

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jtvi-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php)

## *Literary Background of the New Testament*

**F.F. Bruce**

[p.15]

The literature surveyed in this paper is a selection of Palestinian Jewish literature from the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. It does not include documents which have secured a place in the Septuagint, nor yet the Qumran texts in the stricter sense (although some of the works to be considered here have been identified in the Qumran library, they do not appear to be sectarian documents peculiar to the Qumran community). A number of the works considered belong to the pseudepigrapha: that is to say, in accordance with a literary convention of the time which was followed mainly, though not exclusively, by authors of apocalyptic works, they were published under the name of some outstanding figure of Old Testament history. The selection is made principally with respect to the bearing which these documents have on the interpretation of the New Testament.

### **I. LITERATURE OF THE SECOND JEWISH COMMONWEALTH**

**1. First Enoch.** This is not a unitary work but a collection of apocalyptic material. It is frequently called the 'Ethiopic Enoch'—in distinction from the 'Slavonic Enoch' (2 Enoch) and the 'Hebrew Enoch' (3 Enoch)—because it is extant in its entirety only in the Ethiopic version, thanks to its canonical status in the Ethiopic Church. The Ethiopic version is based on a Greek version. About one third of the whole work is extant in Greek, mainly in papyri found in Egypt. The original language was Semitic; the discovery of fragments of about ten Aramaic manuscripts of 1 Enoch in Cave 4 at Qumran suggests that most of it was originally composed in Aramaic.

The collection consists of five principal parts: (a) Enoch's journeying to other worlds (i-xxxvi), (b) the 'Similitudes'

[p.16]

(xxxvii-lxxi), (c) the courses of the heavenly bodies (lxxii-lxxxii), (d) world-history seen in dream-visions (lxxxiii-xc), (e) the concluding section (xci-cviii) which incorporates an independent 'Apocalypse of Weeks' in which the history of the world is divided into ten 'weeks' of indefinite duration (xciii. 1-10, xci. 12-17), and fragments of a Noah-Apocalypse (cvi-cvii), other fragments of which may be traced in earlier sections of 1 Enoch. The various parts were composed evidently in the second and first centuries B.C. Some of the earlier parts are presupposed by the *Book of Jubilees* (iv. 15f) and by the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*Test. Simeon* v. 4; *Test. Levi* x. 5, etc.).

Enoch, who walked with God and was ultimately translated by God to His own dwelling-place (Gen. v. 21-24) was plainly a suitable person to receive revelations both of the divine purpose for the future and of the mysteries of outer space. Moreover, his career was brought into close connection with the 'sons of God' or fallen angels of Gen. vi. 1-4, to whom in 1 Enoch xvi. 3f. he pronounces their doom. This element in 1 Enoch has left its mark on some of the later books of the NT—*cf.* the 'spirits in prison' of 1 Pet. iii. 19 (where, however, we should resist the temptation to adopt the conjectural emendation which introduces Enoch as the preacher) and the references to the 'angels that sinned' by leaving 'their own habitation' in

2 Pet. ii. 4 and Jude 6. Jude 14f, indeed, presents a straightforward quotation from 1 Enoch i. 9.

But the section of 1 Enoch which is most relevant to Gospel study is that called the 'Similitudes', a separate work in which the fallen angels do not figure. It is reported that thus far, while fragments of all the other main sections of 1 Enoch have been identified at Qumran, no fragment of this section has been found. In view of the fragmentary condition of what has been found, it is precarious to base any argument on the absence of anything from the 'Similitudes'.

In the 'Similitudes' God, the 'Lord of Spirits', appears as 'One who had a head of days', or, more briefly, as 'the Head of days'. This designation is certainly derived from Dan. vii. 9, where Daniel beholds 'the Ancient of days', whose hair is 'like the pure wool'. But Daniel's 'one like a son of man' (vii. 13), who is brought to the Ancient of days on the clouds of heaven, appears

[p.17]

in the 'Similitudes of Enoch' as 'the Son of Man who has righteousness' (xlvi. 3), identical apparently with the person elsewhere called the 'Anointed One' (Messiah) of the Lord of Spirits (xlviii. 10, lii. 4), 'the Righteous One... whose elect works hang upon the Lord of Spirits' (xxxviii. 2), and 'the Elect One of righteousness and faith', who has 'his dwelling-place under the wings of the Lord of Spirits' (xxxix. 6f.). This Son of Man 'was named before the Lord of Spirits, and his name before the Head of Days... before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of heaven were made' (xlviii. 2f.). He is to be a support to the righteous and a light to the nations (xlviii. 4), but the executor of divine judgement upon the ungodly (xlviii. 8-10).

'From the beginning the Son of Man was hidden,  
And the Most High preserved him in the presence of his might,  
And revealed him to the elect' (lxii. 7).

But on the day of visitation the Son of Man is manifested as saviour of the righteous and judge of the wicked.

'And one portion of them shall look on the other,  
And they shall be terrified,  
And they shall be downcast of countenance,  
And pain shall seize them,  
When they see that Son of Man  
Sitting on the throne of his glory' (lxii. 5).

Such references to the Son of Man or the Elect One sitting as judge 'on the throne of his glory', where he is installed by the Lord of Spirits (lxi. 8, lxii. 2) remind us forcibly of Jesus' words about the time when the Son of Man will sit on 'the throne of his glory', with the Twelve enthroned as his assessors in judgement (Mt. xix. 28), while all nations appear before him to be separated one from another 'as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats' (Mt. xxv. 31ff). The distinctive feature in the Gospel parable of the sheep and the goats is not the general picture of judgement, but the surprising criterion by which judgement is passed.

Before we hastily write down these 'Son of Man' passages in 1 Enoch as Christian interpolations, we must reckon with their unexpected denouement: in lxxi. 1ff. Enoch is translated to heaven and is greeted by God with the words: 'Thou art the Son of Man who art born for righteousness; righteousness abides over

[p.18]

thee, and the righteousness of the Head of Days forsakes thee not' (lxxii. 14.). No Christian interpolator would have identified the Son of Man with Enoch.

