solar System, and between it and other systems in the void of space, you would approach to an idea of silence, while earth would be millions of light-years away, unseen, unfelt, almost unknown. But the ether would be there, and, although your ears would not hear any sound, yet ether is the realm of which atmosphere is the ante-chamber, and sound is its neighbour and closely akin.

But here in Sphere Ten is an atmosphere of what ether should be if ten times refined by sublimation, and Silence is here a thing not negative so much as active in its effect upon those who bathe themselves in its ocean. Silence here is not the absence of sound, it is the Presence of the Silent One. It is a vibrating entity, but of so quick pulsation that stillness and Silence are as one. I am not able to be more plain in my description, for it is not possible for you, in your grosser element, to imagine, even by a little degree, the condition of which we partook as we entered that vast Temple Hall.

Then down the gangway in the midst there came the Seer and, taking me by the hand, he led us toward the Altar which stood on the boundary of the Chamber where the Throne was, and from which he had dismissed us on our journey.

We came now a little weary, with our hearts full of what we had seen in those far realms of darkness. Our faces shewed the effect of many a fight for the mastery—for I have but told you of our enterprise in brief,

and nowise fully. We were warriors who had come through the war which is incessant between good and its opposite. But our scars and furrows would blend into harmony anon, and we should be more comely than afore we had suffered. It is so with our Royal Prince and Captain who has shewn us the way to Beauty of Spirit, as of aspect in body. And indeed he whose robes still read the lesson of Sacrifice its high dignity, is so beautiful as I cannot find to paint his comeliness in words of earth—or of the heavens.

So we paused before the Altar, and at some distance away, and then we too knelt down and adored the Fount of Being, the One Supreme, who becomes manifest to us only by Presence Form, and that rarely, but most by his Anointed One, who is more in tune with our present state by reason of his Humanity.

Then we at last, having received the sign, all raised our heads and looked toward the Altar. The sign we had was a sense of Presence which glowed in and around us. And as we looked we saw standing on the left of the Altar, with the Altar on his right hand, the Son of Man. He never comes twice in like fashion quite. There is ever some detail new to catch and hold the mind and speak its lesson.

In straight line above his head, hands crossed abreast, stood still, silent and suspended, seven high Angels. Their eyes were not closed, but the lids were lowered, and they seemed to be looking on the ground a little in rear of him. They wore gossamer robes of varicoloured hues. They were not really coloured, these robes. They did but suggest colour without displaying it. There were hues you have not on earth, but with these were also some after your style of violet, gold,

faint crimson (not pink—but what I write, faint crimson), you cannot understand this, but let it rest, you will some day—and blue—only suggestions of these, but very beautiful. And for all their gossamer robes, their bodies were naked in all their surpassing loveliness. They were so very high in their holiness that the garments were of such a lustre as not to clothe so much as to adorn. Their heads were encircled with a band of light about their hair, and the light was alive and moved in its radiance as their thoughts took on a disposition towards praise or love or pity. So evenly attuned and so equal the poise of their minds, that even a very slight change of thought would affect those circles of light, and also send a shimmer of crimson through a blue robe, or a shimmer of gold through one of violet.

The Christ who stood by the Altar was both more emphasized in his visibility, and also the details of his countenance were to us more plain than was the case with those attendant Angels. He wore upon his head a double crown, one within the other. The larger and outer one was of purple, and the inner was of white mixed with crimson. Bars of gold joined the two into one structure, and between them were set jewels of sapphire—a very pretty piece; and the light from it was a cloud about his head. He was clad in a robe of shimmering silver, and upon it was a mantle of crimson-purple—you have no colour of it on earth. About his middle was a belt of metal, between silver and copper in colour. I am doing my best to give you what his appearance was, and so I must use strange mixtures of earth-words, and even then I cannot come near to doing what I list to do. Upon his breast was a chain of

rubies, which held his mantle about his shoulders. In his hand he held a stick of alabaster, vari-coloured, which he rested upon the Altar in repose. His left hand was upon his hip, thumb in belt, so that the mantle fell away on that side. The grace of his figure was matched by the graciousness of his face.

(Was his face anything like the conventional idea we have in pictures of him ?)

But little, friend, but little. But you must know that his face is not of the same features in detail in every manifestation of him. In essentials it is unchanging. As I saw him now, his face was that of a King. The Sufferer was there, but Regality was the dominant note. We read him as one who had won his Kingdom. What elements of battle remained were transmuted into that restfulness which comes with attainment. You are wondering if he had a beard, as in your pictures of him. Not as I saw him then. Indeed, I have never seen him yet with a beard ; I have seen him some fifty or sixty times. But that does not settle the matter. There is no reason why he should not appear bearded, and he may do so on occasion. I have not seen him so, that is all I can say.

When we had looked on him, and on the Angels above him, he spoke to us. You would not understand the import of his theme to the great congregation of people assembled. But when he came to speak to us, the fifteen just returned, his words were such as these, but not spoken as you speak words :

“And you who have been down into the outlands of gloom, know you that I am there also. Manifest to those, my strayed ones, I may not be, except in part and seldom. But when I had penetrated to the outer

realms of my Father's expression of himself, then, before returning this way onward, I went, as you have done, and spoke to many people, and they awoke to hear my voice, and a large number set their faces forward to these realms. But some there were who turned away from me to darker spheres, because they might not endure the sense of the Presence of me, which at that time became intensified in the atmosphere of those regions, and should so remain. You did not reach so far as to the refuge of those who fled from me then. But I am there with them also, and they shall be here with me some day.

"But now, my own and earnest missionaries, you have been afoot of my business, and I have noted your work from my own place. You have not come forth of your battle without scathe. They gave me wounds also.

"You have not in everything been given due credence for your honesty of purpose in your calling of men into the sunlight of these spheres. Of me also they said I did not well but evil.

"Your hearts have sometimes been very full of pain when you beheld the pangs of our brethren in those drear lands. And at times you have stooped to wonder why the Father is so called—times when most the anguish of others bore you down with its millstone of woe and crushed you nearly. My beloved and fellow-labourers in those far fields, remember how I, too, as in all things else, so in this, plumbed the deeps of human experience. I, too, knew darkness when his face was turned away."

He spoke in quiet, calm, and equal tones and, as he spoke, his eyes seemed to dissolve into a mist, a vista of great distance, as if, while telling of these

things and people, he was there in the midst of them, feeling and suffering with them in those dim places far away, and not here in the Sanctuary amid all the beauty of holiness and bright with the seven shining Beings glowing above him. But there was no passion in his words, only a great majesty of pity and of power over all the ills of which he spoke. But to his words again, so far as I can translate them to you :

"But now I give you to wear, when you do worship to the Father, his goodness and loving bounty, a sign and seal of your journey and service, and of your suffering."

He spoke of the new gem which was then added to our diadem of worship which we wore.

Then he raised his left hand and slowly circled it over the heads of the kneeling multitude and said : "My legate I leave with you, to tell you further of the business next ahead of you in this place. For that work I am with you to help you, for it is a great emprise I entrust to you. Do not hurry to begin and, when begun, be strenuous and strong to end it in good fashion, that it need no repairing of others more in advance of you in knowledge as in power. Call and I will answer. But call not more than needs be. This is for the betterment, not only of the spheres inferior, but for your proving also. Remember that and do what you are able with strength already yours. Yet do not let the work suffer for lack of calling on me, for I am there to answer. And that this work at your hands be well done is greater to your minds than your own advancement, for the work is my Father's and mine."

Then he raised his hands in blessing and worship blended and said very slowly, "God is."

And as he said this both he and the Seven slowly faded from our gaze as they withdrew into their own Sphere and left us alone in the Silence. And in that Silence was the Beloved his presence and we, being wrapped about by the Silence, knew that it was his voice and it spoke for us and we paused, because it was he who was speaking and, pausing, heard and worshipped.*

* *The Ministry of Heaven*, Ch. X.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

Notes

THERE are traditions which have been handed down in the Spirit World just as we ourselves have traditions. Of late years several of these have been transmitted by psychic means and some of them have been published. They relate to various phases of historical lore. Some have a cosmic significance, such as the Oahspe Bible, the Book of El-Daoud and the Chronicles of Osiris. Others amplify and explain the Gospels and Acts. Among these are the Aquarian Gospel, the Gospel of Philip the Evangelist and the Scripts of Cleophas. I know of other similar records which are still in manuscript.

