

CHRIST, THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

If we accept the statements in the New Testament, which are professedly historical, as historically true in their broad outlines, we cannot help observing that over and over again : (a) the writers of the books ; (b) the speakers in the narratives ; and above all else (c) our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, claim that He was the fulfilment of prophecy. Whether they had a right to do this or not is another thing ; if our Lord had not, then He was an impostor, or else He made a great mistake, and the belief of the Christian world in Him as a Being such as it has always believed Him to be must pass away, in that He made claims which He had no right to make. If He was right, then His claim upon us is all the stronger, because we can see that Divine Providence all through the ages of God's dealing with the human race had been preparing the way for His coming and His work.

Before going any farther it is necessary to define our terms.

Fulfilment does not necessarily mean the only fulfilment which a prophecy is capable of. In the prophecies attributed to our Lord, we can see more than one application for some of the words. Some refer to what He saw was impending—e.g., the destruction of Jerusalem ; some refer to His second coming ; some refer to both. We can see this now, or, at any rate, most of us think we can. So it was with the prophecies of which we see our Lord was the fulfilment. No doubt, most of them, if not all, but perhaps

all, had a more immediate application : this was very often patent both to the prophet and to his hearers. But beyond that it could be seen that the language was capable of some greater and grander interpretation. Neither the prophet himself nor his hearers knew when this other fulfilment was to come, though the New Testament tells us that they "sought and searched diligently . . . searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto" (1 Pet. i. 10-11). None the less, there it was awaiting its time, and we who look back, if we are teachable, can see how that time came. Neither must we tie up all prophecy, as if, even now, it had received its perfect fulfilment. It may in some cases, if not in all, even though it has had a past fulfilment, be capable of still further fulfilment in God's good time.

For the word "fulfilment," then, we might substitute, as we mean rather *that*, the "realization" of prophecy. Thus, for instance, when in the first Gospel we have over and over again, as was natural in a Gospel written for Jewish readers, the expression "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken," we may very well paraphrase that for ourselves : "that there might be a realization of that which was spoken." This will help us a little in solving the difficulty which troubles some minds when St. Matthew or St. Paul adopts Rabbinic modes of explanation of the older Scriptures. The writer, without discussing the legitimacy of the mode of interpretation, is appealing to his hearers on their own grounds. Here, he says, you can see a realization of what your own teachers have practically taught you to expect.

The word Prophecy, too, has of late years been more distinctly used as a word of wider application than that which was popularly given to it in bygone times. It not only deals with the foretelling of future events, but also with the forth-telling or publication of God's will towards

and about men. And when we see, as God's providential system or plan of dealing with the world develops itself, higher and nobler moral codes and a deeper sense of sin coming to the birth, we see also that this was a leading up to, and a preliminary preparation for, the publication of that code of Gospel morality, which is also being constantly enlarged and developed in its application.

With regard to the claims made in various ways in the New Testament that Christ was the fulfilment of prophecy, but little need be said about some of them. That the writers of the books of the New Testament felt quite sure of it we can see at once : St. Matthew constantly appeals to the Old Testament as being fulfilled ; St. Mark, who was not as likely to do so, begins his Gospel with an appeal to Isaiah, concerning the preparation of the way of the Lord ; St. Luke, when he comes to speak of St. John the Baptist's ministry, does the same ; the Fourth Gospel makes more than one notable appeal to the Old Testament in the account of the Crucifixion ; the preaching of the Gospel to the Jews, as recorded in the Acts, is a constant declaration to them that their Scriptures have been fulfilled in the Person of Christ ; St. Paul, to quote but one instance from his epistles, says that " Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, . . . and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures " ; the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, whoever he may have been, has as one of his greatest objects to show that Christ fulfilled the types that went before of Him in the rites and sacrifices of the Jewish Church. We have quoted St. Peter already : the Second Epistle attributed to him tells us that " we have the word of prophecy made more sure " (i. 19). It is not, therefore, the fanciful idea of one writer, but the conviction of many.

More than one speaker in the Gospel narratives assert

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the same thing. Perhaps one of the most notable instances is to be found in St. John (i. 45). Philip says to Nathanael : " We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And in the Acts, whether it be St. Peter (ii. 25), or SS. Peter and John together (iii. 18), or the whole body of the faithful in their prayers (iv. 25), or St. Stephen (vii. 52), or St. Philip (viii. 35), or St. Paul (xiii. 23), or St. James (xv. 15), all alike hark back to the Old Testament as being fulfilled over and over again in the life of Christ.