The Son of Man in the 'Similitudes' as in Dn. vii is to be understood in terms of corporate personality, as the community of the righteous—'named' and 'hidden' in God's presence from all eternity (or, in Pauline language, 'foreknown' and 'foreordained before the world's foundation')—which can be individualized from time to time in someone who is outstandingly righteous, like Enoch (who, in another section of 1 Enoch, for his righteousness was commissioned to pronounce judgement on the fallen angels), or like that Righteous One who has been chosen to pronounce judgement on all the ungodly at the end-time. The Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels may also be understood up to a point in terms of corporate personality, but he owes his distinctive character to his identification in our Lord's teaching and redemptive ministry with the Isaianic Servant of the Lord, who unlike the Son of Man in Enoch) gives his life as an offering for sin. And the Righteous One in whom the Gospel Son of Man is individualized is Jesus Himself.

**2. *The Book of Jubilees.*** This book is so entitled because it presents the Pentateuchal history from the creation of the world to the Israelites' entry into Canaan in a framework of fifty 'jubilee' periods of forty-nine years each (the Exodus is thus dated A.M. 2410 and the entry into Canaan A.M. 2450). The contents are imparted to Moses by an angel when he went up Mount Sinai to receive the law; 'there are forty-nine jubilees from the days of Adam until this day', said the angel, 'and one week [of years] and two years; and there are yet forty years to come for learning the commandments of the Lord, until they pass over into the land of Canaan' (c. 4).

The entire work is extant only in Ethiopic, into which it was translated from Greek; Greek and Latin fragments are also known. Fragments of the Hebrew original have been found in Caves 1, 2 and 4 at Qumran.

*Jubilees* was probably composed in the second century B.C. in the same circles from which came 1 Enoch and its sources, and the original draft of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. The *Zadokite Work* refers to it as authoritative (CD xvi. 4).

[p.19]

The main purpose of the work is evidently to commend the exclusive use of a solar calendar of 364 days, in which the sacred festivals and fasts would fall annually on the same day of the week as well as on the same day of the month. In the absence of any provision for intercalation, this calendar must have deviated increasingly from the solar and agricultural year, but a calendar of the same general character appears to be attested in the Flood narrative of Genesis and in the book of Ezekiel, and a calendar almost, if not altogether, identical with that of *Jubilees* was followed by the Qumran community. The moon plays no part in the

calendrical system; the months are purely calendar months. Whereas Gen. i. 14 implies that God appointed sun, moon and stars to 'be for signs and for seasons and for days and for years', the parallel in Jub. ii. 9 says expressly that 'God appointed the sun [and only the sun] to be a great sign on the earth for days and for sabbaths and for months and for feasts and for years and for sabbaths of years and for jubilees and for all seasons of the years'. The lunisolar year which was observed by most Jews (including Pharisees and Sadducees alike) is denounced (vi. 36); perhaps it was considered a feature of assimilation to Gentile ways.

The prestige of the tribe of Levi is emphasized. When Isaac blesses Jacob's two sons Levi and Judah (xxx. 12 ff.), he foretells that Levi's descendants will be not only priests but also 'princes and judges and chiefs of all the seed of the sons of Jacob' (verse 15). One of the sons of Judah, he goes on to say (verse 18), will be 'prince over the sons of Jacob' and the Gentiles will quake before him, but no such weight is laid upon his sovereignty as is laid upon the primacy of Levi.

The decrease in men's expectation of life since antediluvian times will continue until 'the heads of the children will be white with grey hair, and a child of three weeks will appear as old as a man of a hundred years' (xxiii. 25); then, with renewed study and practice of the law of God, a time of restoration will set in, when men will live to be a thousand years old (xxiii. 27) and evil will be abolished from the universe.

The biblical foundation of the narrative of Jubilees is expanded by means of haggadic and halakhic material. Haggadic amplifications include the account of Abraham's coming to the

[p.20]

knowledge of the true God at the age of fourteen (xi. 16f.) and of his invention of a seed-scatterer to be attached to the plough (xi. 23f.), and the description of the war at Hebron between the families of Esau and Jacob, in which Jacob kills Esau with an arrow (xxxvii. 1-xxxviii. 4). The halakhic expansions represent the patriarchs as keeping the Sinaitic law in scrupulous detail—not only the written law but later oral interpretations of it. Thus Abraham circumambulates the altar carrying palm-branches seven times a day for each day of the feast of Tabernacles (xvi. 31). The interpretation of the law is, if anything, stricter than the later rabbinical interpretation. The tables of the law given to Moses are a replica of heavenly tables, so that the will of God may be done on earth as it was already done in heaven (cf. ii. 18, iii. 10).

**3. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.*** The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a work purporting to reproduce the charges which the twelve sons of Jacob gave their children before they died, has come down to us in Greek, Armenian and Slavonic recensions, the Armenian and Slavonic recensions being translated from Greek. The original language was Hebrew and/or Aramaic, in which the work was first composed in the second or first century B.C. Since the Greek and other versions have been preserved by the Christian Church (like many of the other Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, and the writings of Philo and Josephus), they have undergone considerable editing in Christian interests; and even before that there is some reason to discern a variety of Jewish recensions in which conflicting Jewish interests are represented. It is no easy task to establish the history of the work throughout its various recensions from the original core; much depends on the interpreter's understanding of the purpose of the original compiler, and only fragments of the Semitic texts survive. Aramaic

fragments of a *Testament of Levi* were found in the Cairo genizah; further Aramaic fragments of the same document have been identified from Qumran Caves 1 and 4., and Hebrew fragments of a *Testament of Naphtali* from Cave 4. It is clear that the Greek *Testaments* are not straightforward translations of the Aramaic and Hebrew texts; the latter are considerably longer than the corresponding Greek texts.

The *Testaments* first became known in the west through Robert

[p.21]

Grosseteste, thirteenth-century bishop of Lincoln, who procured a tenth-century Greek manuscript of the work and published a Latin translation of it. Grosseteste accepted the *Testaments* as genuine utterances of the twelve patriarchs, and imagined that the Jews had withheld them from public circulation because of the testimonies to Christ which they contained.

In fact, we find elements in the *Testaments* which reflect quite different life-settings, not least with regard to the priesthood. Consider, for example, these extracts:

(a) 'To Levi God gave the sovereignty... Therefore, I [Reuben] command you, hearken to Levi, because he will know the law of the Lord, and will give ordinances for judgement and will sacrifice for all Israel until the consummation of the times, as the anointed high priest of whom the Lord spoke. I adjure you by the God of heaven, practise truth each one with his neighbour and entertain love each one for his brother. And draw near to Levi in humbleness of heart, that you may receive a blessing from his mouth. For he will bless Israel and Judah, because it is he whom the Lord has chosen to be king over all the nation. And bow down before his seed, for on your behalf it will die in wars visible and invisible, and will be an eternal king among you' (*Test. Reuben* vi. 7-12). (b) 'A king will arise in Judah, and will make a new priesthood after the fashion of the Gentiles for all the Gentiles. And his advent (Gk. *parousia*) is beloved, as a prophet of the Most High, of the seed of Abraham our father' (*Test. Levi* viii. 14f.).