In the course of my own investigations I came on another traditional account which had been preserved, and it is from that document that my communicators drew the following items on my request for information :

The owner of the khan, or caravansary, was a poor man. He and his family had clubbed together and purchased it about two years before the incident related in this story took place. It was then in a ruined condition. The negotiations had been somewhat protracted, for the Roman authorities were very careful to satisfy themselves of a man's respectability and trustworthiness before they granted him his licence as the keeper of a khan.

As soon as he had entered into possession he began to repair the place. There was, in the middle of the yard, the old feeding-box. As his savings were not great, he did the more necessary repairs first and left the feeding-box till last. He could not employ many workmen. So the work dragged on for two years and, by the time the other work was finished, this manger was past repair. So he had a new one made and, in order that it should sustain less damage, placed it, not in the middle of the yard, but by the wall at the further end. It had been finished only on the day of Joseph's arrival. It was put in position at nightfall, and half-filled with hay, but no animal had eaten out of it yet. The first use made of it was as the bed of the little Child.

I have used the phrase "sanctified spirit" for this reason: modern research has confirmed the fact that there are beings in the great realm of spirit who have never been incarnate on earth. These are sometimes called angels, sometimes high spirits, sometimes they are otherwise designated. But, on account of their other-worldly origin, it is difficult and, as a rule, impossible for them to come so nearly into touch with us as to communicate. Nor do they mingle with those spirits whose habitation is in the spheres near earth. They are, however, able to enter into co-operation with those who have advanced to high estate, who, through ages of progress, have become "sanctified". It is natural, however, that such as are given commissions to earth should be chosen from among those who have themselves passed this way.

It has been said that the omission of the definite article in the Greek is to be understood as signifying that the term "Holy Spirit" should be taken as a proper name. This seems to me to be a case of reading one's preconceived ideas into the text. Moreover, the omission of the definite article is not consistently followed. By way of example, in Acts xiii. 2, the article is duplicated, while in verse 9 it is omitted. The sense of this passage seems to be that there were in the Church at Antioch several psychics, whose names are given. The word used is "prophets", that is, men, or women, who have the gift of clairaudience—those who are endowed with the faculty of hearing spirit voices and who tell forth what they hear. Occasion was taken of the presence of these gifted persons to hold a seance. The result was satisfactory. They obtained counsel from the angel who had the church of the district in his keeping. Such counsel, however, is given for their consideration. As we have seen in the narrative of the Annunciation, the freewill of the individual is sacred and never over-ruled.

Thus in Acts xv. 28, "It seemed advisable to the holy spirit and to us" could scarcely be used in respect of the Deity, but accords well with the idea of counsel received from an angel guide.

It is significant to note that here, at the very beginning of the narrative, we find that all who were admitted into the inner sanctuary to know the counsels there determined were psychics : Zacharias, Elizabeth,

Mary, Joseph, the Magi, the Shepherds, Simeon, Anna, all were endowed with the gifts of the spirit.

These appearances of angels, as recorded in the Gospels, are accepted by the ordinary Christian without demur. And yet, even if we raise no question in respect of the authenticity of the accounts, such acceptance rests on the testimony of single individuals or of small groups. Zacharias was alone when the angel appeared to him ; so was Mary. The shepherds had no witness but themselves ; nor had the Magi. Fairly assessed the evidence of similar appearances to-day rests on testimony no less honest and multiplied a thousand-fold. For there are to-day, in England alone, thousands who assert that they have seen and spoken with angels. Moreover, their testimony agrees together. I suppose the number of the shepherds was not more than half a dozen ; the Magi are by tradition said to have been three in number.

The word of salutation used by the angel Gabriel to Mary is the usual one. It is equivalent to our, "Cheer up !" It might equally well be rendered, "Good morning" or "Good evening". It is the greeting used by the arisen Lord to the women on the first Easter morning. "Hail !" as it is translated in the Authorized Version, is correct, but has now become obsolete.

This is, perhaps, a convenient place to make a few observations in regard to the appearance of great names in modern messages. There is, to my mind, no more reason why an archangel such as Gabriel should appear in the Biblical narrative than to-day. Each

such mention of notable or high-placed spiritual personalities must be taken on its merits. I have myself made enquiries of my spirit communicators and the following is the substance of their replies :

It is perfectly true that the present is a time of great significance to the world's evolution. This being so the spheres are exceptionally active in aiding the onward endeavours of the human race. Among those in close touch with events are spirits of very high degree. The Head and Leader of all is the Christ himself. In the ordinary course of things these high spirits do not personally descend to the earth sphere of the spirit world. That would not be impossible, but it would necessitate an expenditure of energy out of proportion to the result to be obtained. The work is therefore deputed to the great army of various grades who act under the orders of those high ones.

Nevertheless, it is not correct to waive all messages given in the name of, say, St. Francis of Assisi or Joan of Arc, or even of one of the Apostles, as mere delusion. The influence of these high ones is cast far afield and the circumference of its energizing is very large. This thought-radiation, as we may call it, is caught up by earnest spirits who are nearer to the earth level and transmitted in the names of the originators. This, I am informed, is quite permissible and in order, indeed it is part of their training.

I have noticed that such messages as proceed through any certain medium purporting to come from some relative or friend not many years passed over is usually of a more definite nature than those which are given in the name of these higher angels, the substance of whose message, or teaching, has become diffused and

thinned-out in its descent through the intervening spheres.

In other words, there is a distinct difference between actual presence or control by a spirit and the transmission through others down to the earth plane. The appearance of Gabriel to Zacharias and to Mary was evidently one of those comparatively rare occasions which warranted the expenditure of the power necessary for the descent of that high one to the earth sphere.

The three hymns which occur in Luke i, ii, are each interesting in its own way. That which has been given the name "Magnificat" was the ecstatic utterance either of Mary or of Elizabeth, some think the latter. Whoever was the author, it is a beautiful hymn. It is also purely democratic, even socialistic. It is strange to hear this sung in some great cathedral in the present day. The words "He has put down the mighty from their thrones" does not harmonize very well with the presence of the Bishop's Throne in full view of the congregation, with the bishop himself in occupation.

The Benedictus was declaimed by Zacharias at the Naming of John. It contains a prediction of the freeing of Israel from the Gentile yoke, after which the people might serve their God without fear all their days. The fact that this did not come to pass brings to mind the contrast between those predictions uttered by Jesus, all of which were fulfilled literally, and those uttered by others whose words are recorded in the New Testament, many of which did not eventuate.

The other hymn is the beautiful song of Simeon, the

"Nunc Dimittis" uttered on the occasion of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. At this ceremony there was also present Anna, the old psychic who, as in other instances noted in the narrative, is described as a "prophet".

In regard to the question of the Virgin Birth: there was a time when I relegated this to the realm of the unreasonable, indeed the unbelievable. I still do not understand the necessity for it. If it happened there must have been some very important reason for it. But what reason? It does not, as I view the matter, raise Jesus to a higher estate than an ordinary birth would have done, which in itself is wonderful indeed. On the other hand it does appear to remove him to a distance from humanity which he came to help and to save. It leaves a gap between him and me which is not helpful to contemplate.

It cannot have been that the object was to provide a body potentially as well as actually sinless, which would reduce the Temptation in the Wilderness to mere play-acting. Moreover, the further difficulty arising out of this doctrine has necessitated the invention of another to bolster it up, namely, the Immaculate Conception by the mother of the Blessed Virgin.

These are the thoughts which have come to me, and yet I would not dogmatize. I who have seen the wonderful process of materialization do not feel justified in doing so. I have seen a body gradually take shape in the seance room. Into that body has

entered a living soul who has walked among us, touched us, talked to us. I who have seen these wonderful things cannot deny the other which, indeed, is not so wonderful to me.

Also when I read the account of the visit of Gabriel to Mary in the original Greek, slowly and thoughtfully, I am struck with the ring of truth which invades it from beginning to end. Whoever wrote that account at least believed it to be true.

