

THE
LIFE OF CHRIST.

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TO THE QUEEN.

MANET IMMOTA FIDES.

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PREFACE.

IN fulfilling a task so difficult and so important as that of writing the Life of Christ, I feel it to be a duty to state the causes which led me to undertake it, and the principles which have guided me in carrying it to a conclusion.

1. It has long been the desire and aim of the publishers of this work to spread as widely as possible the blessings of knowledge; and, in special furtherance of this design, they wished to place in the hands of their readers such a sketch of the Life of Christ on earth as should enable them to realise it more clearly, and to enter more thoroughly into the details and sequence of the Gospel narratives. They therefore applied originally to an eminent theologian, who accepted the proposal, but whose elevation to the Episcopate prevented him from carrying it out.

Under these circumstances application was made to me, and I could not at first but shrink from a labour for which I felt that the amplest leisure of a lifetime would be insufficient, and powers incomparably greater than my own would still be utterly inadequate. But the considerations that were urged upon me came, no doubt, with additional force from the deep interest with which, from the first, I contemplated the design. I consented to make the effort, knowing that I could at least promise to do my best, and believing that he who does the best he can, and also seeks the blessing of God upon his labours, cannot finally and wholly fail.

And I have reason to be thankful that I originally entered upon the task, and, in spite of all obstacles, have still persevered in it. If the following pages in *any* measure fulfil the objects with which such a Life ought to be written, they should fill the minds of those who read them with solemn and not ignoble thoughts; they should "add sun-

light to daylight by making the happy happier ;” they should encourage the toiler ; they should console the sorrowful ; they should point the weak to the one true source of moral strength. But whether this book be thus blessed to high ends, or whether it be received with harshness and indifference, nothing at least can rob me of the deep and constant happiness which I have felt during almost every hour that has been spent upon it. Though, owing to serious and absorbing duties, months have often passed without my finding an opportunity to write a single line, yet, even in the midst of incessant labour at other things, nothing forbade that the subject on which I was engaged should be often in my thoughts, or that I should find in it a source of peace and happiness different, alike in kind and in degree, from any which other interests could either give or take away.

2. After I had in some small measure prepared myself for the task, I seized, in the year 1870, the earliest possible opportunity to visit Palestine, and especially those parts of it which will be for ever identified with the work of Christ on earth. Amid those scenes wherein He moved—in the

————— “ holy fields
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which eighteen hundred years ago were nailed,
For our advantage, on the bitter cross ”—

in the midst of those immemorial customs which recalled at every turn the manner of life He lived—at Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, at Bethlehem, by Jacob’s Well, in the Valley of Nazareth, along the bright strand of the Sea of Galilee, and in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon—many things came home to me for the first time with a reality and vividness unknown before. I returned more than ever confirmed in the wish to tell the full story of the Gospels in such a manner and with such illustrations as—with the aid of all that was within my reach of that knowledge which has been accumulating for centuries—might serve to enable at least the simple and the unlearned to understand and enter into the human surroundings of the life of the Son of God.

3. But while I say this, to save the book from being judged by a false standard, and with reference to ends which it was never intended to accomplish, it would be mere affectation to deny that I have hoped to furnish much which even learned readers may value. Though the

following pages do not pretend to be exhaustive or specially erudite, they yet contain much that men of the highest learning have thought or ascertained. The books which I have consulted include the researches of divines who have had the privilege of devoting to this subject, and often to some small fragment of it, the best years of laborious and uninterrupted lives. No one, I hope, could have reaped, however feebly, among such harvests, without garnering at least something, which must have its value for the professed theologian as well as for the unlearned. But, with this double aim in view, I have tried to avoid "moving as in a strange diagonal," and have never wholly lost sight of the fact that I had to work with no higher object than that thousands, who have even fewer opportunities than myself, might be the better enabled to read that one Book, beside which even the best and profoundest treatises are nothing better than poor and stammering fragments of imperfect commentary.

4. It is perhaps yet more important to add that this *Life of Christ* is avowedly and unconditionally the work of a believer. Those who expect to find in it new theories about the divine personality of Jesus, or brilliant combinations of mythic cloud tinged by the sunset imagination of some decadent belief, will look in vain. It has not been written with any *direct* and *special* reference to the attacks of sceptical criticism. It is not even intended to deal otherwise than indirectly with the serious doubts of those who, almost against their will, think themselves forced to lapse into a state of honest disbelief. I may indeed venture to hope that such readers, if they follow me with no unkindly spirit through these pages, may here and there find considerations of real weight and importance, which will solve imaginary difficulties and supply an answer to real objections. Although this book is not mainly controversial, and would, had it been intended as a contribution to polemical literature, have been written in a very different manner, I do not believe that it will prove wholly valueless to any honest doubter who reads it in a candid and uncontemptuous spirit. Hundreds of critics, for instance, have impugned the authority of the Gospels on the score of the real or supposed contradictions to be found in them. I am of course familiar with such objections, which may be found in all sorts of books, from Strauss's *Leben Jesu* and Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, down to Sir R. Hanson's *Jesus of History*, and the English *Life of Jesus* by Mr. Thomas Scott. But, while I have never con-

sciously evaded a distinct and formidable difficulty, I have constantly endeavoured to show, by the mere silent course of the narrative itself, that many of these objections are by no means insuperable, and that many more are unfairly captious or altogether fantastic.