(c) 'And now, my children, I command you, love Levi, that you may abide, and exalt not yourselves against him, lest you be utterly destroyed. For to me [Judah] the Lord gave the kingdom, and to him the priesthood, and He set the kingdom beneath the priesthood. To me He gave the things upon the earth; to him the things in the heavens. As the heaven is higher than the earth, so is the priesthood of God higher than the earthly kingdom, unless it falls away through sin from the Lord and is dominated by the earthly kingdom. For the angel of the Lord said to me: "The Lord chose him rather than thee, to draw near to him and to eat of His table and to offer Him the firstfruits of the choice things of the sons of Israel; but thou shalt be king of Jacob"' (*Test. Judah* xxxi. 1-5).

Of these three passages the first ascribes kingship as well as priesthood to the tribe of Levi, the second ascribes priesthood as well as kingship to the tribe of Judah, the third ascribes priesthood to the tribe of Levi and kingship to the tribe of Judah.

The first reflects a period in which a Levitical family exercised the authority of kingship as well as that of priesthood. Such a period we know: it was the period of the Hasmonaean rulers, from Jonathan's assumption of the high priesthood in 152 B.C.

[p.22]

to the execution of Antigonus by Antony in 37 B.C. But recognition of the Hasmonaeans' claims to high priesthood is not characteristic of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; if this first passage is not an interpolation, it bears witness to a recension of the work by a sympathizer with the Hasmonaeans.

The second passage is surely Christian in origin. Whatever priestly functions may have been discharged by David and his successors in pre-exilic times, no suggestion of a priesthood associated with the tribe of Judah appears in the age of the Second Temple until the rise of Christianity. 'For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests' (Heb. vii. 14). But here a king who arises in Judah (the Davidic Messiah) will establish a new priesthood and will exercise it for the Gentiles. Moreover, this priest-king will be a prophet of the Most High—our Lord's *triplex manus* is quite clearly in view. Again, if this passage is not an interpolation, it belongs to a Christian recension of the *Testaments*—a recension, moreover, made under the influence of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The third passage represents the general OT and Jewish tradition by distinguishing the Levitical priesthood from the royal power of Judah. But in placing the kingship below the priesthood it betrays its affinity with that strand of interpretation which goes back to Ezek. xl-xlviii, where the Davidic 'prince' is unmistakably subordinate to the priesthood in the administration of the restored community of Israel. The same emphasis appears in another passage in the *Testaments*, where Naphtali is the speaker:

'In the fortieth year of my life, I saw a vision on the Mount of Olives, on the east of Jerusalem: the sun and moon were standing still. And behold, Isaac, my father's father, said to us: "Run and take hold of them, each according to his strength; and to him who seizes them the sun and moon will belong." And we ran all of us together, and Levi took hold of the sun, and Judah outstripped the others and seized the moon, and then were both lifted up with them' (*Test. Naphtali* v. 1-3).

The meaning of this vision plainly is that Levi's priesthood surpasses Judah's kingship as much as the sun excels the moon in glory.

This is probably the original outlook of the *Testaments*, freed

[p.23]

from pro-Hasmonaeon or Christian editing. And it is very much in line with the Qumran outlook on this subject.

The title 'Messiah' does not appear in the *Testaments*, apart from one or two manuscripts where it has evidently been interpolated in a Christian sense. The verbal adjective *christos* appears in its ordinary sense 'anointed' in *Test. Reuben* vi. 8, where Levi is to 'sacrifice for all Israel until the consummation of the times, as the anointed high priest (*archiereus christos*), of whom the Lord spoke.' This priesthood, according to *Test. Levi* xviii. 2ff., is to be embodied on a coming day in a 'new priest' whom the Lord will raise up—probably the great priest of the new age, the 'Messiah of Aaron' of the Qumran texts.

'His star shall arise in heaven as of a king,

Lighting up the light of knowledge as the sun the day,  
And he shall be magnified in the world....  
The heavens shall be opened,  
And from the temple of glory shall come upon him sanctification.  
With the Father's voice as from Abraham to Isaac.'

M. Black has suggested that, since the only recorded words of Abraham to Isaac are those of Gen. xxii. 7f. ('Here am I, my son... My son, God will provide for Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering'), the implication here is of the voice of God 'calling for the obedience of a beloved son to the point of complete readiness to offer himself in sacrifice' (*Exp T* 60, 1948-49, p. 322).

This new priest, moreover, will re-open paradise to the godly, removing the flaming sword, so that they may eat of the tree of life (*Test. Levi* xviii. 10f.) . He will bind Beliar and 'give his children power to tread on evil spirits' (xviii. 12). This new age of paradise restored is evidently the resurrection age, for in it 'Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will exult... and all the saints will clothe themselves with joy' (xviii. 14). So in *Test. Benjamin* x. 6, when the salvation of God is revealed to all the world, 'you will see Enoch, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob standing (or raised) at His right hand with exultation'. The twelve patriarchs themselves will be raised to share the eternal kingdom, and each will rule his own tribe (*Test. Judah* xxv. 1; *Test. Zebulun* x. 2)—a privilege promised in the Gospels to the twelve apostles (Mt. xlx. 28; Lk. xxii. 30).

Behar (a Greek spelling by dissimilation from Heb. Belial)

[p.24]

appears in several places throughout the Testaments as 'the personification of iniquity, and the supreme adversary of God' (H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, 1963, p. 72). (In NT he appears once in 2 Cor. vi. 15, as the antithesis to Christ.) When Behar is conquered, then 'the saints will rest in Eden, and the righteous will rejoice in the new Jerusalem, which will be God's eternal glory' (*Test. Dan* v. 12).