The probability of the other miracles recorded in the Gospels and Acts I can test by present-day evidence. This of the Virgin Birth stands in another category. It does not lend itself to demonstration, at least, so far as I can see.

And yet from the very nature of the case it is impossible to prove that virgin-births do not occur nowadays in the course of everyday life. The most that can be said is that they are improbable. So I must leave it an open question.

Of late what has been termed the "triangular novel" has been much in evidence among us. Well, here we have a true triangular problem. But how different both in substance and treatment, from its average modern representative! The one exhales sweetness, holiness, humility and the beauty of a great love. The other I need not define.

On the part of Joseph his resolve was heroic; for he would undoubtedly be regarded as the father of the Child and Mary a much-wronged girl.

It is one of the sacred privileges of spiritual communion to ask and sometimes to obtain information

as to the present estate and work of the saints of the past. In this connection I am told that the blessed Mother of our Lord is now the Head of the Children's Sphere. To that sphere are taken such delicate flowers as have experienced but a few days of life on earth and also the still-born children who are more fragile still. She is by some called "the Mother of the World", but the significance of this title I do not know.

Much has been made of what happened in the Temple when Jesus was twelve years old. Yet, such incidents had probably occurred many times in the history of that place. For it appears to have been the usual practice for the instructors of youth to hold classes there, such as we should nowadays call "catechisms". The children sat upon the floor and were allowed to ask questions. Joseph and Mary, returning to Jerusalem, when they missed the Boy from the caravan evidently searched for him at the houses of friends in the district. Failing to find him at any of them, they at last bethought themselves that they might get some information as to his whereabouts among those who gathered daily in the outer courts of the Temple to talk over any news which had come to hand. Here they found him. Mary spoke to him in a tone of gentle reproach and he replied, "But what would you have, mother? Isn't it in my Father's House I ought to be?" It was the remark of an intelligent child, nothing more. God as the Father of his people was not a new notion. Probably the term had occurred during the lesson which the teachers had just been giving. The report that all were astonished

at his questions is also not unique ; such situations are frequent to-day and lose nothing of glamour when related by a loving mother, the source, no doubt, from which Luke obtained the details of this incident.

The one point to note is that, as the law had been observed in the matter of his Circumcision and Presentation, so now it was in conformity with the law that he was taken to Jerusalem at the age of twelve in order that he might be confirmed and so become a full member of the Church. This consorts agreeably with his attitude in after years. He never said or did anything detrimental to the Church of his country. What he did was to condemn, in the strongest possible manner, those who, with such an instrument in their hands to aid the people in their religious life, thrust God aside and advanced their own dignity and profit, eliminating the spiritual content from the ritual which thus had become empty and merely formal.

CHAPTER II

Notes

COMMENTATORS have found a difficulty in explaining the fact that while at one time John recognized Jesus as he who should succeed him, at another time he seemed to have been ignorant of his identity. There is really no confusion ; the several accounts are quite consistent. Elijah gave his prophet John a sign by which he should be able to recognize his successor among the many who came to him for baptism. It would be that one on whom he should see the spirit descending and resting. Until that sign was fulfilled John did not know that this man whom he had already seen among his audience was indeed the one who should take up his work and bring it to completion. I refer to this again in a subsequent note.

The Gospel records, as we have them to-day, are much mutilated and that from several causes. There was the revision after the Council of Nicea in the fourth century when the "Correctors" were given directions to alter the text so as to bring it into conformity with orthodoxy. Then there are the errors of copyists, the insertion in the text of what were originally marginal notes, also the displacement of incidents out of their proper chronological order. Modern translators also

adopt the methods of the old Correctors in a greater measure than is commonly realized. All this makes it very difficult to get at the original meaning of many passages.

It is, however, advisable, where possible, to distinguish between the narrative of events and the comments which are mingled with them. Whether these be the ideas of those who transcribed the Gospels or of the original writers is of minor consideration. Both are interesting as being the interpretation of those who heard at first hand, or who were early readers of what the Evangelists wrote. It is often difficult to distinguish one from the other. But, so far as it affects us, we are at liberty to accept or reject their conclusions.

When, for instance, we come on such interjections as "This he said signifying by what death he was about to die" (John xii. 33), or "For the Law was given through Moses; the grace and the truth were established through Jesus Christ"* (John i. 17, and perhaps also the following verse), we can either accept or reject these comments as they appeal or do not appeal to our own reasoning.

Now on account of the imperfections which have invaded the text of the Gospel records, it is often difficult to know when it is Jesus who is speaking and when it is the Christ who is speaking through his mediumship. Yet a careful reading will show that, as in the present day, such inspiration, or control, varies in its completeness from time to time. Sometimes we clearly have simply the words of Jesus, sometimes the thoughts of the Christ inspiring Jesus but rendered in his own phraseology. Sometimes the Christ himself takes control and speaks in person. On these occasions

Jesus was evidently partially in trance, but not necessarily in complete trance. In this connection see John x. 24 to 33, and John xvi. and xvii., where, even in the English translation, it is not difficult to detect the effect of the Christ control. In John xvi. the utterances of Jesus himself evidently alternate with those of the Christ until, the overshadowing influence becoming more complete, the Christ at length takes entire control, so that, in Chapter xvii., we have his own direct utterances.

In regard to instances where Jesus speaks of his Guide, the Christ, I may refer the reader to such passages as Matthew xii. 6, 41, 42: "There is here One who is greater than the Temple"; "A greater than Jonah is here"; "A greater than Solomon is here."

It was to this fact of the overshadowing of the Christ that he referred when, at the Feast of Tabernacles, his detractors raised the question as to how he had acquired so much learning seeing he had never been through what we should term a university course of education. He explained, "My teaching is not my own teaching. It is his who sent me. Anyone who wishes to practise his will shall understand whether my teaching is from God or whether I speak merely from my own mind."

Then, realizing that some of his utterances might appear to exalt himself in an undue degree, he explained that these had reference not to himself (Jesus) but to the one who sent him (the Christ), for "he who speaks from himself seeks after his own credit; but he who seeks after the credit of that one who sent him is a true man and there is nothing improper in his conduct."

The one who sent him was the Christ. The word

"send" has a sense of commission or sending in one's own service. See also the prophecy in Malachi iii. 1. "I will send my angel (Elijah) and he shall prepare the way before me (the Christ); and the lord for whom you look (the Christ) shall come unawares to his Temple, even the angel of the Covenant (the Christ)."

John stated that "he who sent him to baptize" had given him the sign by which he should know that his successor had arrived and that his own ministry was about to close. The sign was the form of a dove hovering over his head. This, as we have seen, happened at the Baptism.

This is quite in accordance with modern psychic knowledge and experience. The angel guide when he descends to control the medium can frequently be seen by those who have the faculty of clairvoyance.

As, however, the individual progresses in spiritual worth other guides, of the same band but of higher degree, are able to draw near and to maintain touch with their charge in the flesh. These higher ones are usually invisible in person to the eye of the clairvoyant to whom their presence is manifest by means of an effulgence of light, and this sometimes becomes so intensified as to be visible to those who are not possessed of the clairvoyant faculty. The phenomenon is sometimes seen as a shaft of light the base of which rests upon the person whose guide is manifesting.

Accompanying this there is often a visible symbol given and one of the most favoured is that of a dove. I know several instances of this. So the dove seen by

John was the symbol sent by the Christ from his own high sphere to certify John of the high spiritual status of Jesus ; in other words, that this was indeed the one whose coming he awaited.

John also explained the difference in potency between his baptism and that of him who was about to come among them. The baptism of John was not a mere ceremony, a piece of ritual with no inner meaning. It was a rite adopted from the older religions of the world and there had accompanied it a charisma, a real spiritual endowment. In the older systems baptism had the effect of initiating those who received it with sincerity into a new sphere of spiritual influence and enlightenment whose nucleus was one or other of the heavenly Colleges of Wisdom. Henceforth under the ever-present influence of such an outpouring his outlook gradually became changed and his spiritual understanding both clarified and deepened. He began to understand things in a new light.

In the case of John's Baptism, that rite brought the initiate into communion with his own band of angelic guides and teachers of whom Elijah was chief.

