

contempt. The Talmudists always speak of Jesus as "Ha-notseri;" Julian is said to have expressly decreed that Christians should be called by the less honourable appellation of Galilæans; and to this day the Christians of Palestine are known by no other title than Nusâra. But the explanation which refers St. Matthew's allusion to those passages of prophecy in which Christ is called "the Branch" (*nêtser*, נֶטֶר) seems far more probable. The village may have derived this name from no other circumstance than its abundant foliage; but the Old Testament is full of proofs that the Hebrews—who in philology accepted the views of the Analogists—attached immense and mystical importance to mere resemblances in the sound of words. To mention but one single instance, the first chapter of the prophet Micah turns almost entirely on such merely external similarities in what, for lack of a better term, I can only call the physiological quantity of sounds. St. Matthew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, would without any hesitation have seen a prophetic fitness in Christ's residence at this town of Galilee, because its name recalled the title by which He was addressed in the prophecy of Isaiah.

"Shall the Christ come out of Galilee?" asked the wondering people. "Search and look!" said the Rabbis to Nicodemus, "for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John vii. 41, 52). It would not have needed very deep searching or looking to find that these words were ignorant or false; for not to speak of Barak the deliverer, and Elon the judge, and Anna the prophetess, three, if not four of the prophets—and those prophets of the highest eminence, Jonah, Elijah, Hosea, and Nahum—had been born, or had exercised much of their ministry, in the precincts of Galilee. And in spite of the supercilious contempt with which it was regarded, the little town of Nazareth, situated as it was in a healthy and secluded valley, yet close upon the confines of great nations, and in the centre of a mixed population, was eminently fitted to be the home of our Saviour's childhood, the scene of that quiet growth "in wisdom, and stature, and favour with God and man."

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#### LESSON FOUR

### CHAPTER VI.

#### JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

EVEN as there is one hemisphere of the lunar surface, on which, in its entirety, no human eye has ever gazed, while at the same time the moon's librations enable us to conjecture of its general character and

appearance, so there is one large portion of our Lord's life respecting which there is no full record; yet such glimpses are, as it were, accorded to us of its outer edge, that from these we are able to understand the nature of the whole.

Again, when the moon is in crescent, a few bright points are visible through the telescope upon its unilluminated part; those bright points are mountain peaks, so lofty that they catch the sunlight. One such point of splendour and majesty is revealed to us in the otherwise unknown region of Christ's youthful years, and it is sufficient to furnish us with a real insight into that entire portion of His life. In modern language we should call it an anecdote of the Saviour's confirmation.

The age of twelve years was a critical age for a Jewish boy. It was the age at which, according to Jewish legend, Moses had left the house of Pharaoh's daughter; and Samuel had heard the Voice which summoned him to the prophetic office; and Solomon had given the judgment which first revealed his possession of wisdom; and Josiah had first dreamed of his great reform. At this age, a boy of whatever rank was obliged, by the injunction of the Rabbis and the custom of his nation, to learn a trade for his own support. At this age he was so far emancipated from parental authority that his parents could no longer sell him as a slave. At this age he became a *ben hat-tôrah*, or "son of the Law." Up to this age he was called *katôn*, or "little;" henceforth he was *gadôl*, or "grown up," and was treated more as a man; henceforth, too, he began to wear the *tephillîn*, or "phylacteries," and was presented by his father in the synagogue on a Sabbath, which was called from this circumstance the *shabbath tephillîn*. Nay, more, according to one Rabbinical treatise, the *Sepher Gilgulîm*, up to this age a boy only possessed the *nephes*, or animal life; but henceforth he began to acquire the *ruach*, or spirit, which, if his life were virtuous, would develop, at the age of twenty, into the *nishema*, or reasonable soul.

This period, too—the completion of the twelfth year—formed a decisive epoch in a Jewish boy's education. According to Juda Ben Tema, at *five* he was to study the Scriptures, at ten the Mishna, at thirteen the Talmud; at eighteen he was to marry, at twenty to acquire riches, at thirty strength, at forty prudence, and so on to the end. Nor must we forget, in considering this narrative, that the Hebrew race, and, indeed, Orientals generally, develop with a precocity unknown among ourselves, and that boys of this age (as we

learn from Josephus) could and did fight in battle, and that, to the great detriment of the race, it is, to this day, regarded as a marriageable age among the Jews of Palestine and Asia Minor.

Now it was the custom of the parents of our Lord to visit Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. Women were, indeed, not mentioned in the law which required the annual presence of all males at the three great yearly feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles; but Mary, in pious observance of the rule, recommended by Hillel, accompanied her husband every year, and on this occasion they took with them the boy Jesus, who was beginning to be of an age to assume the responsibilities of the Law. We can easily imagine how powerful must have been the influence upon His human development of this break in the still secluded life; of this glimpse into the great outer world; of this journey through a land of which every hill and every village teemed with sacred memories; of this first visit to that Temple of His Father which was associated with so many mighty events in the story of the kings His ancestors and the prophets His forerunners.