A markedly ethical note also pervades the Testaments, with special emphasis on the duty of brotherly love. As in our Lord's teaching, the two great commandments are conjoined: 'Love the Lord and your neighbour; have mercy on the poor and weak' (*Test. Issachar* v. 2); 'Love the Lord with all your life, and one another with a true heart' (*Test. Dan* v. 3). Unlike the characteristic Qumran texts, the *Testaments* denounce hatred and express sentiments of hope and goodwill towards the Gentiles. A detailed comparative study of the ethical teaching of the Testaments and that of the Gospels would bring to light some impressive parallels; their significance would, of course, depend in large measure on our conclusions about the degree of Christian redaction to which the extant text of the *Testaments* has been subjected.

**4. *The Psalms of Solomon.*** This is a collection of eighteen hymns whose titles bear an ascription to Solomon. The ascription is purely conventional, and is designed to characterize this psalter as secondary in relation to the canonical book of Psalms, nearly half of which exhibit the name of David in their titles.

*The Psalms of Solomon* are extant in a number of Greek manuscripts, and also in a Syriac version, translated from the Greek. The Greek bears signs of being itself translated from a Hebrew original.

The date of the collection is not difficult to determine; the poems clearly have as their background the situation in Judaea following the Roman conquest in 63 B.C. They have commonly been regarded as Pharisaic compositions, but it might be wiser to think of them more generally as originating within the hasidic tradition represented not only by the Pharisees but also by the Qumran sect and by the circles into which John the Baptist and Jesus were born. Much of the psalter breathes the devotion and aspiration of such pious people.

As in the Qumran texts (particularly the Habakkuk comment-

[p.25]

ary) the Roman conquerors are viewed as the executors of divine judgement against the Hasmonaeans. But whereas in the Qumran texts the Hasmonaeans are condemned mainly for usurping the high-priesthood, which belonged properly to the house of Zadok, they are condemned in the Psalms of Solomon for usurping the kingship, which belonged properly to the house of David: 'they laid waste the throne of David in tumultuous arrogance' (xvii. 8). Hence came their judgment:

'Thou, O God, didst cast them down, and remove their seed from the earth,  
In that there rose up against them a man that was alien to our race' (xvii. 8f).

The man 'alien to our race' is Pompey, the captor of Jerusalem. But, as in the Habakkuk commentary from Qumran, the oppression of the Romans becomes almost as intolerable as that of the Hasmonaeans; indeed, when the psalmists cry out against the oppressors, it is not always easy to decide whether they have the Hasmonaeans or the Romans in mind. Among other things, Pompey's sacrilegious insistence on entering the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple is contemplated with horror, and his assassination in Egypt fifteen years later is viewed as condign punishment for his impiety (ii. 30ff.).

The hope of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy under the Messiah finds clear and eloquent expression in xvii. 23ff.:

'Behold, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David,  
At the time which Thou knowest, O Lord, that he may reign over  
Israel Thy servant;  
And gird him with strength to shatter unrighteous rulers,  
May he cleanse Jerusalem from the nations that trample her down  
with destruction,  
Wisely and righteously expel sinners from his inheritance,  
Dash in pieces the sinner's arrogance like a potter's vessel,  
And smash all their substance with a rod of iron,  
Destroy lawless nations with the word of his mouth,  
Make the nations flee before him at his rebuke,  
And reprove sinners for the device of their heart.  
He will gather together a holy people and lead them in righteousness,  
He will judge the tribes of a people sanctified by the Lord his God.  
He will not suffer unrighteousness to lodge in their midst any more,

No man who knows wickedness will dwell with them.  
He will know them, that they are all sons of their God,

[p.26]

And he will apportion them in their tribes upon the land.  
The sojourner and the alien will sojourn with them no more;  
He will judge peoples and nations with the wisdom of his judgement.  
He will have Gentile peoples to serve him under his yoke,  
And he will glorify God with the praise of all the earth;  
He will cleanse Jerusalem in holiness, as it was from the beginning.  
That nations may come from the end of the earth to see his glory.  
Bearing gifts for her sons that were utterly weakened,  
And to see the glory of the Lord with which God has glorified her.  
And he himself is a righteous king over them, taught by God.  
And there shall be no unrighteousness in their midst all his days.  
For all will be holy, and their king is the anointed Lord.'

The references to Ps. ii. 9 and other OT prophecies of the messianic kingdom are not difficult to recognize. As for the 'anointed Lord' (unless we have to reckon with a mistranslation of Heb. *meshiach YHWH*, 'the Lord's anointed'), this is the same expression as appears in the angelic message to the shepherds outside Bethlehem in Lk. ii. 11: 'a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord' (*christos kyrios*). There is, indeed, a close affinity between the sentiments of Ps. Sol. xvii. 21ff. and those of the canticles of Luke's nativity narratives. The ardent prayer for Messiah's appearance becomes a divine promise of imminent fulfilment on the lips of Gabriel in Lk. i. 32f.

'He Will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High;  
And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.  
And he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever,  
And of his kingdom there will be no end.'

The fulfilment is celebrated by Mary in the *Magnificat* (Lk. i. 54f):

'He has helped his servant Israel  
In remembrance of his mercy,  
As he spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and to his posterity for ever' –

and even more expressly by Zechariah in the *Benedictus* (Lk. i. 68ff.)

'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
For he has visited and redeemed his people,  
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
In the house of his servant David,  
As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old...'

In the light of the *Psalms of Solomon* we can understand better the thoughts of those who, with Simeon and Anna, were 'looking

[p.27]

for the consolation of Israel' and 'for the redemption of Jerusalem (Lk. ii. 25, 38). And it must be added that we can also understand better the disillusionment of people who shared our psalmist's messianic expectations when they found that nothing was more remote from Jesus' mind than the smashing of Israel's enemies like a potter's vessel.

**5. *The Assumption of Moses.*** *The Assumption of Moses*, like 1 Enoch, is referred to by Jude, when he mentions the dispute between Michael and Satan over the body of Moses. The part of the work which recorded this dispute is unfortunately lost, although it was this part that gave the title the *The Assumption of Moses* to the whole work.

The work is extant only in one Latin manuscript, in the Ambrosian Library in Milan; the Latin text was translated from a Greek version, which in turn was based on a Semitic original.