And when we come to the words of our Lord Himself we find the same claim asserted by Him more often perhaps than most of us have ever noticed.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 17) He says : " Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets : I came not to destroy, but to fulfil " ; and, in His development of the teaching of the old law in that Sermon, we have worked out for us just what we have indicated as being comprised above under the term " fulfilment of prophecy." He claims for St. John Baptist that he was the fulfilment of prophecy as being His forerunner (Matt. xi. 10 || Luke vii. 27).¹ He pointed to Himself as being destined to fulfil the type of Jonah (Matt. xii. 40). He declared that His reception by His hearers was a realization or fulfilment of a prophecy which He ascribed to Isaiah (Matt. xiii. 14 || Mark vii. 6 ; cp. xv. 7). Of Isaiah lxi., when He opened His ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth, He declared, " To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears " (Luke iv. 21).

But it was when our Lord's life was drawing to a close that He called attention more especially to the fulfilment of the older Scriptures. On the way to Jerusalem at the

¹ He certainly intended His hearers to believe that St. John the Baptist was the Elijah of Malachi's prophecy (Matt. xi. 14 ; cp. xvii. 11-13, Mark ix. 13),

end of the long journey through Peraea of which we hear most in St. Luke, we are told that He took unto Him the twelve and said unto them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of Man. For He shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully entreated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again" (Luke xviii. 31-33). After the incident of the striking off by St. Peter of the servant's ear, and our Lord's reminder, "thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" He goes on: "How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (Matt. xxvi. 54); and a little later, "I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not. But all this is come to pass, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (xxvi. 56 || Mark xiv. 49). So at the last supper, "The Son of Man goeth even as it is written of Him" (Matt. xxvi. 24 || Mark xiv. 21; cp. Luke xxii. 22).

Again, after His Resurrection the same truth is asseverated with great persistence. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 25-27), whilst the effect upon the two who heard these words is described: "Was not our heart burning within us, while He spake to us in the way, while He opened to us the Scriptures?" And later on, apparently the very same evening, "He said unto them (i.e., to the eleven and others), These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written

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in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their mind, that they might understand the Scriptures ; and He said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day ; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem ” (Luke xxiv. 45-47).

We have at present limited our notice to the Synoptic Gospels : the Fourth Gospel tells the same story. After the first cleansing of the Temple and our Lord’s remarkable words, “ Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ” (John ii. 19), which, according to the Synoptics, were quoted against Him in a perverted form at His trial, St. John goes on, after explaining “ He spake of the temple of His body,” “ When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He spake this ; and they believed the Scripture (this *must* refer to the Old Testament), and the word which Jesus had said ” (John ii. 22). How strong is the assertion, “ Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life ; and these are they which bear witness of Me ” (John v. 39). Or again, immediately afterwards, “ Moses wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words ? ” (John v. 46, 47). Again, with regard to the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and its fulfilment of prophecy, it is written, “ These things understood not His disciples at the first : but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him ” (John xii. 16). He Himself is said to have applied to the traitor the words from the Psalms (xli. 9), “ He that eateth My bread lifted up his heel against Me ” (John xiii. 18) and also, “ Not one of them perished, but the son of perdition ; that the Scripture might be fulfilled ” (John xvii. 12). The world’s hatred of Him is said to be the fulfilment of the words from

other Psalms (xxxv. 19 ; lxix. 4) : “ They hated Me without a cause ” (John xv. 25). Moreover, though it may perhaps be open to question at what period in our Lord’s life it was that He, as man, became conscious of His Messiahship, yet, if we accept the general history of the narrative as a whole, we cannot but admit that He did claim to be the Messiah, the Christ or Anointed of God, and this involved a claim on His part to be the fulfilment of prophecy.

Such, then, is the claim that is made upon us by our Lord, by the writers of the Gospels, and by some of those who are represented as speaking in them.