Nazareth lies from Jerusalem at a distance of about eighty miles, and, in spite of the intense and jealous hostility of the Samaritans, it is probable that the vast caravan of Galilæan pilgrims on their way to the feast would go by the most direct and least dangerous route, which lay through the old tribal territories of Manasseh and Ephraim. Leaving the garland of hills which encircle the little town in a manner compared by St. Jerome to the petals of an opening rose, they would descend the narrow flower-bordered limestone path into the great plain of Jezreel. As the Passover falls at the end of April and the beginning of May, the country would be wearing its brightest, greenest, loveliest aspect, and the edges of the vast corn-fields on either side of the road through the vast plain would be woven, like the High Priest's robe, with the blue and purple and scarlet of innumerable flowers. Over the streams of that ancient river, the river Kishon—past Shunem, recalling memories of Elisha as it lay nestling on the southern slopes of little Hermon—past royal Jezreel, with the sculptured sarcophagi that alone bore witness to its departed splendour—past the picturesque outline of bare and dewless Gilboa—past sandy Taanach, with its memories of Sisera and Barak—past Megiddo, where He might first have seen the helmets and broadswords and eagles of the Roman legionary—the road would lie to En-Gannîm, where, beside the fountains, and amid the shady and lovely gardens which

still mark the spot, they would probably have halted for their first night's rest. Next day they would begin to ascend the mountains of Manasseh, and crossing the "Drowning Meadow," as it is now called, and winding through the rich fig-yards and olive-groves that fill the valleys round El Jib, they would leave upon the right the hills which, in their glorious beauty, formed the "crown of pride" of which Samaria boasted, but which, as the prophet foretold, should be as a "fading flower." Their second encampment would probably be near Jacob's well, in the beautiful and fertile valley between Ebal and Gerizim, and not far from the ancient Shechem. A third day's journey would take them past Shiloh and Gibeah of Saul and Bethel to Beeroth; and from the pleasant springs by which they would there encamp, a short and easy stage would bring them in sight of the towers of Jerusalem. The profane plumage of the eagle-wings of Rome was already overshadowing the Holy City; but towering above its walls still glittered the great Temple, with its gilded roofs and marble colonnades, and it was still the Jerusalem of which royal David sang, and for which the exiles by the waters of Babylon had yearned with such deep emotion, when they took their harps from the willows to wail the remorseful dirge that they would remember her until their right hands forgot their cunning. Who shall fathom the unspeakable emotion with which the boy Jesus gazed on that memorable and never-to-be-forgotten scene?

The numbers who flocked to the Passover from every region of the East might be counted by tens of thousands. There were far more than the city could by any possibility accommodate; and then, as now at Easter-time, vast numbers of the pilgrims reared for themselves the little *succôth*—booths of mat, and wicker-work, and interwoven leaves, which provided them with a sufficient shelter for all their wants. The feast lasted for a week—a week probably of deep happiness and strong religious emotion; and then, with their mules, and horses, and asses, and camels, the vast caravan would clear away their temporary dwelling-places, and start on the homeward journey. The road was enlivened by mirth and music. They often beguiled the tedium of travel with the sound of drums and timbrels, and paused to refresh themselves with dates, or melons, or cucumbers, and water drawn in skins and waterpots from every springing well and running stream. The veiled women and the stately old men are generally mounted, while their sons or brothers, with long sticks in their hands, lead along by a string their beasts of burden. The boys and children sometimes walk and play by the side

of their parents, and sometimes, when tired, get a lift on horse or mule. I can find no trace of the assertion or conjecture that the women, and boys, and men formed three separate portions of the caravan, and such is certainly not the custom in modern times. But, in any case, among such a sea of human beings, how easy would it be to lose one young boy !

The apocryphal legend says that on the journey from Jerusalem the boy Jesus left the caravan and returned to the Holy City. With far greater truth and simplicity St. Luke informs us that—absorbed in all probability in the rush of new and elevating emotions—He “tarried behind in Jerusalem.” A day elapsed before the parents discovered their loss ; this they would not do until they arrived at the place of evening rendezvous, and all day long they would be free from all anxiety, supposing that the boy was with some other group of friends or relatives in that long caravan. But when evening came, and their diligent inquiries led to no trace of Him, they would learn the bitter fact that He was altogether missing from the band of returning pilgrims. The next day, in alarm and anguish—perhaps, too, with some sense of self-reproach that they had not been more faithful to their sacred charge—they retraced their steps to Jerusalem. The country was in a wild and unsettled state. The ethnarch Archelaus, after ten years of a cruel and disgraceful reign, had recently been deposed by the Emperor, and banished to Vienne, in Gaul. The Romans had annexed the province over which he had ruled, and the introduction of their system of taxation by Coponius, the first procurator, had kindled the revolt which, under Judas of Gamala and the Pharisee Sadoc, wrapped the whole country in a storm of sword and flame. This disturbed state of the political horizon would not only render their journey more difficult when once they had left the shelter of the caravan, but would also intensify their dread lest, among all the wild elements of warring nationalities which at such a moment were assembled about the walls of Jerusalem, their Son should have met with harm. Truly on that day of misery and dread must the sword have pierced through the virgin mother’s heart !

Neither on that day, nor during the night, nor throughout a considerable part of the third day, did they discover Him, till at last they found Him in the place which, strangely enough, seems to have been the last where they searched for Him—in the Temple, “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions ; and all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.”