5. If there are questions wider and deeper than the minutiae of criticism, into which I have not fully and directly entered, it is not either from having neglected to weigh the arguments respecting them, or from any unwillingness to state the reasons why, in common with tens of thousands who are abler and wiser than myself, I can still say respecting every fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, *MANET IMMOTA FIDES*. Writing as a believer to believers, as a Christian to Christians, surely, after nearly nineteen centuries of Christianity, anyone may be allowed to rest a fact of the Life of Jesus on the testimony of St. John without stopping to write a volume on the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel; or may narrate one of the Gospel miracles without deeming it necessary to answer all the arguments which have been urged against the possibility of the supernatural. After the long labours, the powerful reasoning, and the perfect historical candour with which this subject has been treated by a host of apologists, it is surely as needless as it is impossible to lay again, on every possible occasion, the very lowest foundations of our faith.

Nor have I left the subject of the credibility of miracles and the general authenticity of the Gospel narratives entirely untouched, although there was the less need for my entering fully upon those questions in the following pages, from my having already stated elsewhere, to the best of my ability, the grounds of my belief. The same remark applies to the yet more solemn truth of the Divinity of Christ. That—not indeed as surrounded with all the recondite enquiries about the *περιχώρησις* or *communicatio idiomatum*, the hypostatic union, the abstract impeccability, and such scholastic formulæ, but in its broad scriptural simplicity—was the subject of the Hulsean Lectures before the University of Cambridge in the year 1870. In those lectures I endeavoured to sketch what has ever seemed to my mind the most convincing external evidence of our faith, namely, “*The Witness of History to Christ.*” Those who have rejected the creed of the Church in this particular, approach the subject from a totally opposite point to our own. They read the earlier chapters of St. Luke and St. Matthew, and openly marvel that any mind can believe what

to them appears to be palpable mythology; or they hear the story of one of Christ's miracles of power—the walking on the Sea of Galilee, or turning the water into wine—and scarcely conceal their insinuated misgiving as to honesty of those who can accept such narratives as true. Doubtless we should share their convictions in these respects, if we approached the subject in the same spirit and by the same avenues. To show that we *do not* and *why* we do not so approach it, is—incidentally at least—one of the objects of this book.

The sceptic—and let me here say at once that I hope to use no single word of anger or denunciation against a scepticism which I know to be in many cases perfectly honest and self-sacrificingly sincere—approaches the examination of the question from a point of view the very opposite to that of the believer. He looks at the majestic order and apparently unbroken uniformity of Law, until the Universe becomes to him but the result mechanically evolved from tendencies at once irreversible and self-originated. To us such a conception is wholly inconceivable. Law to us involves the necessity of postulating a Law-giver, and “Nature,” which we only use as an unscientific and imaginative synonym for the sum total of observed phenomena, involves in our conceptions the Divine Power of whose energy it is but the visible translucence. We believe that the God and Creator of “Nature” has made Himself known to us, if not by a primitive intuition, at any rate by immediate revelation to our hearts and consciences. And therefore such narratives as those to which I have alluded are not nakedly and singly presented to us in all their unsupported and startling difficulty. To us they are but incidental items in a faith which lies at the very bases of our being—they are but fragments of that great whole which comprises all that is divine and mysterious and supernatural in the two great words, Christianity and Christendom. And hence, though we no longer prominently urge the miracles of Christ as the proofs of our religion, yet, on the other hand, we cannot regard them as stumbling-blocks in the path of an historical belief. We study the sacred books of all the great religions of the world; we see the effect exercised by those religions on the minds of their votaries; and in spite of all the truths which even the worst of them enshrined, we watch the failure of them all to produce the inestimable blessings which we have ourselves enjoyed from infancy, which we treasure as dearly as our life, and which we regard as solely due to the spread and

establishment of the faith we hold. We read the systems and treatises of ancient philosophy, and in spite of all the great and noble elements in which they abound, we see their total incapacity to console, or support, or deliver, or regenerate the world. Then we see the light of Christianity dawning like a tender day-spring amid the universal and intolerable darkness. From the first, that new religion allies itself with the world's utter feeblenesses, and those feeblenesses it shares; yet without wealth, without learning, without genius, without arms, without anything to dazzle and attract—the religion of outcasts and exiles, of fugitives and prisoners—numbering among its earliest converts not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty, but such as the gaoler of Philippi, and the runaway slave of Colossæ—with no blessing apparently upon it save such as cometh from above—with no light whatever about it save the light that comes from heaven—it puts to flight kings and their armies; it breathes a new life, and a new hope, and a new and unknown holiness into a guilty and decrepit world. This we see; and we see the work grow, and increase, and become more and more irresistible, and spread “with the gentleness of a sea that caresses the shore it covers.” And seeing this, we recall the faithful principle of the wise and tolerant Rabbi, uttered more than 1,800 years ago—“If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God” (Acts v. 38, 39).

