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# **JESUS THE CHRIST**

## **HIS MISSION ON EARTH**

**A Hindu View of the Galileean Teacher**

BY

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## FOREWORD

The mission of Jesus the Christ in the world of men is but very imperfectly recorded in the Bible. And that imperfect record has not been properly understood by the accredited followers of the Jewish prophet. For example, the doctrines of *Karma* and Reincarnation, the principles of meditation and the realities of the super-conscious life, have always been denied by the orthodox Christian theologians. That Christ was a great oriental prophet who differed in no way from the other great world-prophets, that all religions are true in the same way in which all the radii of a circle are equal, and that whenever man in his despondency needs divine help God comes down to help him are truths which the Christian has yet to learn. And Christ's philosophy of loving one's enemies and of spiritual fraternity with all souls is a thing which has been rejected in toto by the professed adherents of the teachings of Jesus as being impracticable in the world of men.

This publication coming as it does from an orthodox Hindu is an attempt at solving the problem of the failure of Christianity to evangelise humanity in spite of its being backed up by the most powerful and the most wealthy nations of the world. As Sri Swami Vivekananda says, the Hindu is a true Christian and a true Christian is certainly a Hindu. The present author has had ample opportunities of studying the life of the great prophet of Judaea from various standpoints and feels proud in being enabled to place before the world this Hindu view of the great Galileean teacher, which task he believes he has been in a sense commissioned to do by the great Nazarene himself. The author feels no temerity in confessing that he is a Christian in the truer sense of the word, a much better, purer and holier Christian than many a so-called convert to whom, in his opinion, have appealed aspects of modern Christianity other than the simplicity, purity and holiness of the gospel of the son of man. May the true gospel of Jesus the Christ spread on the earth!

TRICHINOPOLY,

*Easter Sunday, 1918.*

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M. S. NATESON.



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॥ श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः ॥

## CHAPTER I.

### The Birth of the Master

**A** SOLEMN period of the world's destiny was approaching; the sky was overshadowed with darkness and filled with sinister omens. *No.*

2. Alexander the great, the legendary conqueror, who accompanied by a mere handful of Greeks crossed Asia as far as India and dreamed of universal empire, but not by the oppression of the people and the destruction of religion and science after the fashion of the Cæsars, was the heroic genius who understood what the world needed and endeavoured to restore the need. His idea was to reconcile Asia and Europe by a synthesis of religions, supported by scientific authority. Impelled by this thought, he paid homage to the science of Aristotle, to the Minerva of ~~Athens~~, to the Jehovah of Jerusalem, to the Osiris of Egypt and to the Brahman of the Hindus, recognising an identical divinity and wisdom beneath these different symbols. Though unfortunately he died in the intoxication of victory and the glorious accomplishment of

his dream of world-conquest, leaving his empire to selfish and unworthy generals, his thoughts did not die with him. Oriental philosophy, Judaism, Hellenism and Egyptian eclecticism, all stood ready to be fused into the coming Jesus the Christ.

3. In the meanwhile rose the Roman she-wolf: a greedy oligarchy deified political power in the name of brute force, by the oppression of the human intellect. Having conquered all the nations of the earth, Rome arrogated to herself universal power; the Caesars destroyed all individual and collective life outside the capital. This military dictatorship was the direct cause of a lascivious and public parody in the Roman circus where nude virgins, martyrs to their faith, were torn to pieces and devoured by savage beasts amid the plaudits of thousands of spectators.

4. And yet, among the nations conquered by Rome, there was one which called itself the chosen of God. The Israelites, a conquered people, preserved their indomitable faith, even as the Hindus of India preserve their religion to-day.

5. Israel was, as long foretold by her prophet-, eagerly expecting the advent of a saviour, while other nations in the excess of their evil had a presentiment of the same. For centuries Jewish mythology had dreamt of a divine child. The temples spoke of him in mystery; astrologers calculated his coming:

even poets\* sang of him. The world was expecting a spiritual king, such a one as would be understood by the poor and the lowly.

6. When will this child be born? From what divine world will this soul come? In what brilliant lightning-flash will it descend? By what wonderful purity, what superhuman energy, will it remember the abandoned heaven? By what mighty effort will it return from the depth of its earthly consciousness, taking mankind with it in its train?