The last expression, no less than the entire context, and all that we know of the character of Jesus and the nature of the circumstances, shows that the Boy was there to inquire and learn—not, as the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy represents it, to cross-examine the doctors “each in turn”—not to expound the number of the spheres and celestial bodies, and their natures and operations—still less to “explain physics and metaphysics, hyperphysics and hypophysics” (!) All these are but the Apollinarian fictions of those who preferred their heretical and pseudo-reverential fancies of what was fitting, to the simple truthfulness with which the Evangelist lets us see that Jesus, like other children, grew up in gradual knowledge, consistently with the natural course of human development. He was there, as St. Luke shows us, in all humility and reverence to His elders, as an eager-hearted and gifted learner, whose enthusiasm kindled their admiration, and whose bearing won their esteem and love. All tinge of arrogance and forwardness was utterly alien to His character, which, from His sweet childhood upward, was meek and lowly of heart. Among those present may have been—white with the snows of well-nigh a hundred years—the great Hillel, one of the founders of the Masôrah, whom the Jews almost reverence as a second Moses; and his son, the Rabban Simeon, who thought so highly of silence; and his grandson, the refined and liberal Gamaliel; and Shammai, his great rival, a teacher who numbered a still vaster host of disciples; and Hanan, or Annas, son of Seth, His future judge; and Boethus, the father-in-law of Herod; and Babha Ben Butah, whose eyes Herod had put out; and Nechaniah Ben Hiskanah, so celebrated for his victorious prayers; and Johanan Ben Zakkai, who predicted the destruction of the Temple; and the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea; and the timid but earnest Nicodemus; and the youthful Jonathan Ben Uzziel, who subsequently wrote the celebrated Chaldee paraphrase, and was held by his contemporaries in boundless honour. But though none of these might conjecture Who was before them—and though hardly one of them lived to believe on Him, and some to oppose Him in years to come—which of them all would not have been charmed and astonished at a glorious and noble-hearted Boy, in all the early beauty of His life, who, though He had never learned in the schools of the Rabbis, yet showed so marvellous a wisdom, and so deep a knowledge in all things Divine?

Here then—perhaps in the famous *Lishcath haggazzîth*, or “Hall of Squares”—perhaps in the *Chanujôth*, or “Halls of Purchase.” or in

one of the spacious chambers assigned to purposes of teaching which adjoined the Court of the Gentiles—seated, but doubtless at the feet of His teachers, on the many-coloured mosaic which formed the floor, Joseph and Mary found the Divine Boy. Filled with that almost adoring spirit of reverence for the great priests and religious teachers of their day, which characterised at this period the simple and pious Galilæans, they were awe-struck to find Him, calm and happy, in so august a presence. They might, indeed, have known that He was wiser than His teachers, and transcendently more great; but hitherto they had only known Him as the silent, sweet, obedient child, and perhaps the incessant contact of daily life had blunted the sense of His awful origin. Yet it is Mary, not Joseph, who alone ventures to address Him in the language of tender reproach. “My child, why dost Thou treat us thus? see, Thy father and I were seeking Thee with aching hearts.” And then follows His answer, so touching in its innocent simplicity, so unfathomable in its depth of consciousness, so infinitely memorable as furnishing us with the *first recorded words* of the Lord Jesus :

“*Why is it that ye were seeking me? Did ye not know that I must be in my Father’s House?*” \* \*

This answer, so divinely natural, so sublimely noble, bears upon itself the certain stamp of authenticity. The conflict of thoughts which it implies; the half-vexed astonishment which it expresses that they should so little understand Him; the perfect dignity, and yet the perfect humility which it combines, lie wholly beyond the possibility of invention. It is in accordance, too, with all His ministry—in accordance with that utterance to the tempter, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” and with that quiet answer to the disciples by the well of Samaria, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.” Mary had said unto Him, “Thy father,” but in His reply He recognises, and henceforth He knows, *no* father except His Father in heaven. In the “Did ye not *know*,” He delicately recalls to them the fading memory of all that they *did* know; and in that “*I must*,” He lays down the sacred law of self-sacrifice by which He was to walk, even unto the death, upon the cross.

“And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them.” They—even they—even the old man who had protected His infancy,

\* This is the true translation, not “about my Father’s business.”

\* The KJV uses a different expression. The original Greek is somewhat ambiguous so either phrase would be acceptable.

The note from the author was left in only to preserve the reading from the original textbook. You must locate and read the quote, and all others in this and all course textbooks, in your KJV.

and the mother who knew the awful secret of His birth—understood not, that is, not in their *deeper* sense, the significance of those quiet words. Strange and mournful commentary on the first recorded utterances of the youthful Saviour, spoken to those who were nearest and dearest to Him on earth! Strange, but mournfully prophetic of all His life:—“He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

And yet, though the consciousness of His Divine parentage was thus clearly present in His mind—though one ray from the glory of His hidden majesty had thus unmistakably flashed forth—in all dutiful simplicity and holy obedience “He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.”

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HOME AT NAZARETH.

SUCH, then, is the “solitary floweret out of the wonderful enclosed garden of the thirty years, plucked precisely there where the swollen bud, at a *distinctive crisis*, bursts into flower.”

But if of the first twelve years of His human life we have only this single anecdote, of the next eighteen years of His life we possess no record whatever save such as is implied in a single word.