At this point it may naturally be asked : In what way and how exactly did our Lord fulfil prophecy ? and we may be asked to go into details under this head. Now it must be candidly confessed that, so far as the Gospels are concerned, we have very little of detailed particulars of fulfilment given us, in respect to the events of our Lord’s life. Perhaps the most remarkable is that of the prophet Jonah. There are many reasons that may be given for this. The Gospels cannot in any sense be said to be theological treatises : what they profess is to give details of the life and words and works of Christ. Further still, they naïvely confess that this claim of our Lord was not understood by His disciples whilst He was with them. An additional reason may perhaps be given that our Lord’s whole life was one consistent realization of all that had gone before, law, type, and prophecy. The old Christian Father saw this when he said : “ In the Old Testament the New lies hid, in the New Testament the Old is patent.” The evidence of law and type and prophecy is cumulative. It is not the one particular instance which convinces—that, especially in the case of a type, might be accidental—but it is when the whole sum of them is brought together that

the conviction comes home to us. It is a kind of inductive method brought to bear upon the individual facts. This was the way in which early Christian scholars read the Old Testament, and, though we may smile sometimes at their interpretation of individual texts and expressions—as, for instance, the interpretation of the number of Abraham's servants, or the application to Christ of the words describing the result of Samson's death, "So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life"—yet still we cannot, I think, help seeing that this was due to their keen anxiety to show how a preparation for Christ was to be found throughout the Old Testament.

This may be said with regard to the Gospels as a whole, but it is when we come to the end of them that we find greater plainness of speech attributed to our Lord. Previously He had given a great proportion of His teaching in the form of parables; at the last they could say, "Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb, or rather, parable" (John xvi. 29). So it was with regard to the Old Testament: "He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). Notice the word *all* there: *all* the Scriptures.

Do any traces of that interpretation survive? We may ask first of all, I think, this general question: Where did the application of the Old Testament personally to Christ by the writers of the New Testament come from? It certainly would not come from Jews who did not believe in Him. This application is not limited to any one writer or writers. It must have had some common source. Various writings, in particular cases, all agree in attributing to the same passage its fulfilment in Christ. It would have required a wonderful harmony of mind for several writers to do this, unless there was a common source from which

all derived their interpretation. And where can we look for this source but in the Master Himself? No matter, for the moment, who or what He was, we must almost perforce trace it back to Him. When the Apostles and others in the Acts fall back upon the Old Testament to give them their great basis for argument with their fellow-countrymen this procedure must have been based upon previous teaching. It begins, from the very moment of the Ascension, with St. Peter's claim that words from the Psalms found their realization in what had happened to Judas Iscariot and in the appointment of a successor to his office. Later on, we meet with still stronger language implying that men of old in their utterances did not "look only for transitory promises." St. Peter (Acts ii. 30) in his exposition of the sixteenth Psalm attributes it to David, and says: "Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of Christ, that neither was He left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption." They contain a bold assertion surely. Knowing what we do of St. Peter, and remembering that these words are attributed to him on the tenth day after, as he believed, he had parted with his Lord for ever, so far as His bodily presence on earth was concerned, could we imagine his having made such an assertion without some instruction from outside himself? His enemies in the Sanhedrin had no high opinion of his mental calibre. Of him and of St. John it is said they "had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts iv. 13), and to them their words were a marvel. So again, St. Peter says a little later (iii. 18), the "things which God foreshewed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled." In the next chapter we have a definite recollection of

our Lord's own teaching : " He is the stone which was set at naught of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner " (iv. 11 ; cp. Matt. xxi. 42 || Mark xii. 10 ; Luke xx. 17). In the same way the reference to Psalm cx. 1 (Acts ii. 34) is a recollection of our Lord's reference to it (Matt. xxiii. 44 || Mark xii. 36 ; Luke xx. 42), and in both cases we have the evidence of all three Synoptic Gospels. St. Stephen's attitude is the same : " they (i.e. your fathers) killed them which shewed before of the coming of the Righteous One ; of Whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers " (Acts vii. 52). St. Philip, beginning from Isaiah (liii. 7) preached Jesus to Candace's chamberlain (Acts viii. 35). To Cornelius and his household St. Peter says of Christ : " To Him bear all the prophets witness, that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins " (Acts x. 43). St. Paul takes up the same story at Antioch in Pisidia : " Of this man's seed hath God according unto promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus " (Acts xiii. 23). The indictment by St. Paul against the rulers and the people of Jerusalem was that " they knew Him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath " (Acts xiii. 27), and yet " they fulfilled all things that were written of Him " (xiii. 29). And then he goes on almost immediately : " We bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, how that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that He raised up Jesus " ; after which he quotes the Second Psalm and Isaiah (lv. 3). And, what is more surprising still, and may be mentioned here, we find Apostles having the audacity, if we may so call it, to claim for themselves that they also are a fulfilment of prophecy (Acts xiii. 47) :

" For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying,

I have set thee for a light to the Gentiles,

That thou shouldst be for salvation unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

We hear, too, of the Jews of Beroea "examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts xvii. 11). Once more St. Paul claims for himself that he said, "nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that He first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts xxvi. 23), and he follows up these words by an appeal to King Agrippa, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest" (Acts xxvi. 27). And when his journey ended in Rome, there also "he expounded the matter, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts xxviii. 23); and the book of the Acts almost ends with a quotation by St. Paul from Isaiah, which we cannot help thinking he must have known had also been employed by Jesus, and applied to the people who would not accept Him (cp. Acts xxviii. 26 with Matt. xiii. 14 || Mark iv. 12, Luke viii. 10, John xii. 40).