7. No one could say, but all were waiting and expecting. At the very moment when Herod the great was dying, Herod who after a sumptuous and blood-stained reign had covered Judea with splendid palaces and human hecatombs, Herod who was hated by all, haunted by the spectres of his innumerable victims, among whom were his very wife and children, Herod from whose presence had fled the very women of his harem, Herod who had been abandoned by his very bodyguard, Herod whose deathbed was watched by his sister, his evil genius, the instigator of his foulest crimes, in order that she might seize the reins

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\* A golden progeny from heaven descends ;  
Oh ! Speed the mother's pains,  
And haste the glorious birth.  
Labouring nature calls thee to sustain  
The nodding frame of heaven and earth.

of sovereignty, at the very moment of Herod's death, was born the future spiritual king of humanity, and those who had eyes to see were silently preparing for his reign in profound humility.

*save that certain fact*  
 8. Jesus was probably born in Nazareth, although according to the Biblical legends, he might have chanced to have been born in Bethlehem. It was certainly in an abandoned corner of Galilee that his childhood was passed and the first and the greatest of the Christian mysteries accomplished, viz., the appearance of the soul of the Christ. He was the son of Mary, wife of the carpenter Joseph, a Galileean woman of noble origin, affiliated to the Essenes. *Where auth?*

9. Legend has woven a tissue of marvels around the birth of Jesus. If legend gives refuge to a thousand and one superstitions, it conceals psychic truths, which are but little known; for they are above and beyond the perception of the mass of mankind. One fact is however, clear from the legendary history of Mary, which is that Jesus was consecrated before his birth to a prophetic mission by the wish of his mother. The same thing is related of several heroes and prophets among all the nations of the world. Mary felt herself, as it were, illumined by the one she incarnated and considered him as the ethereal essence of the lord.

10. This is a very important matter as it introduces the student of religion to the esoteric, the ancient, the constant and the living tradition in Israel, and along this channel, to the real significance of the Christian legend. The figurative language of Judaic monotheism masks the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul. The woman initiate appeals to a superior soul and demands to receive it in her womb, to bring to birth a prophet.\* The Jews considerably veiled this doctrine and completely absented it from their official worship although it formed a part of the secret doctrine of the initiates. "The word of the lord came unto me, saying, before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee ; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." "Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am."

11. An attempt to discover the esoteric significance of Jewish tradition and Christian legend leads one to conclude that the action of Providence, or the influx of the spiritual world, which co-operates in the birth of any man whoever he be, is more powerful and evident at the birth of all men of genius, whose appearance can in no way be explained and justified by the sole law of physical atavism. This influx reached

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\* Devaki prayed to the lord to receive him in her womb ; and he was born of her as Sri Krishna.

its greatest intensity in the case of Jesus, the prophet destined to change the face of the world. The soul chosen for a divine mission comes from a divine world. It comes freely and consciously; but that it may enter upon an earthly life a chosen vessel is needed and the appeal of a highly gifted mother, who by the attitude of her moral being, the desire of her soul and the purity of her life has a presentiment, attracts and incarnates into her very blood and flesh the soul of the redeemer, destined in the eyes of man to become a son of God. Such is the profound truth beneath the ancient idea of the virgin mother. Hindu genius had already given expression to this idea in the legend of Sri Krishna. The gospels of Mathew and Luke have rendered it with an admirable simplicity and poetic instinct.

12. To the soul which comes from heaven, birth is a death. However sublime the spirit be, once imprisoned in flesh, it temporarily loses the remembrance of all its past; once engaged in corporal life, the development of its earthly consciousness is subjected to mundane laws. It falls under the force of the elements. The higher its origin, the greater will be the effort to regain its dormant powers, its celestial innateness and to become conscious of its mission.