The work opens with a charge by Moses to Joshua; among other things, Moses delivers the books of the law to Joshua, who is to 'anoint them with cedar oil and lay them in earthenware jars in the place which God made from the beginning of the creation of the world' (i. 17)—an interesting literary parallel to the bestowal of the scrolls found in Cave 1 at Qumran. Then comes a hasty survey of the history of Israel from the settlement in Canaan onwards, put in prophetic language into the mouth of Moses before his death. The exile, the restoration under Cyrus, the Hellenizing movement and the Hasmonaean dynasty are mentioned in this survey. The attitude to the Hasmonaean is hostile: 'they will verily work impiety in the holy of holies' (vi. 1). They are followed by a self-willed king, not of the priestly line, who will deal ruthlessly with the remnant of the Hasmonaean family. This king, perhaps identified by the author of the *Assumption* with the 'wilful king' of Dn. xi. 36, will reign for thirty-four years—a detail which confirms what is in any case clear, that Herod the Great (37-4. B.C.) is meant. 'And he shall beget sons that shall succeed him and reign for shorter periods' (vi. 7). Since two sons of Herod who succeeded to part of his kingdom—Philip (4 B.C.-A.D. 34) and Antipas (4 B.C.-A.D. 39)—ruled for more than 34 years, the work must be dated within the 34 years that followed Herod's death, and probably in the earlier rather than in the later part of that period. The

[p.28]

last historical event clearly referred to is the punitive expedition of Varus during the disorders that followed Herod's death: 'into their parts [i.e. into the territories of Herod's sons] will come cohorts and a mighty western king, who will conquer them and take them captive, and burn part of their temple with fire, and crucify some around their colony' (vi. 8f.; cf. Josephus *BJ* ii. 66f; *Ant.* xvii. 286f). The work, then, was evidently composed during the lifetime of Jesus, and probably during His youthful years.

From this point on Moses' forecast becomes vague, as he describes the last days. The rulers will be impious gluttons, until Antichrist arises to take vengeance on them. He is not called 'Antichrist', but 'the king of the kings of the earth' (viii. 1); his portrait is modelled so closely on Antiochus Epiphanes that many commentators have thought that this passage (viii. 1-5) has been displaced, and that it should be regarded as a pseudoprophecy of the persecution under Antiochus, belonging originally between chapters v and vi.

In the days of this imperial persecutor a Levite named Taxo and his seven sons decide to fast for three days and then enter a cave to await death rather than be compelled to transgress the

divine commandments, that so their blood 'shall be avenged before the Lord' (ix. 1-7). The identity and name of this Taxo have been the subject of much ingenious speculation; he and his sons are modelled on the *hasidim* who endured martyrdom under Antiochus, and were probably expected, in circumstances which must remain obscure for us, to play a significant part at the end-time. For the Taxo episode is followed immediately by the manifestation of the kingdom of God, the abolition of evil, and the exaltation of Israel.

The theme of ch. i is then taken up; Joshua professes his incompetence to take Moses' place, but Moses reassures him and sets him on his own throne. The narrative of Moses' death and assumption into heaven, which presumably followed, has not survived.

**6. *The Ascension of Isaiah.*** This work, in the form in which we know it, is composite, consisting of two Christian parts and one Jewish part, which were put together by a Christian editor in the second century A.D. Like 1 Enoch and Jubilees, it is extant in

[p.29]

its entirety only in an Ethiopic version (translated from Greek); Greek, Latin and Slavonic fragments are also known.

The Jewish part (i. 1-iii. 12, v. 1b-14), recording Isaiah's martyrdom, may be pre-Christian and exhibits affinities with Qumran literature. It tells how Isaiah, to avoid the wickedness rampant in Jerusalem during Manasseh's reign, left the capital for Bethlehem and then withdrew to the hill country, accompanied by other prophets, all of whom wore the conventional prophetic garb of haircloth. But when Manasseh, of whose heart Beliar had taken possession, came to know of Isaiah's hiding-place, he had him seized and sawn in two with a wooden saw. Before his death Isaiah commanded his disciples to escape to the region of Tyre and Sidon, 'because', said he, 'for me only has God mingled the cup' (v. 13).

There is probably a reference to this narrative in Heb. xi. 37. As for the 'cup', we are reminded of our Lord's use of this figure in Mk. x. 38, xiv. 36; Jn. xviii. 11; and Isaiah's concern for the safety of his disciples is paralleled by our Lord's words about His disciples at His arrest: 'if you seek me, let these men go' (Jn. xviii. 8).

## II. *LITERATURE AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE*

The destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 compelled a new perspective in Jewish apocalyptic. Two works written under the influence of the catastrophe—the Apocalypse of Ezra (4 Ezra) and the (Syriac) Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch)—purport to contain revelations given to Ezra and Baruch in the period following the earlier destruction of the city and temple by Nebuchadnezzar; but this is a patent disguise for the situation following A.D. 70.

**1. *The Apocalypse of Ezra.*** This apocalypse forms the kernel of the composite apocryphal work which we commonly call 2 Esdras—or, following the Vulgate, 4 Esdras. This work, as it has come down to us, consists of (a) a prologue in which Ezra prophesies the rejection of the Jews in favour of the Church (chs. i.-ii.), (b) the apocalypse proper (chs. iii.-xiv.), (c) an epilogue containing denunciations of all men in general and certain nations in particular

because of their wickedness. The apocalyptic kernel of the work is all that concerns us here, for the prologue and

[p.30]

epilogue are later Christian compilations. Scholars have devised the designations 4 Ezra, 5 Ezra, and 6 Ezra, for the apocalypse, the prologue and the epilogue respectively. The Hebrew original of the apocalypse is lost, and so is the Greek text of the whole composite work; it is extant, however, in other versions based on the Greek—Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian and fragments in one or two other languages.

The *Apocalypse of Ezra* consists of seven visions granted to Ezra in Babylon, the first of them dated 'in the thirtieth year after the destruction of our city' (iii. 1). In the first (iii. i-v. 20) Ezra, bewailing the national disaster, is told that righteousness will be vindicated in the age to come, and that that age will dawn as soon as the foreordained number of the righteous is complete. Its advent will be preceded by supernatural signs.

The second vision (v. 21-vi. 34) gives the assurance that the righteous who die before the new age dawns will suffer no disadvantage in comparison with those who are alive at that time *cf.* I Th. iv. 15). The third vision (vi. 35-ix. 25) opens with a Haggadic recapitulation of the six days of creation, which is said to have been brought into being for the sake of God's people Israel. How then has Israel been given into the hands of other nations, which have no place in God's saving purpose? By way of answer, the new world is brought in to redress the inequalities of this one: 'the entrances of this world were made narrow and toilsome; they are few and evil, full of dangers and involved in great hardships. But the entrances of the greater world are broad and safe, and really yield the fruit of immortality' (vii. 12f.; *cf.* the 'abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom' of 2 Pet. i. 11). The distresses of this world must be endured if the bliss of the new world is to be enjoyed. But the new world will be preceded by a messianic age of limited duration.