And when we have thus been led to see and to believe that the only religion in the world which has established the ideal of a perfect holiness, and rendered common the attainment of that ideal, has received in conspicuous measure the blessing of God, we examine its truths with a deeper reverence. The record of these truths—the record of that teaching which made them familiar to the world—we find in the Gospel narrative. And that narrative reveals to us much more. It not only furnishes us with an adequate reason for the existence and for the triumphs of the faith we hold, but it also brings home to us truths which affect our hearts and intellects no less powerfully than “the starry heavens above and the moral law within.” Taught to regard ourselves as children of God, and common brothers in His great family of man, we find in the Gospels a revelation of God in His Son, which enables us to know Him more, and to trust Him more absolutely, and to serve Him more faithfully, than all which we can

find in all the other books of God, whether in Scripture, or history, or the experience of life, or those unseen messages which God has written on every individual heart. And finding that this revelation has been recorded by honest men in narratives which, however fragmentary, appear to stand the test of history, and to bear on the face of them every mark of transparent simplicity and perfect truthfulness—prepared for the reception of these glad tidings of God's love in man's redemption by the facts of the world without, and the experiences of the heart within—we thus cease to find any overwhelming difficulty in the record that He whom we believe to have been the Son of God—He who alone has displayed on earth the transcendent miracle of a sinless life—should have walked on the Sea of Galilee or turned the water into wine.

And when we thus accept the truth of the miracles they become to us moral lessons of the profoundest value. In considering the miracles of Jesus we stand in a wholly different position to the earlier disciples. To them the evidence of the miracles lent an overwhelming force to the teachings of the Lord; they were as the seal of God to the proclamation of the new kingdom. But to us who, for nineteen centuries, have been children of that kingdom, such evidence is needless. To the Apostles they were the credentials of Christ's mission; to us they are but fresh revelations of His will. To us they are works rather than signs, revelations rather than portents. Their historical importance lies for us in the fact that without them it would be impossible to account for the origin and spread of Christianity. We appeal to them not to prove the truth of Christianity, but to illustrate its dissemination. But though to us Christianity rests on the basis of a Divine approval far more convincing than the display of supernatural power—though to us the providence which for these two millenniums has ruled the destinies of Christendom is a miracle far more stupendous in its evidential force than the raising of the dead or the enlightenment of the blind—yet a belief in these miracles enables us to solve problems which would otherwise be insolvable, as well as to embrace moral conceptions which would otherwise have found no illustration. To one who rejects them—to one who believes that the loftiest morals and the divinest piety which mankind has ever seen were evoked by a religion which rested on errors or on lies—the world's history must remain, it seems to me, a hopeless enigma or a revolting fraud.

6. Referring to another part of the subject, I ought to say I do not regard as possible any final harmony of the Gospels. Against *any* harmony which can be devised some plausible objection could be urged. On this subject no two writers have ever been exactly agreed, and this alone is sufficient to prove that the Gospel notices of chronology are too incomplete to render certainty attainable. I have, of course, touched directly, as well as indirectly, on such questions as the length of the ministry; and wherever the narrative required some clear and strong reason for adopting one view rather than another on some highly disputed point, I have treated the question as fully as was consistent with brevity, and endeavoured to put the reader in possession of the main facts and arguments on which the decision rests. But it would have been equally unprofitable and idle to encumber my pages with endless controversy on collateral topics which, besides being dreary and needless, are such as admit of no final settlement. In deciding upon a particular sequence of events, we can only say that such a sequence appears to us a *probable* one, not by any means that we regard it as *certain*. In every instance I have carefully examined the evidence for myself, often compressing into a few lines, or even into an incidental allusion, the results of a long enquiry. To some extent I agree with Stier and Lange in the order of events which they have adopted, and in this respect, as well as for my first insight into the character of several scenes, I am perhaps more indebted to the elaborate work of Lange than to any others who have written on the same subject. When an author is writing from the results of independent thought on the sum total of impressions formed during a course of study, it is not always possible to acknowledge specific obligations; but whenever I was consciously indebted to others, I have, throughout the book, referred especially to Ewald, Neander, Schenkel, Strauss, Hase, Sepp, Stier, Ebrard, Wieseler, Hofmann, Keim, Caspari, Ullmann, Delitzsch, De Pressensé, Wallon, Dupanloup, Capecelatro, Ellicott, Young, Andrews, Wordsworth, Alford, and many others; as well as to older writers like Bonaventura and Jeremy Taylor. I have also to acknowledge the assistance which I have gained from the writings of Dean Stanley, Canons Lightfoot and Westcott, Professor Plumptre, Dr. Ginsburg, Mr. Grove, and the authors of articles in the Encyclopædias of Ersch and Grube, Herzog, Zeller Winer, and Dr. W. Smith. Incidental lights have of