But the band attached to him who was coming was of a much higher order. Their Head was the Christ himself. The combined effect of that Head and those who formed his band was correspondingly more powerful and more sublime. He would baptize them with a sanctified spirit-guide and the outer manifestation would be, in some cases at least, an effulgence of fire. This is exactly what happened at Pentecost and there are traditions of similar manifestations during the early days of the Church. Indeed such are not entirely unknown to-day.

When we read of our Lord being shown "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," to quote the old English Version, we must not understand this as referring to the material. All material things have their spiritual counterpart: houses, trees, mountains, cities, and the bodies of animals and men. It is this "soul", or spirit body, which is seen from the standpoint of the spirit world.

A little spirit child once informed me that she liked the trees which were in the neighbourhood of my home; she often tarried under them and "leaned against them". I asked her how she managed that, seeing she was a spirit and the trees were material, to which she replied, with some contempt at my ignorance, that it was not the material trees she meant, it was their spirit part which was much better than the part we saw from the earth side.

CHAPTER III

Notes

It is usually taken for granted that Jesus, being a poor man himself, had more sympathy with the poor than with the rich. But this, as it seems to me, is not true. In the extreme sense he evidently was not a poor man, certainly not a poverty-stricken man. The Band seems to have been fairly well organized. They were graded according to their respective gifts and abilities. On the "business" side also things were orderly. They had their official treasurer and, if we read between the lines, he was kept well in funds. For instance, when Jesus dismissed Judas at the Last Supper, the other Disciples thought he had bidden him to give some money to the poor. It is stated in a casual manner, as if this was quite a usual practice. It is not the possession of property which our Lord condemns, but the selfish use of it.

In regard to the suggestion that Jesus travelled outside Palestine, that would be in accordance with the custom of the times. It was, of course, usual for scholars and teachers to visit the various seats of learning in the leading cities of the world to confer with the resident teachers. The book which deals with this phase of the life of Jesus more fully than any others is

Hafed, Prince of Persia. It is based on one of the traditional histories of Jesus which have been preserved in the archives of the Spirit World. It was given through the mediumship of David Duguid from 1869 to 1875. There have been other subsequent narratives on the same subject, evidently drawn from other traditional sources. But Hafed is the most striking and complete.

A second-century Jewish tradition speaks of Jesus as working as a labourer in Egypt and practising magic there before beginning his ministry in Palestine. See *Peake's Commentary*, Matt. ii. 15.

In regard to the Mysteries to which I have made reference in the foregoing chapter. Various nations had their sacred Mysteries. In their outward aspect they were rites and ceremonies which were enacted with a view to worship and also for the instruction of the people in things appertaining to their present responsibility as spiritual beings and to the reality and nature of the life continued in the Spirit Land. As time went on, these Mysteries became degraded until they were either suppressed by law or passed away of themselves. Those which lasted longest were the Eleusinian Mysteries, celebrated chiefly in honour of the goddess Ceres at Eleusis in Greece. These were removed to Rome in the reign of Hadrian (died A.D. 138) and were finally abolished by Theodosius the Great (died A.D. 395) after an existence of some 1,800 years.

The Eleusinian Mysteries did not meet with fair

treatment at the hands of Christian writers. The best among heathen philosophers and officials held them in great reverence as exercising a wholesome effect on the morals of the people. Cicero, in reference to them, says, "*Neque solum cum laetitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam tum spe meliore monendi*" (De Leg. xiv.), "Not only do we learn a method of living in joy, but also of dying in the enjoyment of a better hope."

It was the business, however, of the Christian controversialists to fight for their Faith and, in their enthusiasm, they not only neglected to inform themselves of the true nature of these Mysteries, but also descended to the lower level of controversy and misrepresented them. Thus Clement of Alexandria was not above deliberately confusing the Phrygian with the Eleusinian Mysteries in order that he might disparage the latter. (Encycl. Brit.)

Now, it is notable that while Paul speaks of the Mysteries slightly, we find no word of disparagement used by our Lord. I cannot but conclude that, whereas the great Apostle spoke more or less from hearsay, the Master had not alone a deeper insight but also a more immediate and first-hand knowledge of the Mysteries. I believe he had studied them on the spot either at Eleusis or in Egypt, perhaps in both countries. In regard to Egypt it may be replied that in the time of our Lord the true Mysteries of Egypt had long ceased to be maintained. I have an idea that not only is this an erroneous opinion, but that they are not entirely extinct to-day.

One of our theologians recently gave it as his opinion that the Christian and pagan Mysteries had no

connection. And yet, so marked is the family likeness between the ancient Mysteries and the elements of the Hebrew-Christian Faith which evolved out of the teaching of Jesus that one cannot but feel that the origin of them both is from the One God who has never left himself without witness among his children since the world began. It is interesting also to note that the origin of all the Mysteries is placed by tradition with the Egyptians from whom also Moses, under Divine guidance, adopted the structural plan of the Tabernacle and its Rites, a land with which Jesus in his earlier years was connected.

The following is a very condensed account of the Eleusinian celebrations and, in brackets, for the sake of brevity, I have noted the parallels which may be found in the Hebrew institutional religion and its successor, the Christian. In other parts the identity is sufficiently apparent without such notation. It will be understood that the rites spoken of are those celebrated at Eleusis and at its lesser, preparatory centre at Agrae.

The teaching of the Mysteries was of duty, sin, the future life, the punishment of guilt and the reward of goodness. The benefit received in initiation extended into the future life in the Elysian Fields. [The Church, the Kingdom of the Heavens.]

The Mysteries were divided into the Greater and the Lesser. [High Mass and Low Mass ; greater and lesser Sacraments.]

The purification by water outwardly in baptism was a symbol of inward purity of heart. After which rite had been administered, the Mysteries were read to the Initiates out of the Petroma, a book made of two slabs

of stone cemented together. [Baptism, Jewish and Christian ; Tables of the Law.] Garments worn at the Initiation were afterwards held in reverence as sacred. [Chrisome, Bridal Veil.]

The Hierophant [High Priest, Pope, Archbishop], was careful to subdue the flesh to the spirit by abstemiousness in the matter of food ; and he was a celibate. On the part of candidates for Initiation, careful preparation was enforced both bodily and spiritually. [Easter Eve in the Greek Church gives some faint idea of the *Paradosis*, the crowning act of the ceremony of Initiation into the Mysteries].

They were performed only in that place where the god had appointed to manifest himself as being his special dwelling place. ["Jehovah Who dwelleth in Zion." "Who dwelleth at Jerusalem"—Holy of Holies with the Shekinah Presence, Consecrated Host in Tabernacle on the Altars of Churches ; these also consecrated.]

They were celebrated in the darkness of night. [Holy of Holies]. Certain doctrines were called *Aporreta* or Secrets because they were not to be mentioned in public indiscreetly. ["Unto you it is given to know," etc. "Give not that which is holy," etc.]

Confession of sins was made at the Celebration. Marcus Aurelius did this at Eleusis to the Hierophant.

In the initiation the Hierophant propounded questions to which the candidates returned answers in a set form. [Catechism, Baptism, Confirmation, Ordinations, and Consecration Services of the various Denominations.]

The gods were by no means perfect in character and their faults and sins were frankly declared and

published. [Bible and later Saints—"Is it not written in your Law, Ye are gods?"] An Egyptian Hierophant informed Alexander the Great that the deities, even those of a higher order, had once been men. [Apostles, Evangelists and Saints in general.] Yet although these were honoured with worship, the Mysteries denounced the error of Polytheism and taught the truth of the Oneness of God. [Benedicite; "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord".]

Ceres was a wanderer in many lands and yet she taught the people agriculture and gave them laws. [Moses and the Pentateuch.]

The Holy Hymn of the Beholding, *Epopsis*, refers in covert terms to the Holy Child Jacchus, to his death and resurrection. [Te Deum; Jesus.]

The actual Celebration—omitting the first day which was merely preparatory—extended over the Octave. [Passover, Feast of Tabernacles; also Christian Festivals.]

On the First Day, *Agormos*, the people assembled at Eleusis.

The Second Day was called: "To the sea, ye Initiated!" *Alade Mustai*. [Baptism, Blessing the Waters.]