That word occurs in Mark vi. 3: “Is not this *the carpenter?*”

We may be indeed thankful that the word remains, for it is full of meaning, and has exercised a very noble and blessed influence over the fortunes of mankind. It has tended to console and sanctify the estate of poverty; to ennoble the duty of labour; to elevate the entire conception of manhood, as of a condition which in itself alone, and apart from every adventitious circumstance, has its own grandeur and dignity in the sight of God.

1. It shows, for instance, that not only during the three years of His ministry, but throughout the whole of His life, our Lord was poor. In the *cities* the carpenters would be Greeks, and skilled workmen; the carpenter of a provincial village—and, if tradition be true, Joseph was “not very skilful”—can only have held a very humble position



and secured a very moderate competence. In all ages there has been an exaggerated desire for wealth ; an exaggerated admiration for those who possess it ; an exaggerated belief of its influence in producing or increasing the happiness of life ; and from these errors a flood of cares and jealousies and meannesses have devastated the life of man. And therefore Jesus chose voluntarily "the low estate of the poor"—not, indeed, an absorbing, degrading, grinding poverty, which is always rare, and almost always remediable, but that commonest lot of honest poverty, which, though it necessitates self-denial, can provide with ease for all the necessaries of a simple life. The Idumæan dynasty that had usurped the throne of David might indulge in the gilded vices of a corrupt Hellenism, and display the gorgeous gluttonies of a decaying civilisation ; but He who came to be the Friend and the Saviour, no less than the King of All, sanctioned the purer, better, simpler traditions and customs of His nation, and chose the condition in which the vast majority of mankind have ever, and must ever live.

2. Again, there has always been, in the unenlightened mind, a love of idleness ; a tendency to regard it as a stamp of aristocracy ; a desire to delegate labour to the lower and weaker, and to brand it with the stigma of inferiority and contempt. But our Lord wished to show that labour is a pure and a noble thing ; it is the salt of life ; it is the girdle of manliness ; it saves the body from effeminate languor, and the soul from polluting thoughts. And therefore Christ laboured, working with His own hands, and fashioned ploughs and yokes for those who needed them. The very scoff of Celsus against the possibility that *He* should have been a carpenter who came to save the world, shows how vastly the world has gained from this very circumstance—how gracious and how fitting was the example of such humility in One whose work it was to regenerate society, and to make all things new.

3. Once more, from this long silence, from this deep obscurity, from this monotonous routine of an unrecorded and uneventful life, we were meant to learn that our *real* existence in the sight of God consists in the inner and not in the outer life. The world hardly attaches any significance to any lives except those of its heroes and benefactors, its mighty intellects, or its splendid conquerors. But these are, and must always be, the few. One raindrop of myriads falling on moor or desert or mountain—one snowflake out of myriads melting into the immeasurable sea—is, and must be, for most men the symbol of their ordinary lives. They die, and barely have they died, when they are

forgotten ; a few years pass, and the creeping lichens eat away the letters of their names upon the churchyard stone ; but even if those crumbling letters were still decipherable, they would recall no memory to those who stand upon their graves. Even common and ordinary men are very apt to think themselves of much importance ; but, on the contrary, not even the greatest man is in any degree necessary, and after a very short space of time—

“ His place, in all the pomp that fills  
The circuit of the summer hills,  
Is that his grave is green.”

4. A relative insignificance, then, is, of necessity, the destined lot of the immense majority, and many a man might hence be led to think, that since he fills so small a space—since, for the vast masses of mankind, he is of as little importance as the ephemerid which buzzes out its little hour in the summer noon—there is nothing better than to eat, and drink, and die. But Christ came to convince us that a *relative* insignificance may be an *absolute* importance. He came to teach that continual excitement, prominent action, distinguished services, brilliant success, are no essential elements of true and noble life, and that myriads of the beloved of God are to be found among the insignificant and the obscure. “*Si vis divinus esse, late ut Deus,*” is the encouraging, consoling, ennobling lesson of those voiceless years. The calmest and most unknown lot is often the happiest, and we may safely infer that these years in the home and trade of the carpenter of Nazareth were happy years in our Saviour’s life. Often, even in His later days, it is clear that His words are the words of one who rejoiced in spirit ; they are words which seem to flow from the full river of an abounding happiness. But what must that happiness have been in those earlier days, before the storms of righteous anger had agitated His unruffled soul, or His heart burned hot with terrible indignation against the sins and hypocrisies of men ? “*Heaven,*” as even a Confucius could tell us, “*means principle ;*” and if at all times innocence be the only happiness, how great must have been the happiness of a sinless childhood ! “*Youth,*” says the poet-preacher, “*danceth like a bubble, nimble and gay, and shineth like a dove’s neck, or the image of a rainbow which hath no substance, and whose very image and colours are fantastical.*” And if this description be true of even a careless youth, with what transcendently deeper force must it apply to the innocent, the sinless, the perfect youth of Christ ?

In the case of many myriads, and assuredly not least in the case of the saints of God, a sorrowful and stormy manhood has often been preceded by a calm and rosy dawn.