course been caught from various archæological treatises, as well as works of geography and travel, from the old Itineraries and Reland down to Dr. Thomson's *Land and Book*, and Mr. Hepworth Dixon's *Holy Land*.

7. It is needless to add that this book is almost wholly founded on an independent study of the four Gospels side by side. * In quoting from them I have constantly and intentionally diverged from the English version, because my main object has been to bring out and explain the scenes as they are described by the original witnesses. The minuter details of those scenes, and therewith the accuracy of our reproduction of them, depend in no small degree upon the discovery of the true reading, and the delicate observance of the true usage of words, particles, and tenses. It must not be supposed for a moment that I offer these translations—which are not unfrequently paraphrases—as preferable to those of the English version, but only that, consistently with the objects which I had in view, I have aimed at representing with more rigid accuracy the force and meaning of the true text in the original Greek. It will be noticed that in most of my quotations from the Gospels I do not slavishly follow the English version, but translate from the original Greek. It will be seen, too, that I have endeavoured to glean in illustration all that is valuable or trustworthy in Josephus, in the Apocryphal Gospels, and in traditional particulars derived from the writings of the Fathers.

8. Some readers will perhaps be surprised by the frequency of the allusions to Jewish literature. Without embarking on “the sea of the Talmud” (as the Rabbis themselves call it)—a task which would require a lifetime—a modern reader may find not only the amplest materials, but probably *all* the materials it can offer for the illustration of the Gospel history, in the writings not of Christians only, but also of learned and candid Rabbis. Not only in the well-known treatises of Lightfoot, Schöttgen, Surenhuys, Wagenseil, Buxtorf, Otho, Reland, Budæus, Gfrörer, Herzfeld, McCaul, Etheridge, but also in those of Jews by birth or religion, or both, like Geiger, Jost, Grätz, Derenbourg, Munk, Frankl, Deutsch, Raphall, Schwab, Cohen, any one may find large quotations from the original authorities collected as well by adversaries as by reverent and admiring students. Further, he may read the entire Mishna (if he have the time and patience to do so) in the Latin version of Surenhusius, and may now form his judgment

* **Ed. Note:** We do not approve of nor sponsor other versions than the KJV. However, for purposes of illustration they are allowed as are more literal translations from the Greek for these same narrow purposes.

respecting large and important treatises even of the Gemara, from such translations as the French one of the *Berachôth* by M. Moïse Schwab. I have myself consulted all the authorities here named, and have gained from them much information which seems to me eminently useful. Their researches have thrown a flood of light on some parts of the Gospels, and have led me to some conclusions which, so far as I am aware, are new. Nothing of the slightest importance can be gleaned from the Talmudists about our Lord Himself. The real value of the Rabbinic writings in illustrating the Gospels is indirect, not direct—archæological, not controversial. The light which they throw on the fidelity of the Evangelists is all the more valuable because it is derived from a source so unsuspected and so hostile.

9. If in any part of this book I have appeared to sin against the divine law of charity, I must here ask pardon for it. But at least I may say that whatever trace of asperity may be found in any page of it, has never been directed against men, but against principles, or only against those men or classes of men in long-past ages whom we solely regard as the representatives of principles. It is possible that this book may fall into the hands of some Jewish readers, and to these particularly I would wish this remark to be addressed. I have reason to believe that the Jewish race have long since learnt to look with love and reverence on Him whom their fathers rejected; nay, more, that many of them, convinced by the irrefragable logic of history, have openly acknowledged that He was indeed their promised Messiah, although they still reject the belief in His divinity. I see, in the writings of many Jews, a clear conviction that Jesus, to whom they have quite ceased to apply the terms of hatred found in the Talmud, was at any rate the greatest religious teacher, the highest and truest Prophet whom their race produced. They, therefore, would be the last to defend that greatest crime in history—the Crucifixion of the Son of God. And while no Christian ever dreams of visiting upon them the horror due to the sin of their ancestors, so no Jew will charge the Christians of to-day with looking with any feeling but that of simple abhorrence on the long, cruel, and infamous persecution to which the ignorance and brutality of past ages have subjected their great and noble race. We may humbly believe that the day is fast approaching when He whom the Jews crucified, and whose divine revelations the Christians have so often and so grievously disgraced,

will break down the middle wall of partition between them, and make both races one in religion, in heart, and life—Semite and Aryan, Jew and Gentile, united to bless and to evangelise the world.