On the Third Day the principal rite was the Offering of a mullet. [*Ichthus*, the fish, as a symbol of our Saviour.]

On the Fourth Day there was a Procession in which was displayed the Holy Basket of Ceres and various emblems, including a serpent. [Processions, First-fruits, Baskets, Exodus xxix. 23, Leviticus viii. 2, etc. Serpent—emblem of St. John.]

The Fifth Day was called the Day of Torches, when

torches were consecrated to Ceres. [Feast of Lights, Candlemas, Holy Candles.]

The Sixth Day was dedicated to Jacchus, son of Jupiter, the Father of the gods, and Ceres. His image was carried in procession. [Jesus, Son of God the Father. The image of the Madonna and the Holy Child carried in procession on certain festivals.]

The Seventh Day was given up to sports and contests.

On the Eighth Day there was a second Initiation for those who had not been present at the former.

On the Ninth Day wine was offered to the East and the West as a libation after the solemn repetition of a mystical formula. ["In the Holy Place shalt thou pour out a drink-offering of wine unto Jehovah." *Hoc est enim calix sanguinis Mei.*]

On entering the Temple, *Mustikos Sekos*, to be Initiated, the candidates washed their hands in holy water. Within the building divine lights appeared, with flashes of fire accompanied by voices, thunderings and shaking of the edifice. [Sinai, Dedication of Solomon's Temple, Pentecost.]

Here mystic rites were enacted, some of which seem to have been of the nature of what we know as a seance. Here were seen revealed the blessed as they enjoyed their reward in the Elysian Fields—legislators, patriots, pious priests and ministers and those who had lived their lives so as to benefit mankind. [Samuel at Endor, Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, visions seen by Saul of Tarsus and St. Stephen; the Twenty-four Elders, Revelation iv. 10.]

There was also the Shining Image, *Agalma*, which represented the Creator. [Shekinah, Cherubim.]

Those initiated into the Greater Mysteries were called

"Beholders", *Epoptai*. ["We did not follow cunningly-devised myths when we made known to you the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were beholders—*Epoptai*—of his Majesty." II Peter i. 16.] The writer is evidently contrasting the heathen Mysteries, of which he had heard, and the Processions, which, perhaps, he had witnessed, with the Mysteries of the Christian Faith, to the disparagement of the former.

Even the Kteis has its parallel in the Vesica of our ecclesiastical art as displayed in mural decorations and windows and on banners and wands carried in procession. And one has but to glance through the pages of a catalogue of church furniture and ornaments to see how many a processional cross is set in a true Phallos as its base. Nay, in one processional wand I find the two symbols combined in one design.

In regard to the question as to the avenue by which these things found their way into the constitution and practice of the Church, that I must leave to those who are more learned in the ancient lore than am I.

CHAPTER IV

Notes

THE term "miracle" has been variously defined by theologians, just as in the Gospels the Evangelists used different words for the same thing. These express the different aspects which are presented by those remarkable works which struck those who beheld them with wonder ; as "signs", "wonders" or "mighty works". None of these descriptions, however, goes to the root of the matter. In recent years much study has been given to the psychic faculties and it has thrown light on the miracles recorded in the Bible. I suppose the student would describe a miracle as an act which involves the exercise of one or other of these psychic gifts.

If this be so, then Bible miracles assume a different value from that at which they are usually assessed. Take the three which I have selected for treatment in this and the following chapter. They may be taken as samples of the whole.

From the standpoint of the student of modern psychic science the faculties involved in the Healing of the Paralytic would be clairvoyance and bodily healing. Here we have two distinct classes of psychic faculty exemplified. Clairvoyance, strictly speaking, is not "mediumship". It is the faculty of psychic sight, by which the spiritual body of the patient is viewed and its condition diagnosed. Mediumship begins with the actual healing, the spiritual and material bodies of

Jesus being the composite medium through which the life-stream is poured upon and into the body of the patient.

In the case of the Demoniac the faculty employed is clairvoyance, by which our Lord was able to see the obsessing spirit. The rest was consequent on the exercise of his will-power by which he broke the unholy bond between the obsessed and the obsessor and so freed both.

In the Transfiguration, we have entirely different forces at work. On the part of the three Apostles there is trance with the consequent quickening of the spiritual sight. On the part of Jesus there is the process of dematerialization of the material body. This was carried out by invisible workers drawing on the psychic power resident in the personalities of both Jesus and the Three.

Referring to the case of the paralytic and the method employed by Jesus in dealing with it, I may add the following. The power used in spiritual healing is the same in every case. It is the stream of life which continuously emanates from our Heavenly Father, descends through the Christ Sphere and impinges on the earth environment.

But when we come to consider the manner in which it is used we find that in every case there is a difference. Personally I do not know any two healers whose methods are exactly the same. This applies both to the medium himself and also to the controlling spirit, usually some medical man, who has elected to continue from

the spirit side of life the beneficent work in which he was engaged during his earth career.

His diagnosis is, of course, made from the spirit side. He carefully examines the soul, or spirit body, of the patient and from it is able to appraise the condition of the physical body of which the soul is a replica.

Healers in the flesh, of necessity, view things from the opposite standpoint. They have to attune their spirit sight (clairvoyance) so that they may be able to view the aura which surrounds the material body and which, by its hue and general appearance, indicates the condition of the body. Others are able to visualize the soul itself and make their diagnosis on much the same lines as the spirit healers.

It was the possession of this faculty which enabled our Lord to diagnose the condition of the soul of the paralytic.

The instance of the stilling of the waters on Galilee is interesting and should be taken, as I have intimated in the text, in connection with the freeing of the demoniac. I have referred to the incident in *Problems which Perplex*, No. 75, p. 138; *The Kingdom of God*, Ch. iii., p. 47.

Matthew viii. 29, "to torment us before the time". There is no instantaneous change in our convictions after death. We carry with us the opinions and prejudices which we have imbibed during our life on earth. It is evident that this darkened soul had not yet shed the erroneous notions which he had been taught about

the future Judgement ; common both to the Hebrew and also the Pagan theologians. He still lived in terror of what should be his fate when the dread Judge should pronounce the verdict. He may have been a Jew. It is more probable, from the mention of the word "Legion", that he was one of the Roman legionaries who had died in the district and whose body had been buried in one of the adjacent caves. This would, in his present darkened condition, help to bind him to the spot.

On the other hand, there is evidence of some advancement ; for he had arrived at that stage when he does not seek to justify his past life. He is dimly conscious of his sinful state, and that is a considerable step upward on the way towards the light.

My suggestion that our Lord did not anticipate the result of his exorcism of the obsessing band will not, I fear, meet with unanimous approval. It all turns on the question of the extent to which, during his earth-life, he drew on the omniscience of Deity. My position is that his limitations while incarnate were co-extensive with perfect man. Inasmuch, however, as I believe that morally he was perfect I also believe that, in consequence of that perfection, his powers, in this connection as in others, were in excess of those of any other man, either before his time or since. But this does not annihilate limitation.

There is no doubt in my mind that he could have projected his consciousness into the region beyond the cliff-top and have sensed the conditions there

obtaining. Indeed he repeatedly exercised this faculty of clairvoyance at a distance. He did so in the case of Nathaniel and again when his friend Lazarus was sick in Bethany while Jesus himself was in Peræa beyond Jordan.

But in the case at present under consideration we must remember that he was face to face with a regiment of desperate earthbound spirits striving for the mastery, and, as I have intimated, his attention was necessarily absorbed in that contest. Their spokesman, I am inclined to think, was almost as eager as the possessed man himself for the breaking of the bond. It was his companions who were holding him back from progress. It may have been, as is indeed often the case, that they were obsessing him in much the same way as he was obsessing his demented victim.

Anyway, the alternative to the above explanation is that Jesus, acting on his own right, did deliberately destroy the property of the owners of the herd. This, to my mind, demands a much greater effort of belief.

CHAPTER V

Notes

THAT the process of dematerialization of the body of a living man is of a more transcendental nature than the reverse process usually known as "materialization" will be apparent to those who have studied the various phases of mediumship. Where one instance of the former is recorded there are a thousand of the other. Such instances, however, have occurred and the evidence for these is based on unimpeachable testimony. This is not the place to go into detail. I might, however, mention the case of Mrs. Guppy, one of the best known in modern times.