For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. And after these things my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. And the world shall be turned back to primaeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings; so that no one shall be left' (vii. 28-30).

The four hundred years of the messianic age are derived from Ps. xc. 15, 'Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil',

[p.31]

interpreted in the light of Gn. xv. 13, where Abraham is told that his offspring will be afflicted for four hundred years. The alternative reckoning of the duration of the messianic age in Rev. xx. 1-6 is based on another passage in Ps. xc.—verse 4, with its reference to a thousand years which are in God's sight 'as yesterday when it is past.')

After the seven days of annihilation, the resurrection and the new creation take place and the dead are judged. Ezra is dismayed because the lost so greatly outnumber the saved, and all through Adam's disobedience:

'O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants. For what good is it to us, if an eternal age has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death?' (vii. 118f.).

He is forbidden, however, to pray for the doomed multitudes. 'Many have been created, but few shall be saved' (viii. 3), and it is not for a mere creature like Ezra to be more compassionate than the Creator. For the lost there is no hope, but to Ezra and the rest of the elect minority comes the assurance:

'It is for you that paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand. The root of evil is sealed up from you, illness is banished from you, and death is hidden; hell has fled and corruption has been forgotten; sorrows have passed away, and in the end the treasure of immortality is made manifest' (viii. 52-54).

The fourth vision (ix. 26-x. 59) portrays the desolate city of Jerusalem under the guise of a bereaved woman, who is suddenly transformed into the heavenly Jerusalem. In the fifth vision xi. 1-xii. 39) a great and rapacious eagle rises out of the sea, symbolizing the Roman Empire (here identified with the fourth empire of Dn. vii. 7ff.). The eagle is reproved by a lion, symbolizing the Davidic Messiah, who will judge and destroy evildoers at the end-time. The vision is to be dated in Domitian's reign (A.D. 81-96), and Domitian is evidently expected to be the last Roman Emperor.

The sixth vision (xiii. 1-58) describes the Messiah again, this time in the form of a man who rises from the sea and stands on Mount Zion; he destroys all his enemies with the fiery breath of his mouth and gathers the exiled tribes of Northern Israel. As in

[p.32]

vii. 29, God calls the Messiah 'my son' (xiii. 32). 'My son' is also the designation given in the seventh vision (xiv. 1-48) to a heavenly being with whom Ezra will live 'until the times are ended' after he has been translated to heaven. But before his translation Ezra is commanded to dictate all the revelation of God to five men over a period of forty days, since the pre-exilic records of the revelation have been burned in the destruction of Jerusalem. Ninety-four books are thus produced. Twenty-four of these, by divine command, are to be published for worthy and unworthy alike to read; the remaining seventy are to be kept for 'the wise among your people' (*cf.* Dn. xi. 33). The former are no doubt the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible; the others are apocalyptic works like the Apocalypse of Ezra itself. Then comes the promised translation: 'at that time Ezra was caught up, and taken to the place of those who are like him, after he had written all these things. And he was called the scribe of the knowledge of the Most High for ever and ever' (xiv. 49, Syriac version).

**2. *The Apocalypse of Baruch.*** *The Apocalypse of Baruch* (2 Baruch), a work extant in a Syriac version, is one among several apocryphal or pseudepigraphic works which bear the name of Jeremiah's friend and secretary. In addition to the apocryphal Baruch (1 Baruch) which follows Jeremiah in LXX, there is a second-century A.D. *Apocalypse of Baruch* in Greek (3 Baruch), and another Greek work, *The Rest of the Words of Baruch* (4 Baruch), which can be dated shortly after the crushing of the second Jewish revolt against the Romans in A.D. 135.

While 2 Baruch is extant only in Syriac (and for 77 out of its 87 chapters in a single Syriac manuscript), the Syriac text is plainly a translation from Greek, and the Greek text in turn was in all probability based on a Hebrew original.

The apocalypse purports to have been revealed to Baruch 'in the twenty-fifth year of Jeconiah, king of Judah' (i. 1), i.e. in 573-2 B.C. (cf. Ezk. xl. 1). But, as in 4 Ezra, the period actually reflected is that following the downfall of the second Jewish commonwealth, not the first.

In the seven successive sections of the book Baruch sees a series of visions which, while they differ in various details, show him that under the fourth of Daniel's world-empires (assumed rather than stated to be Rome) life will become more and more difficult

[p.33]

for the righteous and iniquity will be increasingly rife. The messianic woes are impending; the present age is approaching its end:

'For the youth of the world is past,  
The strength of the creation is already exhausted,  
And the advent of the times is very short;  
Yea, they have passed by.  
The pitcher is near to the cistern,  
The ship to the port,  
The course of the journey to the city,  
And life to its consummation' (lxxxv. 10).

Meanwhile, the path of the righteous man is clear; it is obedience to the law:

'Now the righteous have been gathered in,  
And the prophets have fallen asleep  
And we also have gone forth from the land,  
And Zion has been taken from us;  
We have nothing now save the Mighty One and His law' (lxxxv. 3).

And obedience to the law will bring happier times:

'If you endure and persevere in His fear,  
And do not forget His law,  
The times will change upon you for good,  
And you will see the consolation of Zion' (xliv. 7).

Each man is responsible to keep the law, and has the power to keep it, if he gives his mind to it. Adam's disobedience did indeed involve multitudes of his posterity in physical death, but their sin (as distinct from their mortality) stands rather 'in the following of Adam' than in the inheritance of his fallen nature:

'For though Adam first sinned  
And brought untimely death on all,  
Yet, of those who were born from him,  
Each has prepared for his own soul torment to come,

And each has chosen for himself glories to come...  
Each one of us has been the Adam of his own soul' (liv. 15, 19).

There is a notable contrast between this 'proto-Pelagian' point of view and Paul's teaching in Rom. v. 12-21, where each human being is involved in the corporate personality or solidarity which is Adam.