10. It has been asked, why I began the Life of Christ at the Nativity and not at the Annunciation. My reason for doing so was partly because the Annunciation belongs to that vast divine history which *preceded* the Incarnation, the truth of which is assumed on every page; partly because little or nothing can, on such a subject be added to the narrative of St. Luke. Those who may desire such illustration as I can give to the elucidation of that narrative, may find it in my edition of the Gospel of St. Luke.

And now I send these pages forth not knowing what shall befall them, but with the earnest prayer that they may be blessed to aid the cause of truth and righteousness, and that He in whose name they are written *may*, of His mercy,

“Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in His wisdom make me wise.”

F. W. F.

Editor's Note:

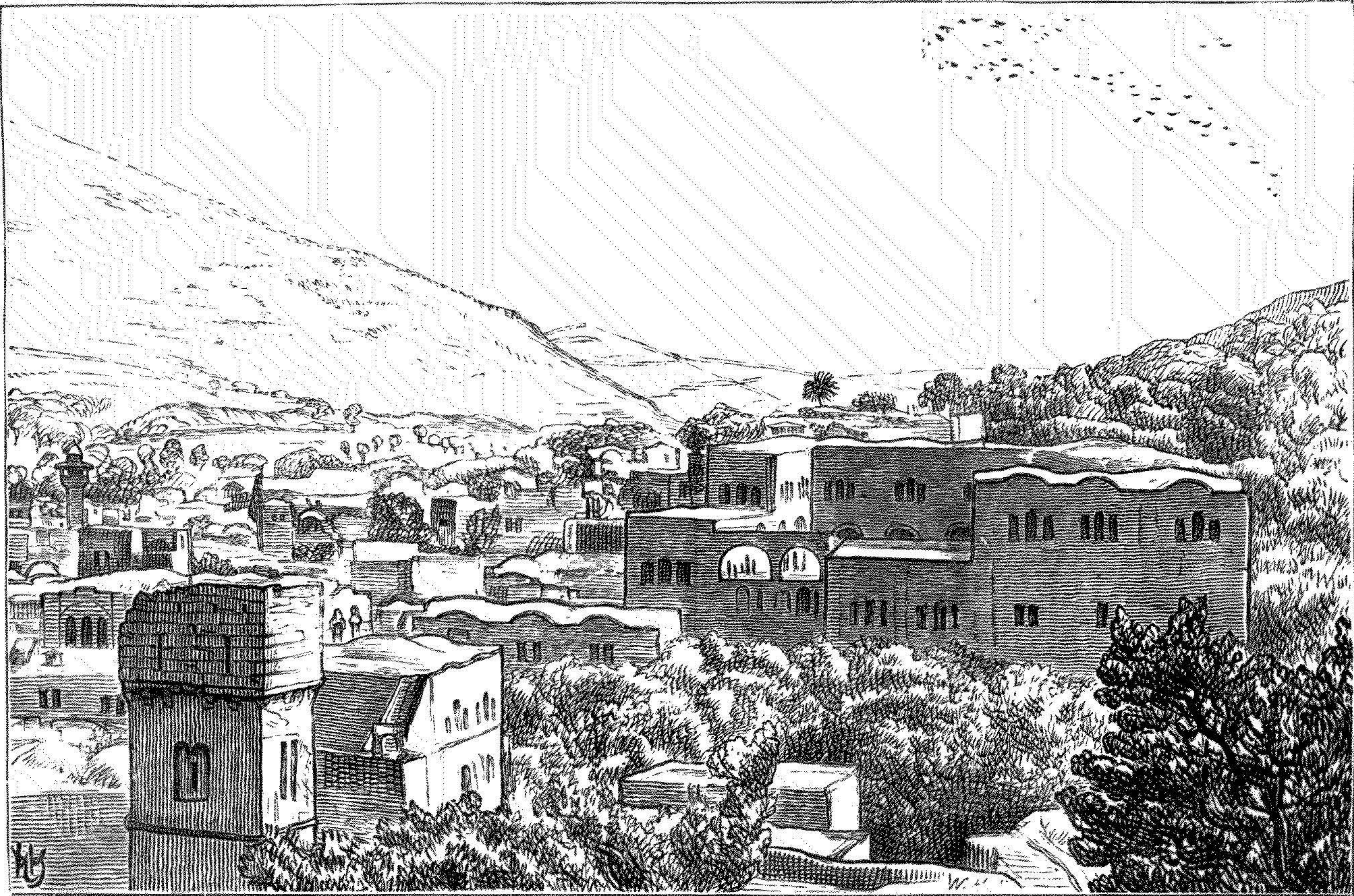
In this textbook the author does not always quote the scriptures from the KJV. For illustrative purposes he sometimes paraphrases the scriptures, using words translated from the Greek text that are more descriptive so as to illustrate a particular point being made about the life of Christ.