On June 3rd, 1871, this lady was sitting with her friend Miss Neyland in her home at Highgate when suddenly her body was dematerialized and she disappeared. Her body, in its dematerialized state, was transported to a house in Lamb's Conduit Street, High Holborn, where a seance was being held, and there re-materialized.

The reason why Jesus took the three Apostles with him on this occasion was for their sake alone. It was his custom, when he had a more than ordinarily strenuous task to perform, to impress their services in order that he might draw on the power generated by reason of

their psychic gifts. It was not so in the present case. We know that he often went away into the mountains alone "to pray". There can be no doubt at all that at such times he had experiences similar to this ; that he had conversations with those who were helping him in his work and especially with the one who was the Leader of the Band, his Guide from the Christ Sphere.

These interviews he did not make public ; they were too sacred to him to risk misunderstanding and the cynical remarks which would be made by the ecclesiastics who were ever ready to lay hold of such references of his which to them savoured of vanity and even verged on blasphemy. Even with his Disciples he was reticent, for they also were somewhat dull of understanding in regard to the deeper elements of psychic and spiritual truth. Here and there, however, we do get a hint which he let drop with what almost seems to have been inadvertence. For instance, he once said to his hearers, "I am speaking of the things which I have seen when with my Father".

Now he felt that it was due to these three, who were nearest to him in sympathy and understanding, that some light should be given them in regard to those things which he had recently been gradually instilling into their minds. So on this occasion he took them with him in order that they might see what happened at other times when he spent the night alone.

The psychic significance of the Transfiguration is that the development of the psychic powers of Jesus kept pace with his other activities. As time went on

they continually increased in quality. I have already noted the danger of the misuse of psychic gifts. This is not more disastrous but more apparent in the case of psychic phenomena such as materialization and also the reverse process dematerialization.

Where seances are held for these purposes from the scientific point of view merely, without prayer and devout aspiration, the manifestation is sometimes of a low, even gross, order. At times it is attended by real danger to the experimenters. The lowest phase of all is included in the practice known as Black Magic. These are, nevertheless, all of the same order as that which occurred on the Mount of the Transfiguration. The difference is not in kind but in the quality, which in this case was of the highest and holiest.

Praying and cursing are of the same genus ; one is good and the other evil.

The spectacle which the three Apostles witnessed was identical in character with that which Elisha saw on the occasion of the Ascension of Elijah with one difference.

The material body is connected with the soul, or spirit-body, by means of the life-cord, the "silver cord" of Ecclesiastes xii. 6. When this is severed, as at death, the separation between the two is complete and final.

When the body of Elijah was dematerialized this life-cord was severed. This made it impossible for the particles of the body to be re-assembled again.

On the other hand, when the body of Philip was

dematerialized on the road to Gaza, the cord was not severed. The particles of his body were re-assembled at Azotus.

So in the case of Jesus, the cord was not severed and this made it possible for the particles of his body to be brought together again. It was this process which gave rise to the cloud which the three saw when Moses and Elijah were taking their departure. The cloud was the result of the initial stage of the re-materializing and its excessive radiance was consequent on the presence of the Christ and his retinue.

It is interesting to note that Moses and Elijah were two of the few persons who were traditionally held to have passed hence not by the ordinary method of death but by the process of bodily dematerialization.

The fact that, when the Voice came out of the cloud, our Lord was referred to as "My dear son", may suggest to some readers that the Speaker was the Father, the first Person of the Holy Trinity, and not the Christ. But all such manifestations, in whatever sphere they may occur, are given through the instrumentality of the Christ and his ministers. It must, however, be borne in mind that, so perfect is the unity existing between the Father and his delegate the Christ, any distinction between the acts of the Two is impossible to us with our present intellectual and spiritual limitations.

In this connection it may be noted that where Jesus speaks of his Father, it may, sometimes at least, be that he is referring to his Heavenly Guide, the Christ.

Had the Gospels come down to us in their entirety it is possible we might then have been able to get a clearer view of this as of other matters.

I may add that the term "My dear son" is a frequent form of address used by our angel-guides when addressing their earthly charges.

CHAPTER VI

Notes

THE "kings" known to those whom our Lord taught were viceroys, or delegates, of the Roman Emperor. In regard to the idea of the Heavenly Father as viceroy, see *The Kingdom of God*, end of Chapter vi., on "Glory".

The Father is spoken of by our spirit friends not as Dictator or Emperor, but as King, whose authority is voluntarily based on the love of his subjects, who are one with him in that love.

It should be noted that the "chasm" between Dives and Lazarus existed, as a rift, during their earth-life and was of Dives' own creating. Now it is "great" and must be bridged by him, according to spiritual law.

In regard to the teaching of Jesus about the future, including the Second Coming, I have dealt with this in *Problems Which Perplex*, No. 59 and 60, pp. 107 to 111.

CHAPTER VII

Notes

I HAVE said that Israel and Rome failed to rise to the task which had been allotted to them and therefore were passed over and that task was given to others. This, however, is not to imply that they had altogether failed. The divine purpose was achieved up to a point and the contribution of these, as of other nations, to the progress of the world has been assimilated into the general scheme.

It has in the past been too much a habit to revile the Jews for the part they took in compassing our Saviour's death. But in the other scale we must place the fact that it was that race which produced Jesus. That alone would justify their existence.

The Shekinah is a well-known phenomenon in the present day. It is found that this mystic cloud of golden mellow light is the more easily produced in complete darkness. This, of course, was the case in the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies being very carefully constructed so that no ray of actinic light might penetrate within that chamber.

It must not be supposed that there is any kind of Dualism in the incidents which gather around either the

Temptation in the Wilderness or Holy Week. Any idea of a Personal Devil as a rival to the Supreme God is erroneous. There are many personal "devils", but not only is there no rival to God, there is no one spirit of evil supreme over all others, as in Milton's great poem. Such a condition of things would be a cosmic impossibility. The reason for this was once given to me by one of my spirit-communicators. In these words :

Bear in mind always that although, when considered in the light of the Only Good and Beautiful, evil has a negative aspect, yet when considered obversely, that is, beginning at the opposite end and proceeding forward in opposition to the Life Stream of the Only Good, there be great and powerful beings of darkness who are the counterpoises of the Archangels and Principalities and Thrones of Light.

One great divergency, however, stands, and it is this. As through the storeys of the heavens there is progress ever onward until the Sublime blends into the Ultimate Sublimity, in the darker spheres there is no such consummation, there is no Supreme. As in all other phases of activity, so in this, those dark powers stop short of completeness, and order is wanting by reason of the lack of a Godhead.

Were this not so, then darkness would equal light in potency and in evolutionary expansion, till light should find no place, and love and beauty might be invaded of their opposites, until no place for them should be found. Then the purpose of the Most Highest should be thrust awry, and, stumbling into by-ways, be wrecked in space, and among eternities be changed into confusion and so fail to attain.

So, powerful as are those Lords of the Darkness,

they are not All-powerful. This is the prerogative of One, and of him alone. He has knowledge of his own Might so complete as to be secure in what licence he permits to a progeny rebellious, and, for a few eternities, they are permitted to stray, that, in the end, they shall prove, by their capitulation, free-willed and unconditional, the supremacy of Love. Then will First and Last be clarified as to their relation each to other, and the Wisdom of God be manifest. *The Ministry of Heaven.* Ch. x.

The un-named Disciple "whom Jesus loved" is usually taken to be John the Apostle. But this is by no means certain. The phrase occurs several times in the Gospel according to John. This fact is interpreted variously. Some think the writer used it as an anonymous reference to himself. Why he should do this is not clear. Others feel that to use such a description of himself is not in accordance with that humility which is the traditional attribute of the Apostle, at least in his later years.

It has been suggested that it referred to Lazarus from whom, after his sojourn in the Spirit World during the three days' trance from which Jesus called him, the writer of this Gospel obtained much of the mystic teaching which it enshrines. Certainly we are told, earlier in the Gospel, in rather pointed phraseology, that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus." And it was this phrase which the sisters had used when they sent word of their brother's sickness.