5. And while they were occupied manually, we have positive evidence that these years were not neglected intellectually. No importance can be attached to the clumsy stories of the Apocryphal Gospels, but it is possible that some religious and simple instruction may have been given to the little Nazarenes by the *sopherîm*, or other attendants of the synagogue; and here our Lord, who was made like unto us in all things, may have learnt, as other children learnt, the elements of human learning. But it is, perhaps, more probable that Jesus received His early teaching at home, and in accordance with the injunctions of the Law (Deut. xi. 19), from Joseph. He would, at any rate, have often heard in the daily prayers of the synagogue all which the elders of the place could teach respecting the Law and the Prophets. That He had not been to Jerusalem, for purposes of instruction, and had not frequented any of the schools of the Rabbis, is certain from the indignant questions of jealous enemies, "From whence hath this man these things?" "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" There breathes throughout these questions the Rabbinic spirit of insolent contempt for the *am ha-aretz* (עַם הָאָרֶץ) or illiterate countryman. The stereotyped intelligence of the nation, accustomed, if I may use the expression, to that mummified form of a dead religion, which had been embalmed by the Oral Law, was incapable of appreciating the divine originality of a wisdom learnt from God alone. They could not get beyond the sententious error of the son of Sirach, that "the wisdom of the learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure." Had Jesus received the slightest tincture of their technical training He would have been *less*, not *more*, effectually armed for putting to shame the supercilious exclusiveness of their narrow erudition.

6. And this testimony of His enemies furnishes us with a convincing and fortunate proof that His teaching was not, as some would insinuate, a mere eclectic system borrowed from the various sects and teachers of His times. It is certain that He was never enrolled among the scholars of those Scribes who made it their main business to teach the traditions of the fathers. Although schools in great towns had been founded eighty years before, by Shimon Ben Shetach, yet there could have been no Beth Midrash or Beth Rabban, no "vineyard" or "array" at despised and simple Nazareth. And from whom could

Jesus have borrowed?—From Oriental Gymnosophists or Greek Philosophers? No one, in these days, ventures to advance so wild a proposition.—From the *Pharisees*? The very foundations of their system, the very idea of their religion, was irreconcilably alien from all that He revealed.—From the *Sadducees*? Their epicurean insouciance, their “expediency” politics, their shallow rationalism, their polished sloth, were even more repugnant to true Christianity than they were to sincere Judaism.—From the *Essenes*? They were an exclusive, ascetic, and isolated community, with whose discouragement of marriage, and withdrawal from action, the Gospels have no sympathy, and to whom our Lord never alluded, unless it be in those passages where He reprobates those who abstain from anointing themselves when they fast, and who hide their candle under a bushel.—From *Philo*, and the Alexandrian Jews? Philo was indeed a good man, and a great thinker, and a contemporary of Christ; but (even if his name had ever been heard—which is exceedingly doubtful—in so remote a region as Galilee) it would be impossible, among the world’s philosophies, to choose any system less like the doctrines which Jesus taught, than the mystic theosophy and allegorising extravagance of that “sea of abstractions” which lies congealed in his writings.—From *Hillel* and *Shammai*? We know but little of them; but although, in one or two passages of the Gospels, there may be a conceivable allusion to the disputes which agitated their schools, or to one or two of the best and truest maxims which originated in them, such allusions, on the one hand, involve no more than belongs to the common stock of truth taught by the Spirit of God to men in every age; and, on the other hand, the system which Shammai and Hillel taught was that oral tradition, that dull dead Levitical ritualism, at once arrogant and impotent, at once frivolous and unoriginal, which Jesus both denounced and overthrew. The schools in which Jesus learnt were not the schools of the Scribes, but the school of holy obedience, of sweet contentment, of unalloyed simplicity, of stainless purity, of cheerful toil. The lore in which He studied was not the lore of Rabbinism, in which to find one just or noble thought we must wade through masses of puerile fancy and kabbalistic folly, but the Books of God without Him, in Scripture, in Nature, and in Life; and the Book of God within Him, written on the fleshly tables of the heart.

The education of a Jewish boy of the humbler classes was almost exclusively scriptural and moral, and his parents were, as a rule, his sole teachers. We can hardly doubt that the child Jesus was taught by

Joseph and Mary to read the Shema (Deut. vi. 4), and the Hallel (Ps. cxiv.—cxviii.), and the simpler parts of those holy books, on whose pages His divine wisdom was hereafter to pour such floods of light.

But he had evidently received a further culture than this.