The messianic woes are variously portrayed, but most picturesquely in the vision of the waters (liii. 1-lxxxv. 4.). Here the history of the world is presented in the form of a succession of

[p.34]

dark waters followed by bright waters. The first dark waters are Adam's transgression, their darkness being intensified by the subsequent fall of the angels (Gen. vi. 1-4); then follow the bright waters of Abraham's call and obedience. The last dark waters are the messianic woes, marked by war, earthquake, fire and famine, when 'all the earth will devour its inhabitants' (lxx. 10). But the inhabitants of the holy land will be immune from those plagues, as the Israelites in Goshen were immune from the plagues of Egypt. These last dark waters are followed by the brightness of the messianic age.

Not much is said of the Messiah's rôle, except that he will kill the last imperial Antichrist (xl. 1f.; cf. 2 Th. ii. 8) and summon all nations before him for judgement, destroying some and sparing others (lxxii. 2; cf. Mt. xxv. 31.). But the messianic age which he inaugurates is described in glowing terms as an age when the curse of Eden will be removed and joy and fertility will abound. Men will feed on Behemoth and Leviathan, the great monsters which were created on the fifth day of creation but reserved for the messianic age (so also 4 Ezra vi. 49 ff.);

the earth also will yield its fruit ten thousandfold; on one vine there will be a thousand branches, and each branch will produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster will produce a thousand grapes, and each grape will produce a *car* [220 litres] of wine... And at that same time the treasury of manna will descend from on high again, and men will eat of it in those years, because they are the ones who have come to the consummation of time' (xxix. 5-8).

The passage about the abnormally fruitful vine represents a widespread theme of Jewish and early Christian expectation; it appears in essentially the same form as a *baraita* (a non-Mishnaic pericope from the period immediately following A.D. 70) in TB *Baba Bathra* 74b-75a and elsewhere; and Papias (*ap. Iren. haer.* v. 33. 3f) reports a similar oracle as a saying of Jesus.

The heavenly Jerusalem, laid up with God before the earthly paradise was formed, will be revealed on earth (iv. 2-7), and the holy vessels and other installations which were rescued by an angel before the first temple was destroyed, and safely concealed in the earth until the appointed time, will be restored to their proper place (vi. 5-10). (This belief in the concealment of the holy vessels is reflected in a number of curious incidents in the apostolic age.)

[p.35]

After this messianic age the Messiah, instead of dying as in 4 Ezra, experiences a glorious epiphany (perhaps being caught up into heaven), and the righteous are raised from the dead (xxx. 1-5). Their resurrection to bliss seals the doom of the wicked. But to the question imagined by Paul, 'How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?' (1 Cor. xv. 35), the answer received by Baruch is that when the earth gives back the dead, 'it will make no change in their form, but as it has received, so will it restore them'. They must be raised in their original form so that their identity may be recognized (xlix. 1-I-4)

It may be that the Apocalypse of Baruch had an ending (now lost) which recorded Baruch's translation to heaven, as the *Apocalypse of Ezra* ends with an account of Ezra's translation. For such an ending we are prepared in lxxvi. 2, where Baruch is told that after he has given final instruction to his people, 'thou wilt surely depart from earth, nevertheless not unto death; but thou wilt be preserved to the consummation of the times' (cf. Dan. xii. 13).

### III. THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS

Although the works of Josephus were published in Rome, not Palestine, they must be included in the literature of first-century Palestinian Judaism.

Josephus (c. A.D. 37-103) was a native of Judaea, the son of a priest named Mattithiah, of the order of Jehoiarib (cf. 1 Ch. xxiv. 7), and claims kinship with the Hasmonaeans, who belonged to that order. After a brief period of association with the Essenes, and with an ascetic wilderness-dweller named Banus, he joined the party of the Pharisees at the age of nineteen. On a delegation to Rome in A.D. 63 he was greatly impressed by the power of the empire. He was strongly opposed to the Jewish revolt against Rome in A.D. 66, and although he was given a command in Galilee in which he manifested considerable energy and ability, he had no confidence in the insurgent cause. After the Roman seizure of the stronghold of Jotapata, which he had defended until further resistance was useless, he escaped with forty others to a cave. When this refuge in turn was about to be stormed, the defenders entered into a suicide pact, and Josephus

[p.36]

found himself one of the last two survivors. He persuaded his fellow-survivor that they might as well surrender to the Romans, and then he contrived to win the favour of Vespasian, the Roman commander, by predicting his elevation to the imperial purple—a prediction which came true in A.D. 69. Next year Josephus was attached to the Roman general headquarters during the siege of Jerusalem, acting as interpreter for Titus (Vespasian's son and successor in the Palestinian command), when he wished to offer terms to the defenders of the city. After the fall of Jerusalem Josephus went to Rome, where he settled down as a client and pensioner of the emperor, whose family name Flavius he adopted when he became a Roman citizen.

Not unnaturally, Josephus's behaviour during the war won for him the indelible stigma of treason in the eyes of his nation. Yet he employed the years of his leisure in Rome in such a way as to establish some claim on their gratitude. These years were devoted to literary activity in which he shows himself to be a true patriot according to his lights, jealous for the good name of his people. His first work was a *History of the Jewish War*, written first in Aramaic for the benefit of Jews in Mesopotamia and then published in a Greek edition. The account of

the outbreak of the war is here preceded by a summary of Jewish history from 168 B.C. to A.D. 66. His two books *Against Apion* constitute a defence of his people against the anti-Jewish calumnies of an Alexandrian schoolmaster named Apion; in them, too, he endeavours to show that the Jews can boast a greater antiquity than the Greeks, and in the course of this argument he has preserved for us a number of valuable extracts from ancient writers not otherwise extant. In *Ap.* i. 38f he gives a brief account of the Jewish canon of Holy Scripture; he reckons the books to be 22 in all, but these 22 comprise the same documents as the traditional 24. books of the Hebrew Bible or the 39 of the Protestant OT. His longest work is his *Jewish Antiquities*, in twenty books, relating the history of his people from earliest times (in fact he begins his narrative with the creation of the world) down to his own day. The first edition of this work was completed in A.D. 93. Finally he wrote his *Life*, largely as a defence of his war-record, which had been represented in unflattering terms by another Jewish writer, Justus of Tiberias. It is impossible to reconcile the account of his

[p.37]

war activities given in his *Life* with that given earlier in his *Jewish War*; the suspicion of Domitian, Vespasian's second son and successor (A.D. 81-96) who was now Josephus's patron (nominally at least), made it politic for him to minimize his part in the Jewish revolt, which in the earlier work he had perhaps exaggerated.