He also stated earlier that he varied from the KJV English translation for the same reasons. We want it made clear to the students that we only allow those variances so that the students can have a descriptive look at the life of Christ. In no way should the students assume that we espouse the use of other versions in any way, shape, or form. The KJV is the preserved Word of God for English speaking people.

The use by the author of the language of paraphrase and the language from time to time that may be used in another version for illustrative purposes has been allowed but only for that narrow usage; i.e., to give the student a more “descriptive” look at the life of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, whenever an actual scripture reference is given in the textbook, the student is required to look up that reference in their King James Bible.

Editor: Dr. T.E. VanBuskirk



NABLOUS—THE ANCIENT SHECHEM

HOLMAN HUNT, *Del.*

THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER I

THE NATIVITY.

ONE mile from Bethlehem is a little plain, in which, under a grove of olives, stands the bare and neglected chapel known by the name of "the Angel to the Shepherds." It is built over the traditional site in the fields where, in the beautiful language of St. Luke—more exquisite than any idyll to Christian ears—"there were shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night, when, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them," and to their happy ears were uttered the good tidings of great joy, that unto them was born that day in the city of David a Saviour, which was Christ the Lord.

The associations of our Lord's nativity were all of the humblest character, and the very scenery of His birthplace was connected with memories of poverty and toil. On that night, indeed, it seemed as though the heavens must burst to disclose their radiant minstrelsies; and the stars, and the feeding sheep, and the "light and sound in the darkness and stillness," and the rapture of faithful hearts, combine to furnish us with a picture painted in the colours of heaven. But in the brief and thrilling verses of the Evangelist we are not told that those angel* songs were heard by any except the wakeful shepherds of an obscure village;—and those shepherds, amid the chill dews of a winter night, were guarding their flocks from the wolf and the robber, in fields where Ruth, their Saviour's ancestress, had gleaned, sick at heart, amid the alien corn, and David, the despised and youngest son of a numerous family, had followed the ewes great with young.

"And suddenly," adds the sole Evangelist who has narrated the circumstances of that memorable night in which Jesus was born, amid the indifference of a world unconscious of its Deliverer, "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and

* **Ed. Note:** The Scriptures do not state that the angels sang. Be careful to not confuse tradition with Scriptural truths.

saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will." * **Ed. Note:** You are required to look up and read all Scriptures referenced, in your KJV.

It might have been expected that Christian piety would have marked the spot by splendid memorials, and enshrined the rude grotto of the shepherds in the marbles and mosaics of some stately church. But, instead of this, the Chapel of the Herald Angel is a mere rude crypt; and as the traveller descends down the broken steps which lead from the olive-grove into its dim recess, he can hardly persuade himself that he is in a consecrated place. Yet a half-unconscious sense of fitness has, perhaps, contributed to this apparent neglect. The poverty of the chapel harmonises well with the humble toil of those whose radiant vision it is intended to commemorate.

“Come now! let us go unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord made known to us,” said the shepherds, when those angel songs had ceased to break the starry silence. Their way would lead them up the terraced hill, and through the moonlit gardens of Bethlehem, until they reached the summit of the grey ridge on which the little town is built. On that summit stood the village inn. The khan (or caravanserai) of a Syrian village, at that day, was probably identical, in its appearance and accommodation, with those which still exist in modern Palestine. A khan is a low structure, built of rough stones, and generally only a single storey in height. It consists for the most part of a square enclosure, in which the cattle can be tied up in safety for the night, and an arched recess for the accommodation of travellers. The *leewan*, or paved floor of the recess, is raised a foot or two above the level of the court-yard. A large khan—such, for instance, as that of which the ruins may still be seen at Khan Minyeh, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee—might contain a series of such recesses, which are, in fact, low small rooms with no front wall to them. They are, of course, perfectly public; everything that takes place in them is visible to every person in the khan. They are also totally devoid of even the most ordinary furniture. The traveller may bring his own carpet if he likes, may sit cross-legged upon it for his meals, and may lie upon it at night. As a rule, too, he must bring his own food, attend to his own cattle, and draw his own water from the neighbouring spring. He would neither expect nor require attendance, and would pay only the merest trifle for the advantage of shelter, safety, and a floor on which to lie. But if he chanced to arrive late, and the *leewans* were all occupied by earlier guests, he would have no choice but to be content with such accommo-

dation as he could find in the court-yard below, and to secure for himself and his family such small amount of cleanliness and decency as are compatible with an unoccupied corner on the filthy area, which must be shared with horses, mules, and camels. The litter, the closeness, the unpleasant smell of the crowded animals, the unwelcome intrusion of the pariah dogs, the necessary society of the very lowest hangers-on of the caravanserai, are adjuncts to such a position which can only be realised by any traveller in the East who happens to have been placed in similar circumstances.