(i.) The art of writing is by no means commonly known, even in these days, in the East; but more than one allusion to the form of the Hebrew letters, no less than the stooping to write with His finger on the ground, show that our Lord could write. (ii.) That His knowledge of the sacred writings was deep and extensive—that, in fact He must almost have known them by heart—is clear, not only from His direct quotations, but also from the numerous allusions which He made to the Law and to the Hagiographa, as well as to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Joel, Hosea, Micah, Zechariah, Malachi, and, above all, to the Book of Psalms. It is probable, though not certain, that He was acquainted with the uncanonical Jewish books. This profound and ready knowledge of the Scriptures gave more point to the half-indignant question, so often repeated, “*Have ye not read?*” (iii.) The language which our Lord commonly spoke was Aramaic; and at that period Hebrew was completely a dead language, known only to the more educated, and only to be acquired by labour: yet it is clear that Jesus was acquainted with it, for some of His scriptural quotations directly refer to the Hebrew original. Greek too He must have known, for it was currently spoken in towns so near His home as Sepphoris, Cæsarea, and Tiberias. Meleager, the poet of the Greek anthology, in his epitaph on himself, assumes that his Greek will be intelligible to Syrians and Phœnicians: he also speaks of his native Gadara, which was at no great distance from Nazareth, as though it were a sort of Syrian Athens. Ever since the days of Alexander the Great, alike in the contact of the Jews with Ptolemies and with Seleucids, Hellenic influences had been at work in Palestine. Greek was, indeed, the common medium of intercourse, and without it Jesus could have had no conversation with strangers—with the centurion, for instance, whose servant He healed, or with Pilate, or with the Greeks who desired an interview with Him in the last week of His life. Some, too, of His scriptural quotations, if we can venture to assume a reproduction of His *ipsissima verba*, are taken directly from the Greek version of the Septuagint, even where it differs from the Hebrew original. Whether He was acquainted with Latin is much more doubtful, though not impossible. The Romans in Judæa must by this time have been very numerous, and Latin was inscribed upon the

coins in ordinary use. But to whatever extent He may have known these languages, it is clear that they exercised little or no influence on His human development, nor is there in all His teaching a single indisputable allusion to the literature, philosophy, or history of Greece or Rome. And that Jesus habitually *thought* in that Syriac which was His native tongue may be conjectured, without improbability, from some curious plays on words which are lost in the Greek of the Gospels, but which would have given greater point and beauty to some of His utterances, as spoken in their original tongue.

7. But whatever the boy Jesus may have learned as child or boy in the house of His mother, or in the school of the synagogue, we know that His best teaching was derived from immediate insight into His Father's will. In the depths of His inmost consciousness did that voice of God, which spake to the father of our race as he walked in the cool evening under the palms of Paradise, commune—more plainly, by far—with Him. He heard it in every sound of nature, in every occupation of life, in every interspace of solitary thought. His human life was “an ephod on which was inscribed the one word God.” Written on His inmost spirit, written on His most trivial experiences, written in sunbeams, written in the light of stars, He read everywhere His Father's name. The calm, untroubled seclusion of the happy valley, with its green fields and peaceful scenery, was eminently conducive to a life of spiritual communion; and we know how from its every incident—the games of its innocent children, the buying and selling in its little market-place, the springing of its perennial fountain, the glory of its mountain lilies in their transitory loveliness, the hoarse cry in their wind-rocked nest of the raven's callow brood—He drew food for moral illustration and spiritual thought.

Nor must we lose sight of the fact that it was in these silent, unrecorded years that a great part of His work was done. He was not only “girding His sword upon His thigh,” but also wielding it in that warfare which has no discharge. That noiseless battle, in which no clash of weapons sounds, but in which the combatants against us are none the less terrible because they are not seen, went on through all the years of His redeeming obedience. In these years He “began to do” long before He “began to teach.” They were the years of a sinless childhood, a sinless boyhood, a sinless youth, a sinless manhood, spent in that humility, toil, obscurity, submission, contentment, prayer, to make them an eternal example to all our race. We cannot imitate Him in the occupations of His ministry, nor can we

even remotely reproduce in our own experience the external circumstances of His life during those three crowning years. But the vast majority of us are placed, by God's own appointment, amid those quiet duties of a commonplace and uneventful routine which are most closely analogous to the thirty years of His retirement; it was during these years that His life is for us the main example of how we ought to live. "Take notice here," says the saintly Bonaventura, "that His doing nothing wonderful was in itself a kind of wonder. For His whole life is a mystery; and as there was power in His actions, so was there power in His silence, in His inactivity, and in His retirement. This sovereign Master, who was to teach all virtues, and to point out the way of life, began, from His youth up, by sanctifying in His own person the practice of the virtuous life He came to teach, but in a wondrous, unfathomable, and, till then, unheard-of manner."

His mere presence in that home of His childhood must have made it a happy one. The hour of strife, the hour of the sword, the hour when many in Israel should rise or fall because of Him, the hour when the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed, the hour when the kingdom of heaven should suffer violence, and the violent take it by force, was not yet come. In *any* family circle the gentle influence of one loving soul is sufficient to breathe around it an unspeakable calm; it has a soothing power like the shining of the sunlight, or the voice of doves heard at evening;-

"It droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven,  
Upon the place beneath."

Nothing vulgar, nothing tyrannous, nothing restless can permanently resist its beneficent sorcery; no jangling discord can long break in upon its harmonising spell. But the home of Jesus was no ordinary home. With Joseph to guide and support, with Mary to hallow and sweeten it, with the youthful Jesus to illuminate it with the very light of heaven, we may well believe that it was a home of trustful piety, of angelic purity, of almost perfect peace; a home for the sake of which all the earth would be dearer and more awful to the Watchers and Holy Ones, and where, if the fancy be permitted us, they would love to stay their waving wings. The legends of early Christianity tell us that night and day, where Jesus moved and Jesus slept, the cloud of light shone round about Him. And so it was; but that light was no visible Shechînah; it was the beauty of holiness; it was the peace of God.