I have gone into detail about the early teaching of Christianity as described to us in the Acts, because it shows that the following points were certainly insisted upon as a fulfilment of prophecy—the Davidic origin of Jesus, His passion, His Resurrection, and the coming in of the Gentiles, as well as the rejection of that teaching by so many.

What common ground, then, had the preachers of Christianity and their opponents? This, at any rate, that the Old Testament, in all its parts alike, looked forward to the coming of some one who was to be a deliverer of his people. That this was so cannot be gainsaid. When St. John the Baptist had preached for some time, "the people," we are told, "were in expectation, and *all* men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were

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the Christ " (Luke iii. 15). If we are to believe the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and, as it was evidently written for Jewish readers, we cannot help believing it in this matter, the Jewish Sanhedrin, at the time of the Birth of our Lord, were quite ready to give an official pronouncement, drawn from the prophets, as to where the expected Messiah was to be born (Matt. ii. 4). And this expectation that the time of fulfilment of prophecy was about to arrive, seems, perhaps owing to the Dispersion of Jews amongst all the great centres of population, in Asia Minor, in Greece, in Alexandria, in Rome, to have attracted the heathen to a similar belief in a new Golden Age being near at hand.

In those early years of Christianity, Jew and Jewish Christian alike believed that the prophecies of the Old Testament looked forward to a person that was to come. The only question between them was this: The Jew said to the Christian, Your Jesus is not that person; the Christian said, I am fully persuaded that He is.

Now all this helps us, I think, to come to a clear understanding about the question] I am now discussing. The manifold application of which prophecy is capable has been already insisted upon: its application to the needs of the time, and its further realization in the future are two distinct things. For instance, it may be granted, for the moment, as being at present the current view, especially as this is not a suitable occasion for going into a discussion of the point, that Isaiah liii. is of exilic date, and is intended to depict under the title of the suffering Servant of Jehovah the sufferings of Israel as a people. That need not hinder us from holding that the prophecy was capable of a still further interpretation and realization in Him who is called in the Acts God's "holy Servant Jesus" (iv. 27; cp. iii. 13, iv. 30).

The one great difficulty that beset the Jews and made

them blind to the fact that Jesus was "the coming One," was the conception that prevailed amongst them as to what sort of person their Messiah should be. That conception was material and in no sense spiritual. It was Jewish, not catholic; i.e., it did not comprehend the eventual equality of Jew and Gentile as component parts of a spiritual Israel.¹ Since the return from the exile the Jews of Palestine, and particularly those of Jerusalem, had hedged themselves round with the Law and become an exclusive body. This is to be seen in the way in which they treated not only their neighbours the Samaritans, but also the rural and ignorant people of their own race. What had been handed down to them to cherish most fervently was the setting up of an earthly kingdom in Palestine, under the lordship of a true descendant of David. With that was to come prosperity. Jerusalem was to become the centre of the world towards which all people were to look, impressed with its glory and magnificence. A golden age, such as the heathen poets had also imagined, was to come in, a time of universal peace and prosperity. The reception of our Lord by the populace of Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday proved this. The Jewish ruling class had so persuaded themselves of it that they shut their eyes to whatever could be said on the other side, especially because they trusted in the One that was to come to deliver them from the Roman yoke. It seems clear that no one in the Jewish world of our Lord's day anticipated a suffering Christ. What they did expect can be gathered from Ezekiel and the Jewish Apocalyptic writings. The Apostles had not the slightest idea of it; they did not understand what our Lord meant when He spoke of His coming sufferings. The nearest approach to it on the part of any one in our Lord's lifetime is

¹ St. Paul, as we know, saw this fact clearly, and explained it in his Epistle to the Romans.

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contained in the words attributed to the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel (John i. 29; cp. i. 36), "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" But this passage admits of more than one interpretation. It may, indeed, refer to Christ as about to fulfil the type of the Passover Lamb, and this is perhaps borne out by the reference to that lamb in St. John's account of the Crucifixion.¹ But others would make the allusion only a simile like that in Isaiah (liii. 7; cp. Acts viii. 32, 1 Pet. i. 19, "precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ"), "as a lamb that is led to the slaughter . . . He opened not His mouth."