It is also suggested that the rumour—referred to in

the last chapter, where again the anonymous phrase is used—that that Disciple should never die had arisen out of the fact that, as he had once “died” and had been raised again “from the dead”; he was henceforth immune.

I must leave it there. It is an interesting speculation, but not of intrinsic importance.

The angel who came to Jesus in Gethsemane is referred to in Luke xxii. 43 as “an angel from the heaven”, evidently the heaven with which Jesus was in direct communion, the Christ Heaven. No doubt it was the remembrance of this incident which caused him, a little later, to say to Peter “Do you not understand that I could call on my Father and he would immediately place at my service more than a dozen legions of angels? But in that case how would the Scriptures be fulfilled?” (Matthew xxvi. 53, 54.)

As to the sword with which Peter wounded the servant of the High Priest, that was probably one of the two which hung on the wall of the room, referred to in Luke xxii. 38. The literal-minded Apostle had pointed these out to his Master who, having other matters on his mind, had merely dismissed the incident without further comment or explanation: “Enough, enough!” (This reduplicated exclamation is from Dr. Moffatt’s translation and expresses exactly the sense of the original.) Whereupon, still misunder-

standing, Peter had, on leaving the house, covertly hidden one of the swords under his cloak.

Crucifixion was not essentially necessary to the achieving of God's purpose. What was necessary was that Jesus should pass through all the phases incidental to human life from conception to ascension. One of those incidents was that of death.

In regard to the excessive concentration upon the death of Jesus, I have talked this matter over with my spirit communicators. I find that, while they approve the sentiment of love and devotion which has gathered around the use of the Crucifix, yet they deplore its chief effect on the mind of the devotee, and for the same reasons as those I have put forth in the text.

On the other hand they love the Cross, as for its Christian, so also for the wider significance which it has for those of other faiths. To them the empty cross is indicative of life, not of death ; a sentiment evidently co-responsive with that which led some of the early Christians to depict our Lord not attached to the Cross but crowned, clad in royal robes and levitated with the Cross behind him in the background.

That the effect of our devotions is felt in the Spirit Spheres is a fact to which our spirit communicators

bear unanimous testimony. I take one instance as being characteristic of the general trend of such messages.

During Easter week last year I was talking with a spirit friend. He was telling me that he had spent his Easter at the Temple of All Hallows which is in the Fifth Sphere. The culmination of the service of devotion was the manifestation of Jesus. Having described this very beautiful episode, he added: "Now that Festival began on Good Friday and it was on that day, according to earth reckoning, that I was present. And I noticed, as Jesus stood there, for a short space his face became clouded with sorrow. It was the thoughts arriving from your world, coming up just at that time with such force, which gave him pain. It was but for a moment, however, and then it passed. But while it lasted I saw the sweat upon his brow."

In regard to the sufferings of martyrs, there seems to be some spiritual law at work analogous to that which operates in ordinary cases of physical suffering. We know that bodily pain cannot be carried beyond a certain point. The patient faints and so becomes insensible to pain. In the late war there were many cases when the injury to the body was mortal and yet the wounded felt little or no pain.

In the case of those who have been called on to witness for the truth and have been condemned to death by fire it is noticeable how self-possessed they almost always are. Their sacrifice for truth's sake

appears to have opened up the way for the ministration of their angel friends who see to it that avoidable and needless suffering is minimized or altogether avoided. I will here refer only to one such instance.

About the year 202, Perpetua, a lady of Carthage, and a servant named Felicitas were condemned as Christians under the edict of Severus. The case is mentioned by Tertullian and Augustine. The following extract is taken from Backhouse and Tylor's *Early Church History* :

"Perpetua and Felicitas, being stripped and enclosed in nets, were exposed to a wild cow, selected on account of her fierceness. But from this spectacle even the hardened devotees of the amphitheatre recoiled ; and being brought back the victims were covered with a loose robe. Perpetua was first led in. She was tossed and fell on her loins, and when she saw her tunic torn from her side, she drew it over her, more mindful of her modesty than her sufferings. Then being called for again, she bound up her hair : 'For,' says the narrator, 'it is not becoming in a martyr to die with dishevelled hair, lest she should appear to be mourning in her glory'."

Seeing that Felicitas was wounded and crushed, she went to her, gave her her hand and lifted her up. So these two noble women stood together, a sight unworthy to be beheld by so heartless a crowd, who, however, were for the time overawed by the spectacle, and suffered their victims to be removed. Being taken out of the arena, Perpetua roused herself as one who awakes out of sleep, and looking round said : "I cannot tell when we are to be led out to that cow," and when she heard what had already happened, she

could not believe it until she saw her torn garment and the wounds on her body.

I have not mentioned in my account the darkness, the earthquake and the other phenomena which in the Gospels are stated to have occurred at the time of the Crucifixion. The authenticity of these items is not conclusive. There was quite evidently, and naturally, great disturbance of mind among the followers of Jesus at that time and, whether in substance true or not, the reports are garbled.

Doubtless phenomena did occur. Indeed to the mystic it would seem inevitable that such tremendous psychic happenings attendant on the Crucifixion could not but cause some disturbance in the material environment. The drama, as viewed from the material side, was impressive and tremendous enough. From the spiritual side, we are told, it was much more tremendous and its effect on the whole World of Spirit was catastrophic. Milman hit the truth literally when he wrote :

"The Angel armies of the sky
Look down with sad and wondering eyes
To see the approaching Sacrifice."

This is not the place to go into this. But, while we may hesitate to accept the details of the phenomena as they have survived in the sacred records as entirely accurate, we may hazard the opinion that, had a complete narrative been left to us by some initiate of the Mysteries present at that time, they would have

been found to have been of much larger range and intensity than any which have come down to us in the Gospels.

There is a tradition which has persisted down the ages that during the period between his Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus went to the regions of gloom and there "preached to the spirits in prison". This was largely founded on a reference in I Peter iii. 19. Dr. Rendel Harris, however, suggests an emendation of the text which makes this refer to Enoch, and this is accepted by other commentators.

Nevertheless, communications which have come to hand from the Spirit World of late years support the idea that our Lord did pay such a visit. One such reference occurs in the passage which I have included in the Epilogue.

Further information is to the effect that, at certain times when conditions are ripe, the ministrations which are continually maintained to those who are in the darkness are intensified. Then a combined effort is made to help those who are ready for progress to come forth into the brighter realms. Such a mission, we are told, followed on the visit above-mentioned. This has been repeated several times since then. At the present time there is another concerted mission of a similar kind consequent on the recent spiritualistic movement which has not only had its effects on the world at large but also has penetrated into the lower regions of the Spirit World where it has made such an effort possible.

CHAPTER VIII

Notes

THE tomb mentioned in this chapter is what is known as "General Gordon's Tomb" from the fact that it was he who first called attention to it. It is perhaps too early as yet to make any definite pronouncement one way or the other. An important factor in the case is the identification of the actual course which the original north wall of the sacred City took. The reader will find an interesting description of the tomb in *The Story of the Empty Tomb*, by the Rev. C. C. Dobson. There is also a brief account by the Rev. J. W. Potter which Major Marriott incorporates in his little book *Arabic the Language of Christ*.

It would be helpful to the understanding of the sequence of events in this chapter to study some "Harmony of the Gospels". A Harmony is a compilation of the four accounts in the order in which the events therein described took place. It is apparent that all these harmonies are merely speculative; but they do help one to view the story, more or less, as a connected whole. There is one published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge: "The Four Gospels arranged in the form of a Harmony", by the Rev. J. M. Fuller, price two shillings. It has

several maps of the tours of our Lord which are also helpful.

A few centuries after these events had taken place some old monk, not without a boyish sense of humour, was copying out the Gospel according to St. John. He had slowly and laboriously written the account of Nicodemus coming to Jesus in the night and it stuck in his memory ; he could not forget it. So when he came on the name again, with his tongue in his cheek he made a note in the margin, "the one who came to him in the night at first". Some later copyist, thinking it a rather good idea, went one better and put it in the text, where it has remained ever since. See John vii. 50 ; xix. 39.