## **Editor's note:**

The next several pages of the textbook were left in it in their entirety for three reasons. One, for continuity; two, to present alternate viewpoints; and three, to give a few extra-biblical sources in order to show how easily one can be led into error by placing credence on them instead of on the Scriptures of God. Remember, however, that the evidence of the Scriptures should never be refuted by tradition, extra-scriptural writings such as apocryphal books, and the other writings and comments of men, no matter how learned the men may be.

The Scriptures plainly state in several places that Jesus had both brothers and sisters. Therefore, “If the plain sense makes perfect sense, then seek no other sense.” And the plain sense of the Scriptures is that Jesus had brothers and sisters of the same mother, Mary, but of different fathers from himself. Their father was Joseph and His father was God.



But Mary was the mother of all of them.

It is not being “uncandid” or “contentious” to hold to and plainly state truths that are clearly taught in the Scriptures. The contentiousness and uncandidness are only perceived as such because of the Catholic promotion of the perpetual virginity of Mary. This unscriptural stand is an invention of the Catholic Church and has no basis in the teachings and facts of Scripture. It is a fiction invented by the “Catholic Fathers” that many Protestants are reticent to divest themselves of. The reason for this is easily seen when one remembers the fact that all Protestants are, in actuality, Catholics themselves. The Catholic Church believes this, that Protestants are still part of the Catholic Church, but the Protestants themselves are rejecters of this fact. To return to the main thrust of the matter. Because Protestants are only Catholics who merely rejected some, not all but some, of the teachings of Catholicism and merely started their own reformed

Catholic Churches when rejected by the Romanists who would not allow Catholic doctrines to be reformed within the Roman Church, they have brought many errors of Catholicism out with them when the Reformation took place. And one of the errors brought out by some of them, of which group the textbook author belonged, was a reverence for the writings of the Catholic Fathers. This reverence leads them to a reticence to refute the perpetual virginity of Mary by stating the biblical fact, plainly stated in the Scriptures, that she had other children than Jesus who was the Christ. Instead, they “tip-toe” around the subject and will not state the biblical fact of her motherhood of other children after the birth of Jesus. Thus betraying their Catholic roots and their current attachment to the teachings of the Catholic Church even when those teachings are contrary to the Scriptures.

Dr. VBK

8. In the eleventh chapter of the Apocryphal History of Joseph the Carpenter, it is stated that Joseph had four elder sons and several daughters by a previous marriage, and that the elder sons, Justus and Simon, and the daughters Esther and Thamar, in due time married and went to their houses. "But Judas and James the Less, and the Virgin, my mother," continues the speaker, who is supposed to be Jesus Himself, "remained in the house of Joseph. I also continued along with them, not otherwise than if I had been one of his sons. I passed all my time without fault. I called Mary my mother, and Joseph father, and in all they said I was obedient to them, nor did I ever resist them, but submitted to them . . . nor did I provoke their anger any day, nor return any harsh word or answer to them; on the contrary, I cherished them with immense love, as the apple of my eye."

This passage, which I quote for the sake of the picture which it offers of the unity which prevailed in the home at Nazareth, reminds us of the perplexed question, Had our Lord any actual uterine brothers and sisters? and if not, who were those who in the Gospels are so often called "the brethren of the Lord?" Whole volumes have been written on this controversy, and I shall not largely enter on it here. The evidence is so evenly balanced, the difficulties of each opinion are so clear, that to insist very dogmatically on any positive solution of the problem would be uncandid and contentious. Some, in accordance certainly with the *primâ facie* evidence of the Gospels, have accepted the natural supposition that, after the miraculous conception of our Lord, Joseph and Mary lived together in the married state, and that James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon, with daughters, whose names are not recorded, were subsequently born to them. According to this view, Jesus would be the eldest, and on the death of Joseph, which, if we may follow tradition, took place when He was nineteen, would assume the natural headship and support of the orphaned family. But according to another view, of which St. Jerome may be called the inventor, these brethren of our Lord were in reality His cousins. Mary, it is believed, had a sister or half-sister of the same name, who was married to Alphæus or Clopas, and these were their children. Each person can form upon that evidence a decided conviction of his own, but it is too scanty to admit of any positive conclusion in which we may expect a general acquiescence. In any case, it is clear that our Lord, from His earliest infancy, must have been thrown into close connection with several kinsmen, or brothers, a little older or

a little younger than Himself, who were men of marked individuality, of burning zeal, of a simplicity almost bordering on Essenic ascetism, of overpowering hostility to every form of corruption, disorder, or impurity, of strong devotion to the Messianic hopes, and even to the ritual observances of their country. We know that, though afterwards they became pillars of the infant Church, at first they did not believe in our Lord's Divinity, or at any rate held views which ran strongly counter to the divine plan of His self-manifestation. Not among these, in any case, did Jesus during His lifetime find His most faithful followers, or His most beloved companions. There seemed to be in them a certain strong opinionativeness, a Judaic obstinacy, a lack of sympathy, a deficiency in the elements of tenderness and reverence. Peter, affectionate even in his worst weakness, generous even in his least-controlled impulse; James the son of Zebedee, calm and watchful, reticent and true; above all, John, whose impetuosity lay involved in a soul of the most heavenly tenderness, as the lightning slumbers in the dewdrop—these were more to Him and dearer than His brethren or kinsmen according to the flesh. A hard aggressive morality is less beautiful than an absorbing and adoring love.