Now, however much they did this, it need not prevent us from seeing with the early Christians a wonderful realization of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Certainly Zechariah (ix. 9) anticipated a "lowly" king, in his words which have such an appositeness when referred to our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. And with reference to Isaiah liii. we can see in our Master the suffering Servant of Jehovah above all other of His servants. A Cambridge Professor has well expressed the position which is generally received now:—

"The whole religious history of Israel down to the time of Him whom Christians believe in as the Christ, and in a special manner the teaching of the prophets, formed a most remarkable preparation for His coming. It remains true as ever, and criticism and historical investigation only confirm it, that the Scriptures were in reality full of Him, and that, in proportion as men had entered into their spirit they must have been able to receive Him (John v.

¹ Or perhaps we may think of Genesis xxii., "God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." It is noticeable, in this connexion, that in Revelation (v. 6, 12; xiii. 8) mention is made of the "Lamb that hath been slain."

38, 39). It is still legitimate as ever to regard types and ideals which were first fully realized in Him as divinely intended to foreshadow Him " (Stanton, *Hastings' Dict. of the Bible*, iii. 357a).

When we regard the marvellous coincidences that there are between passages of the Old Testament and the accounts of the Four Gospels we shall, I hope, most of us be led, without always requiring the assent of others to each detail of our pious beliefs, to see many connexions between the two such as our fathers before us saw, and certainly, at any rate, those for which we have the authority of Scripture itself, as, for instance, the constant asseverations that the Death and Resurrection of Christ were the fulfilment of prophecy, as well as our Lord's own claims of this character.

Though we cannot require of any one that he should necessarily accept many passages of the Old Testament which seem to look forward to the New Testament, most Christians, if not all, would accept the following as capable of Messianic application or interpretation: the bruising of the serpent's head by the seed of the woman, the offering up of Isaac by Abraham, the Passover Lamb, the sacrifices and rites of the Levitical law—an exposition of some of these is given in the Epistle to the Hebrews—the brazen serpent, the prophet like Moses of Deuteronomy, Job's Redeemer ("I know that my redeemer liveth"), many of the Psalms, especially ii. ("Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee"), xvi. ("Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption"), xxii. ("My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"), xxiv. ("Lift up your heads, O ye gates"), cx. ("The Lord said unto my lord"), and cxviii. ("The stone which the builders rejected"), and also many passages from the prophets: we may specify Isaiah ix. ("Unto us a child is

born"), liii. ("He was wounded for our transgressions"), lxiii. ("I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save"), Daniel ix. ("The anointed one shall be cut off"), Micah v. 2 ("Thou Bethlehem Ephratah"), Zechariah ix. ("Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass").

But when we have to appeal to the Jew who has not yet acknowledged that the promises of his Scriptures have been fulfilled or realized in the person of Christ, what are we to say to him? We must plead with him on the general grounds of the paragraph just quoted. His Temple has passed away and perished from the face of the earth. The place which God had chosen to place His name in is gone. The sacrifices have gone with it. The services in which his ancestors took such a pride, with all their magnificence, are no more. There have been false Christs and false prophets: some even just about the time when Jesus lived. But let him examine carefully the records about Him Who is claimed to be the Messiah. Their general historicity is becoming more and more established. Let him compare the narrative with those parts of the Old Testament which speak of the coming deliverer. Let him try to divest himself for the moment of the idea that they must necessarily point to an earthly ruler, an earthly deliverer. Let him try, as some Jews have done, to understand the position of Jesus, and he will, at any rate, be led, to begin with, to form a higher estimate of Christ's work, His life, His character. The intolerance shown towards Jews by the Christians of some countries is an un-Christian trait in their character. The spirit of St. Peter in approaching His fellow-countrymen was far different from this. "And now, brethren, I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts iii. 17). St. Paul says the same thing in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia: "they that dwell in Jerusalem,

and their rulers, *because they knew Him not*, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning Him ” (Acts xiii. 27). And in this they were but manifesting the same spirit as their Master, Who, when He was being nailed to the cross, said, “ Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do ” (Luke xxiii. 34). Ignorance, then, as so often in the world’s history, was the cause of persecution. “ Had they known it ” (i.e. the Divine wisdom), says St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 8), the rulers of this world “ would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

If we wish to see how some Jews of the present day are regarding our Lord, the following extracts concerning Jesus of Nazareth, written by a Jew, who is not a Christian and has, so far as we know, no intention to become one, and published some two years ago, will enlighten us. The main source from which he draws what he writes is the Talmud (Adolph Danziger’s *Jewish Forerunners of Christianity*, chap. ii.).