It should be noted that the Resurrection itself did not consist in the raising of the body of Jesus. Resurrection takes place in the Spirit World and the manifestations recorded in the Gospels were evidence that this was an accomplished fact.

Moreover the Greek word "anastasis" means more than is usually understood by the Latinized "resurrection". It embodies a sense of movement, a rising up and going forward.

The head-wrapping was not composed of bandages like the other wrappings. There was no time to complete

the binding of the body. So they used a sudarium, or sweat-cloth, a handkerchief used for wiping the perspiration off the face. This was bound tightly under the chin to serve until the proper bands could be substituted. John is emphatic here. He tells us that the handkerchief which was about the head was not lying with the linen bindings, but separate, "twisted into one place," the "place" being the head-cavity carved into the face of the rock at the head of the loculus, as may be seen to-day.

In John xx. 8, 9, we have: "Then therefore entered also the other Disciple, he who came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed. For not yet did they know the scripture that he must rise from among the dead." If the Disciple here referred to is the Apostle John, who was one of the Three who was present at the Transfiguration, it is probable that that event flashed across his mind now. What had happened in the Tomb was the completion of the identical process they had seen that memorable night on the Mount; but which had there been arrested.

The question may have arisen in the reader's mind: where were the angels when the two Apostles entered the tomb? To those who have not studied psychic science experimentally the answer will probably seem far-fetched. To the experienced Spiritualist that answer

is clear enough. For it is well known that the angel world is not run on haphazard principles. The life and service of the Spheres is highly organized and every worker there has his own department, his own special line of work. In that particular line he is trained and the keynote is efficiency. These angels who had been sent to the tomb were highly trained in the chemistry of psychic phenomena. Their special department was that which deals with the process of materialization, dematerialization and kindred phenomena.

Their first duty was that of dematerializing the body of Jesus. This they had accomplished just before the arrival of the women. That is why they were sitting one at each end of the loculus.

Their next duty was to materialize a body in which Jesus might appear to Mary Magdalene and subsequently to the other women. Their help was needed as this was a highly specialized and, with the materials at their disposal, a difficult process, for they had to work in the open and also without the aid of a circle of psychic helpers. They succeeded, however, although, in the circumstances, the body they effected was somewhat frail. Hence the exclamation of our Lord, "do not cling so closely!" The other women merely fell at his feet, the one nearest laying her hand on them, for they could not all do this. Having accomplished this service, therefore, the two angels returned to the tomb, materialized each a body for himself once again and there awaited the second visit of Mary.

Where the appearance to these other women took place we do not know. The brief reference says it was as they were going to tell the Disciples. It was after his interview with Mary Magdalene, for Mark says that

it was she who had the honour of seeing him first. It must have been immediately after that as the dawn was breaking.

How many angels were present on the morning of the Resurrection we are not told. Two, or maybe three, materialized, but there was certainly a considerable band present as is the case in modern times.

It may be appropriate to refer here to the suggestion that these "young men" were not angels but members of some mystical society, perhaps of the Essenes. But the whole account given by the Evangelists accords so intimately with present-day experience that I have no doubt at all that they were visitants from the world of Spirit. The same applies to the "two men" present at the Ascension.

"Do not cling—I have not yet ascended." For an explanation of this passage see *The Priesthood of the Laity*, pp. 6-8; and *Problems Which Perplex*, No. 76, p. 139.

This explanation of our Lord is kindred to that of the Angel at the ford Jabbok (Genesis xxxii. 26) "Let me go, for the dawn is here!"

Materialization is possible in the full light of day, but very difficult to achieve. In which connection it is notable that most, if not all, such instances in the Bible happened either in darkness or in a dim light. These appearances of our Lord are no exception to the rule.

It is interesting to note how freely Jesus and his Disciples were able to enter and leave the City at this time, even after sundown. They would go to Gethsemane by the eastern Gate ; the Damascus Gate which, as we have seen, was the one which led to Calvary and the tomb, was on the north ; the two Disciples returning from Emmaus in the evening would probably enter the city from the west.

This all accords with the concession made by the Government to the Jews that during the Feast of the Passover the gates of the City should remain open all night. This would enable the people to enter the City for such services, for instance, as that which took place at midnight on the eve of the Passover, when the Temple Gates were thrown open at that hour.

CHAPTER IX

Notes

THERE is no difficulty about our Lord eating food during his visit to the Disciples on the Evening of the First Easter Day. Instances of spirits eating and drinking have occurred in modern times. This, however, can only happen when the materialized form is comparatively perfect ; and that again is only achieved by repeated experiment. It will be remembered that the first attempt to materialize a body occurred at the tomb in the early morning. The structure of this body was very frail. In the evening, however, conditions were much more propitious. This appearance in Jerusalem was the fourth or fifth that day. The company present, from which the necessary ingredients could be drawn, was a considerable one. The exact number we do not know, but it was probably not less than twenty. This included ten of the Apostles, all of whom were, in greater or less degree, psychic. And of this number were Peter, James and John, the three most psychic of all. It was night-time and the room would be as dimly lighted as possible on account of their fear of arrest. Everything, therefore, was favourable to the securing of excellent conditions for such a manifestation.

The phrase used in John xx. 19 is an unusual one and has apparently caused some perplexity to scholars. Literally translated it is, "Jesus came and stood—or

took his station—into their midst.” The words were those of an eye-witness. I believe the solution is as I have given it in the text.

Matthew xxviii. 18 “All power (authority) is given to me,” etc. See *The Priesthood of the Laity*, p. 7.

Mark xvi. 15 16: “Go into all the world—shall be condemned”. See *The Kingdom of God*, pp. 88, 89.

John xx., 21: “As the Father has sent me”, etc. See *Problems Which Perplex*, No. 76, p. 140.

In regard to the following verses (22, 23) compare Matthew xvi. 19; xviii. 18. The reader will interpret this “Power of the Keys” according to his own conviction. Nevertheless, it is perhaps worthy of note that these passages do embody a truth which is known to all who have attended seances, especially those held for the helping of earthbound spirits. It is a fact that our attitude towards those who have injured us affects them very greatly. Until they have obtained our forgiveness they cannot progress. We have in this matter a very grave responsibility and the warning as to “binding” and “loosing” in the above passage is salutary.

I rather cling to the old term "ascension". There has gathered around it so much of beauty and devotion that I do not like to let it go. Nor, I think, is there any need—so long as we understand it aright. I have rendered the phrase in Luke xxiv. 51 "he was brought back again into the heaven", and I think that is the real meaning. There was no ascension of the materialized body from a lower to a higher position in the sky above, nor was it translated into the Realm of Spirit. It was transmuted; that is, it was again resolved into the etherial elements out of which it had been produced and, in the process, his state was changed from the visible to the invisible.

These etherial particles remained, and still do remain, within the environment of earth. As we progress in knowledge and the revelation, which is at present only in its elementary stages, develops and gradually attains to a higher level, our angel communicators will be able to impart to us teaching more sublime than has been possible hitherto. Then men will be able to understand somewhat of the tremendous significance which this fact has in respect of the transaction which takes place in the mystical Eucharistic consecration.

But there was an ascension nevertheless. Understood in the sense I have above intimated, ascension was a normal factor in the life of our Lord. As I have already noted, during his Ministry, leaving his body in trance, or deep sleep, he frequently ascended to the Christ Sphere for replenishment and instruction. These visits were continued after death for, as we have seen, on the first Easter morning he sent word to his Disciples, by Mary Magdalene, that he was about

to ascend to his Father. On which see *The Priesthood of the Laity*, pp. 6-8.

Later, to the Disciples in Galilee, he announced the result : "Plenary authority has been given to me, both earthly and heavenly". After the last interview of all he left them in order to take up this new exalted office as the First and the Last and the Living One, one henceforth with the Christ and the Father, Head paramount of his race. In the old Eastern imagery, he "sat on the Right Hand of the Father". Having grappled with sin and the powers of the hells he came forth Victor, the crowned King of angels and of men.

Henceforth it would be impossible for him, without traversing the laws which govern the heavenly economy, again to manifest by the process of materialization. From that time onward whenever he did manifest to any of his followers it was by the projection of his presence visibly into one of those spheres inferior to that of the Christ.