9. Whether these little clouds of partial miscomprehension tended in any way to overshadow the clear heaven of Christ's youth in the little Galilæan town, we cannot tell. It may be that these brethren toiled with Him at the same humble trade, lived with Him under the same humble roof. But however this may be, we are sure that He would often be alone. Solitude would be to Him, more emphatically than to any child of man, "the audience-chamber of God;" He would beyond all doubt seek for it on the grey hill-sides, under the figs and olive-trees, amid the quiet fields; during the heat of noonday, and under the stars of night. No soul can preserve the bloom and delicacy of its existence without lonely musing and silent prayer: and the greatness of this necessity is in proportion to the greatness of the soul. There were many times during our Lord's ministry when, even from the loneliness of desert places, He dismissed His most faithful and most beloved, that He might be yet more alone.

10. It has been implied that there are but two spots in Palestine where we may feel an absolute moral certainty that the feet of Christ have trod, namely—the well-side at Shechem, and the turning of that road from Bethany over the Mount of Olives from which Jerusalem first bursts upon the view. But to these I would add at least another

—the summit of the hill on which Nazareth is built. That summit is now unhappily marked, not by any Christian monument, but by the wretched, ruinous, crumbling *wely* of some obscure Mohammedan saint. Certainly there is no child of ten years old in Nazareth now, however dull and unimpressionable he may be, who has not often wandered up to it; and certainly there could have been no boy at Nazareth in olden days who had not followed the common instinct of humanity by climbing up those thymy hill-slopes to the lovely and easily-accessible spot which gives a view of the world beyond. The hill rises six hundred feet above the level of the sea. Four or five hundred feet below lies the happy valley. The view from this spot would in any country be regarded as extraordinarily rich and lovely; but it receives a yet more indescribable charm from our belief that here, with His feet among the mountain flowers, and the soft breeze lifting the hair from His temples, Jesus must often have watched the eagles poised in the cloudless blue, and have gazed upwards as He heard overhead the rushing plumes of the long line of pelicans, as they winged their way from the streams of Kishon to the Lake of Galilee. And what a vision would be outspread before Him, as He sat at spring-time on the green and thyme-besprinkled turf! To Him every field and fig-tree, every palm and garden, every house and synagogue, would have been a familiar object: and most fondly of all amongst the square flat-roofed houses would His eye single out the little dwelling-place of the village carpenter. To the north, just beneath them, lay the narrow and fertile plain of Asochis, from which rise the wood-crowned hills of Naphtali, and conspicuous on one of them was Safed, “the city set upon a hill;” beyond these, on the far horizon, Hermon upheaved into the blue the huge splendid mass of his colossal shoulder, white with eternal snows. Eastward, at a few miles’ distance, rose the green and rounded summit of Tabor, clothed with terebinth and oak. To the west He would gaze through that diaphanous air on the purple ridge of Carmel, among whose forests Elijah had found a home; and on Caifa and Accho, and the dazzling line of white sand which fringes the waves of the Mediterranean, dotted here and there with the white sails of the “ships of Chittim.” Southwards, broken only by the graceful outlines of Little Hermon and Gilboa, lay the entire plain of Esdraelon, so memorable in the history of Palestine and of the world, across which lay the southward path to that city which had ever been the murderess of the prophets, and where it may be that even now, in the dim foreshadowing of prophetic vision, He foresaw the agony in the

garden, the mockings and scourgings, the cross and the crown of thorns.

The scene which lay there outspread before the eyes of the youthful Jesus was indeed a central spot in the world which He came to save. It was in the heart of the Land of Israel, and yet—separated from it only by a narrow boundary of hills and streams—Phœnicia, Syria, Arabia, Babylonia, and Egypt lay close at hand. The Isles of the Gentiles, and all the glorious regions of Europe, were almost visible over the shining waters of that Western sea. The standards of Rome were planted on the plain before Him; the language of Greece was spoken in the towns below. And however peaceful it then might look, green as a pavement of emeralds, rich with its gleams of vivid sunlight, and the purpling shadows which floated over it from the clouds of the latter rain, it had been for centuries a battle-field of nations. Pharaohs and Ptolemies, Emirs and Arsacids, Judges and Consuls, had all contended for the mastery of that smiling tract. It had glittered with the lances of the Amalekites; it had trembled under the chariot-wheels of Sesostris; it had echoed the twanging bow-strings of Sennacherib; it had been trodden by the phalanxes of Macedonia; it had clashed with the broadswords of Rome; it was destined hereafter to ring with the battle-cry of the Crusaders, and thunder with the artillery of England and of France. In that Plain of Jezreel, Europe and Asia, Judaism and Heathenism, Barbarism and Civilisation, the Old and the New Covenant, the history of the past and the hopes of the present, seemed all to meet. No scene of deeper significance for the destinies of humanity could possibly have arrested the youthful Saviour's gaze.

**Stop here and take Lesson Four Test.**

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

THUS then His boyhood, and youth, and early manhood had passed away in humble submission and holy silence, and Jesus was now thirty years old. That deep lesson for all classes of men in every age, which was involved in the long toil and obscurity of those thirty