“ As Moses marvelled at the bush which burned and yet was not consumed, and approached to examine its nature, so I am drawn to examine the wondrous mystery of the life and death of Jesus to my fullest power of mind and in deep reverence.

“ I seek to gather what it (i.e. the Talmud) tells of that life, so full of human charm and sweetness, of the individual whose sublime principles might have united all men, Jew and Gentile alike, under the banner of his Messiahship, had it not been for the errors and crimes of those who mistook his word and work and mission, and even in his name were guilty of deeds at which humanity revolts.”

The writer then goes on to claim that Hillel’s teachings had prepared Hebrew hearts for the gentle message of Him who followed. He continues ;—

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“The descent of Jesus from David, as set forth in the New Testament, is not disputed. . . . The Prince of Judaism and the Prince of the Christian world are of one blood, the race of David ; and the faith and hopes of mankind, whether Jewish or Christian, spring from a common fountain. . . . Granted that we as Jews reject certain points cardinal with the Christian faith, it cannot be denied that Christianity is a historical fact, and its existence to-day is directly traceable to Jewish origin through the New Testament. . . . The message (which Christ came to offer) developed, but did not contradict, the teachings of the great Rabbi (Hillel). . . . Neither had any part in the narrow local spirit which would make Palestine the only Holy Land in God’s world.

“Hillel is said to have said, ‘We carry a Temple in our hearts in which the Lord can be served and always and everywhere,’ and this while the Temple was still standing.

“There was absolutely no accusation that could be brought against Christ, under the law of Moses, of any important kind. . . .

“Over the supreme tragedy let the Angel of Sorrow spread his wings. Veil thy face, Sun ! Be darkened, sky ; let the earth tremble, and man mourn in tears ! The most angelic of men, the most loving of teachers, the meek and humble Prophet, is to die by the death of the cross.

“He has made humility honor ; he has carried the highest wisdom to the homes of the lowly and ignorant of the world. . . . The Redeemer of the poor, the teacher of the ignorant, the friend of all that faint with toil and are oppressed with cares, must die on the cross.

“Jesus died for the essence of all religion ; for purity, charity, and holiness ; for a cause in which death itself is a godly thing.

“ His fate is no secret to Himself. . . . The greatness which can speak in the face of torture and death as Jesus spoke ; which can return good for evil, love for hate, blessing for curses ; which not only preaches the law of love, but lives by it and dies for its sake, is a greatness before which every other fades into nothing.

“ The man Jesus is the most heroic, the grandest, the noblest personality of all time and age.”

And, in conclusion, the writer attributes the crucifixion almost entirely to the Sadducees, not to his countrymen as a whole nor to the Jewish teachers, quoting Nicodemus, and Gamaliel's words in Acts v.

If the Hebrew of to-day would but approach the study of the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth in the spirit of these extracts, very much might soon be done towards the clearing away of prejudices.

Let him but think that the Christian accepts all his Scriptures, as the word of God ; let him try to realize that it was out of the Jewish Church that the Christian Church sprang ; that that Church claims for its Founder that He was the one pointed out by the Jewish Scriptures ; that He Himself announced that His purpose was not to destroy, but to fulfil ; that the earliest Christian teachers were never weary of appealing to the Old Testament ; that they continued to worship in the Temple whilst it was still standing ; that almost ever since the Crucifixion the Temple and its sacrifices have disappeared, never to be revived ; let him see how in many particulars prophetic details were actually realized in the person of Christ ; let him try to spiritualize the ideas that he has in him of the future kingdom which was foretold ; then let him turn to the realities—the life and portrait of the character of Christ as it is historically displayed to us—and the effect upon the world of His life and teaching from that date to this, and he may

be led to the idea that there is more than he has ever thought of before in that Religion and its Founder. Occasionally through the ages, but less often as time has gone on, he will find the history of Christianity blurred by acts of bigotry and persecution ; but the good and the true have prevailed. Conviction may come to him as in a dazzling flash it came to his great fellow-countryman, Saul of Benjamin ; or it may come to him after long and painful mental struggle, so that at last he will exclaim : Thou hast conquered, O Nazarene ; of a truth Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God.

HENRY A. REDPATH.