In Palestine it not unfrequently happens that the entire khan, or at any rate the portion of it in which the animals are housed, is one of those innumerable caves which abound in the limestone rocks of its central hills. Such seems to have been the case at the little town of Bethlehem-Ephratah, in the land of Judah. Justin Martyr, the Apologist, who, from his birth at Shechem, was familiar with Palestine, and who lived less than a century after the time of our Lord, places the scene of the nativity in a cave. This is, indeed, the ancient and constant tradition both of the Eastern and the Western Churches, and it is one of the few to which, though unrecorded in the Gospel history, we may attach a reasonable probability. Over this cave has risen the Church and Convent of the Nativity, and it was in a cave close beside it that one of the most learned and eloquent of the Fathers of the Church—that great St. Jerome to whom we owe the received Latin translation of the Bible—spent thirty of his declining years in study, and fasting, and prayer.

From their northern home at Nazareth, in the mountains of Zebulon, Joseph, the village carpenter, had made his way along the wintry roads with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. Fallen as were their fortunes, they were both of the house and lineage of David, and they were traversing a journey of eighty miles to the village which had been the home of their great ancestor while he was still a ruddy shepherd lad, tending his flocks upon the lonely hills. The object of that toilsome journey, which could not but be disagreeable to the settled habits of Oriental life, was to enrol their names as members of the house of David in a census which had been ordered by the Emperor Augustus. In the political condition of the Roman Empire, of which Judæa then formed a part, a single whisper of the Emperor was sufficiently powerful to secure the execution of his mandates in the remotest corners of the civilised world. Great as are the historic difficulties in which the census is involved, there seem

to be good independent grounds for believing that it may have been originally ordered by Sentius Saturninus, that it was *begun* by Publius Sulpicius Quirinus, when he was for the first time legate of Syria, and that it was completed during his second term of office. In deference to Jewish prejudices, any infringement of which was the certain signal for violent tumults and insurrection, it was not carried out in the ordinary Roman manner, at each person's place of residence, but according to Jewish custom, at the town to which their family originally belonged. The Jews still clung to their genealogies and to the memory of long-extinct tribal relations; and though the journey was a weary and distasteful one, the mind of Joseph may well have been consoled by the remembrance of that heroic descent which would now be authoritatively recognised, and by the glow of those Messianic hopes to which the marvellous circumstances of which he was almost the sole depositary would give a tenfold intensity.

Travelling in the East is a very slow and leisurely affair, and was likely to be still more so if, as is probable, the country was at that time agitated by political animosities. Beeroth, which is fifteen miles distant from Bethlehem, or possibly even Jerusalem, which is only six miles off, may have been the resting-place of Mary and Joseph before this last stage of their journey. But the heavy languor, or even the commencing pangs of travail, must necessarily have retarded the progress of the maiden-mother. Others who were travelling on the same errand, would easily have passed them on the road, and when, after toiling up the steep hill-side, by David's well, they arrived at the khan—probably the very one which had been known for centuries as the House of Chimham, and if so, covering perhaps the very ground on which, one thousand years before, had stood the hereditary house of Boaz, of Jesse, and of David—every *leewan* was occupied. The enrolment had drawn so many strangers to the little town, that “there was no room for them in the inn.” In the rude limestone grotto attached to it as a stable, among the hay and straw spread for the food and rest of the cattle, weary with their day's journey, far from home, in the midst of strangers, in the chilly winter night—in circumstances so devoid of all earthly comfort or splendour that it is impossible to imagine a humbler nativity—Christ was born.

Distant but a few miles, on the plateau of the abrupt and singular hill now called *Jebel Fureidis*, or “Little Paradise Mountain,” towered the palace-fortress of the Great Herod. The magnificent houses of his friends and courtiers crowded around its base. The humble wayfarers,

as they passed near it, might have heard the hired and voluptuous minstrelsy with which its feasts were celebrated, or the shouting of the rough mercenaries whose arms enforced obedience to its despotic lord. But the true King of the Jews—the rightful Lord of the Universe—was not to be found in palace or fortress. They who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. The cattle-stables of the lowly caravanserai were a more fitting birthplace for Him who came to reveal that the soul of the greatest monarch was no dearer or greater in God's sight than the soul of His meanest slave; for Him who had not where to lay His head; for Him who, from His cross of shame, was to rule the world.