For the history of the Jews between the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.) and the war of A.D. 66-73, and especially for the period beginning with the Roman occupation of 63 B.C., the works of Josephus are of incomparable value. He had access to first-rate sources, both published and unpublished the work of Nicolas of Damascus, historiographer to Herod the Great, supplied a detailed record of that monarch's career; official Roman records were placed at his disposal; he consulted the younger Agrippa on various details concerning the origin of the Jewish war, and of course could rely on his own immediate knowledge of many phases of it. He can indeed be thoroughly tendentious in his portrayal of personalities and presentation of events, but his 'tendency' is so obvious that the reader can easily detect it and make necessary allowances for it. He consistently places his own dubious conduct in the most favourable light; the Zealots and other anti-Roman factions are represented as bandits and thoroughly malignant and impious characters.

In his attempts to make things Jewish intelligible or acceptable to his Gentile patrons he sometimes modifies the true picture to the point of misrepresentation. Thus the parties of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes are called 'philosophies' (*BJ* ii. 119; *Ant.* xviii. 11), after the fashion of the Greek philosophical schools; the same designation is even given to the followers of Judas the Galilaeen (usually identified, though not by Josephus, with the Zealots), for they are called the 'fourth philosophy' (*Ant.* xviii. 23) and their leader becomes a 'sophist' (*BJ* ii. 118, 433). The doctrine of bodily resurrection, which the Pharisees accepted and the Sadducees denied, is transformed into the immortality of the soul, which was more congenial to Greek thought (*BJ* ii. 163, 165; *Ant.* xviii. 14, 16).

In the pages of Josephus we meet many figures who are well known to us from the NT: the family of the Herods; the Roman emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero; Quirinius, the

[p.38]

governor of Syria; Pilate, Felix, and Festus, the procurators of Judaea; the high-priestly families, including Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias, and the rest; the Pharisees and Sadducees; and so on. Against the background which Josephus provides we can read the NT with greater understanding and interest.

In addition to the rising under Judas the Galilaeen (*cf.* Acts v. 37), incidents common to the NT narrative and Josephus are the famine in Judaea under Claudius (Acts xi. 28; *Jos. Ant.* xx. 101) and the sudden illness and death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts xii. 19-23; *Ant.* xix. 343-350)

Still more germane to the NT record is Josephus's account of John the Baptist's activity and his death at the hands of Herod Antipas:

'Herod killed him, though he was a good man, who bade the Jews practise virtue, be just to one to another and pious toward God, and come together in baptism. He taught that baptism was acceptable to God provided that they underwent it not to procure remission of certain sins, but for the purification of the body, if the soul had already been purified by righteousness. And when the others gathered round him (for they were greatly moved when they heard his words), Herod feared that his persuasive power over men, being so great, might lead to a rising, as they seemed ready to follow his counsel in everything. So he thought it much better to seize him and kill him before he caused any tumult, than to have to repent of falling into such trouble later on, after a revolt had taken place. Because of this suspicion of Herod, John was sent in chains to the fortress of Machaerus... and there put to death' (*Ant.* xviii. 117-119).

Josephus adds that, in the opinion of many Jews, Herod's defeat (*c.* A.D. 36) by the Nabataean king Aretas IV, father of Herod's first wife whom he put away in order to marry Herodias, was a divine judgment for the murder of John.

There are some differences between this account and those given by the Evangelists. According to the latter, John was imprisoned because he denounced Herod's marriage to Herodias, and beheaded him at Herodias's instance (Mk. vi. 17ff.; Lk. iii. 19f.). But this explanation and that given by Josephus are not mutually exclusive. Again, according to Mk. i. 4. John proclaimed 'a baptism of repentance for remission of sins', whereas Josephus implies that his baptism was for those whose sins had already been cancelled by righteousness. The Markan and parallel NT accounts are earlier than that of Josephus, who indeed appears

[p.39]

to attribute to John the baptismal doctrine which he had learned during his brief association with the Essenes (as we may now recognize in the light of the Qumran texts). Josephus's statement that John bade his hearers 'come together in baptism' (or 'by means of baptism', if the dative *baptismō* is instrumental) suggests the formation of a religious community which was entered by baptism. This is in keeping with the 'Q summary of John's preaching in Mt. iii. 8f / Lk. iii. 8f.; the community so formed would be the 'people prepared'—the remnant which John was to 'make ready for the Lord', according to Lk. i. 17.

In *Ant.* xx. 200 Josephus tells how, during the interregnum between the death of the procurator Festus and the arrival of his successor Albinus (A.D. 62), the high priest Annas II 'assembled a council of judges and brought before it the brother of Jesus the co-called Christ,

whose name was James, together with some others, and having accused them as law-breakers, delivered them over to be stoned to death'.

This prepares us for a previous reference to 'Jesus the so-called Christ' in His own right, and raises the question of the authenticity of the *testimonium Flavianum*, the well-known account of Jesus which appears in the transmitted text of *Ant.* xviii. 63f. As it stands, this account has been heavily edited in the Christian interest. Probably, however, it is not a complete interpolation; behind it we may discern an original text along these lines:

'About this time there arose a source of fresh troubles—one Jesus, a wise man and a wonder-worker, a teacher of men who gladly welcome strange things. He led away many Jews, and many of the Greeks also. This man was the so-called Christ. When Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, his original followers did not cease, and even now the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out.'

Further contacts with the gospel narrative found in additions in the Slavonic version of the *Jewish War* are of even more doubtful authenticity than the *testimonium Flavianum*, and need not be discussed here.

Josephus must have given long and careful thought to the messianic hope and related expectations of his people. The taking away of the daily sacrifice (foretold in Dan. viii. 12ff., ix. 27, xii. 11) he finds fulfilled in the cessation of the sacrifices about

[p.40]

three weeks before the Roman capture of the temple (*BJ* vi. 94); and when he describes how the victorious legionaries sacrificed to their standards in the temple court (*BJ* vi. 316), there is little doubt that in his mind he identified this incident with the 'abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet' (Dn. viii. 13, ix. 27, xi. 31, xii. 11). And even if he hailed Vespasian as the predicted world-ruler from Judaea (*BJ* iii. 400ff.; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 13), his enigmatic reference to the stone in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (*Ant.* x. 210) makes it clear that deep within his heart he hoped and believed that Rome would not have the last word: Israel's day would come.