Guided by the lamp which usually swings from the centre of a rope hung across the entrance of the khan, the shepherds made their way to the inn of Bethlehem, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. The fancy of poet and painter has revelled in the imaginary glories of the scene. They have sung of the "bright harnessed angels" who hovered there, and of the stars lingering beyond their time to shed their sweet influences upon that smiling infancy. They have painted the radiation of light from His manger-cradle, illuminating all the place till the bystanders are forced to shade their eyes from that heavenly splendour. But all this is wide of the reality. Such glories as the simple shepherds saw were seen only by the eye of faith; and all which met their gaze was a peasant of Galilee, already beyond the prime of life, and a young mother, of whom *they* could not know that she was wedded maid and virgin wife, with an Infant Child, whom, since there were none to help her, her own hands had wrapped in swaddling-clothes. The light that shined in the darkness was no physical, but a spiritual beam; the Dayspring from on high, which had now visited mankind, dawned only in a few faithful and humble hearts.

And the Gospels, always truthful and bearing on every page that simplicity which is the stamp of honest narrative, indicate this fact without comment. There is in them nothing of the exuberance of marvel, and mystery, and miracle, which appears alike in the Jewish imaginations about their coming Messiah, and in the apocryphal narratives about the Infant Christ. There is no more decisive criterion of their absolute credibility as simple histories, than the marked and violent contrast which they offer to all the spurious gospels of the early centuries, and all the imaginative legends which have clustered about them. Had our Gospels been unauthentic, they too must

inevitably have partaken of the characteristics which mark, without exception, every early fiction about the Saviour's life. To the unilluminated fancy it would have seemed incredible that the most stupendous event in the world's history should have taken place without convulsions and catastrophes. In the Gospel of St. James there is really a striking chapter, describing how, at the awful moment of the nativity, the pole of the heaven stood motionless, and the birds were still, and there were workmen lying on the earth with their hands in a vessel, "and those who handled did not handle it, and those who took did not lift, and those who presented it to their mouth did not present it, but the faces of all were looking up; and I saw the sheep scattered and the sheep stood, and the shepherd lifted up his hand to strike, and his hand remained up; and I looked at the stream of the river, and the mouths of the kids were down, and were not drinking; and everything which was being propelled forward was intercepted in its course." But of this sudden hush and pause of awe-struck Nature, of the parhelions and mysterious splendours which blazed in many places of the world, of the painless childbirth, of the perpetual virginity, of the ox and the ass kneeling to worship Him in the manger, of the voice with which immediately after His birth He told His mother that He was the Son of God, and of many another wonder which rooted itself in the earliest traditions, there is no trace whatever in the New Testament. The inventions of man differ wholly from the dealings of God. In His designs there is no haste, no rest, no weariness, no discontinuity; all things are done by Him in the majesty of silence, and they are seen under a light that shineth quietly in the darkness, "showing all things in the slow history of their ripening." "The unfathomable depths of the Divine counsels," it has been said, "were moved; the fountains of the great deep were broken up; the healing of the nations was issuing forth; but nothing was seen on the surface of human society but this slight rippling of the water; the course of human things went on as usual, while each was taken up with little projects of his own."

How long the Virgin Mother and her holy Child stayed in this cave, or cattle-enclosure, we cannot tell, but probably it was not for long. The word rendered "manger" in Luke ii. 7, is of very uncertain meaning, nor can we discover more about it than that it means a place where animals were fed. It is probable that the crowd in the khan would not be permanent, and common humanity would have dictated an early removal of the mother and her child to some more appropriate

resting-place. The Magi, as we see from St. Matthew, visited Mary in "the house." But on all these minor incidents the Gospels do not dwell. The fullest of them is St. Luke, and the singular sweetness of his narrative, its almost idyllic grace, its sweet calm tone of noble reticence, seem clearly to indicate that he derived it, though but in fragmentary notices, from the lips of Mary herself. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine from whom else it could have come, for mothers are the natural historians of infant years; but it is interesting to find, in the actual style, that "colouring of a woman's memory and a woman's view," which we should naturally have expected in confirmation of a conjecture so obvious and so interesting. To one who was giving the reins to his imagination, the minutest incidents would have claimed a description; to Mary they would have seemed trivial and irrelevant. Others might wonder, but in her all wonder was lost in the one overwhelming revelation—the one absorbing consciousness. Of such things she could not lightly speak; "she kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." The very depth and sacredness of that reticence is the natural and probable explanation of the fact that some of the details of the Saviour's infancy are fully recorded by St. Luke alone.

Stop here and take Lesson Test.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

FOUR other events only of our Lord's infancy are narrated by the Gospels—namely, the Circumcision, the Presentation in the Temple, the Visit of the Magi, and the Flight into Egypt. Of these the first two occur only in St. Luke, the last two only in St. Matthew. Yet no single particular can be pointed out in which the two narratives are necessarily contradictory. If, on other grounds, we have ample reason to accept the evidence of the Evangelists, as evidence given by witnesses of unimpeachable honesty, we have every right to believe that, to whatever cause the confessed fragmentariness of their narratives may be due, those narratives may fairly be regarded as supplementing each other. It is as dishonest to assume the existence of irreconcilable discrepancies as it is to suggest the adoption of impossible harmonies. The accurate and detailed sequence of biographical narrative from the