13. Profound and tender souls like those of Jesus need silence and peace to spring into manifesta-

tion. Jesus spent his early days amid the calm of Galilee. His impressions were always gentle, austere and serene. His birth-place was like a corner of heaven dropped on the side of a mountain. The simple houses surrounded by groves of pomegranates, vines and fig-trees; the myriads of doves filling the skies, the verdant freshness of the pure mountain air, the open clear horizon as seen from the mountain tops, the imposing back-ground of the quiet, solemn home-life of the pious patriarchal families,—such were the environments of Jesus in his youth: To him the home was a sanctified temple. It was at home that Jesus received his early instruction and first became acquainted with the scriptures under the teaching of his parents. To the child's mind, every passing Jewish festival presented the eternal not merely in the starry sky, but even in the candlestick, in the speech of the father, in the silent love of the mother. He questioned eagerly both his father and mother; but was told, "The word of God lives in his prophets alone. Some day, the wise Essenes, solitary wanderers by mount Carmel and the Dead Sea, will give thee an answer."

14. Into the synagogues he often went only to hear the arid teachings of the Phariseean doctors of the law whose text-tortures oftener drove him out.

15. When alone in silent meditation, he read



thoughts and saw souls; he caught glimpses of divinely beautiful and shining beings bending over him. Wonderful visions came in his sleep and often-times he felt attracted by a mighty dazzling light and plunged into an incandescent sun. He felt perfect reconciliation with all beings and was in sublime harmony with the universe. Yet more, a mysterious light sprang forth from the depths of his inner nature and carried him away to the most distant tracts of space, yet united him by secret vibrations with all souls. What was this light? Was it not the source of souls and worlds? Jesus called it, "My father in heaven."

16. The feeling of unity with God is the first great revelation of Jesus, which guided him with an invincible feeling of certainty and made him gentle and indomitable.

17. Jerusalem, the pride of Israel, the centre of Jewish aspirations, the holy Kasi, as it were, of the primitive Israelites, had witnessed torrents of blood shed in its streets by repeated legions of Roman tyranny. After the horror of the humiliation following on the Cæsarian occupation, after the decimation of the sanhedrim and the reduction of the pontiff to a mere slave, Herod, by an irony of fate, had rebuilt the temple with magnificence and glory. When on his first pilgrimage Jesus saw the city girt around with

walls like a gloomy fortress with the Roman amphitheatre at its gates and Roman legions—lance in hand—keeping watch from the heights, he admired the beauty of the marble porticoes and observed the purple-and-violet-robed priests sacrificing bulls and goats in front of the sanctuary and sprinkling the blood over the people with blessings. To him, all these had no resemblance whatever to the temple of his dreams.

18. Among the poorer classes, he saw maniacs issuing from veritable sepulchres and at the water's brink, lepers, paralytics, wretches and others suffering from diverse diseases.

19. Then his soaring soul propounded the question, "Of what use are these priests, this temple and these sacrifices, since they do not afford relief to such terrible suffering?"

20. His soul, full of anguish, he left Jerusalem and proceeded towards the open peaks of Galilee crying with a heartfelt prayer, "Father in heaven, grant that I may know and heal and save."



## CHAPTER II.

### The Preparation for His Mission

**T**HE premature death of Joseph set Mary's son entirely free to follow any reasonable track to arrive at the solution of the problems now surging in his soul. He wandered from place to place, welcomed everywhere by the Essenes, who treated him with honour by reason of his superior faculties, his ardent love and an indescribable divine element that manifested itself throughout his entire being. From them he learnt the doctrine of the divine word, already taught by Sri Krishna in India, by the priests of Osiris in Egypt and by Orpheus and Pythagoras in Greece.

22. According to this doctrine, the highest manifestation of God is man, who is the image of the universal being in constitution, form, organs and intelligence and who possesses all the faculties characteristic of that being. In the mundane evolution of humanity, God is scattered, split up and mutilated, so to speak, in the multiplicity of men and of human imperfections. In the mundane world, man suffers, struggles and tries to realise his own divine nature. He is the son of man, the perfect man, the man type, the profoundest thought of God, remaining hidden in

the infinite abyss of desire and power, *satva* enveloped by *rajas* and *tamas*. And yet, at certain epochs, when humanity is to be saved from some terrible gulf and set on a higher stand, a chosen one identifies himself with divinity, attracts it to himself by strength, wisdom and love and manifests it anew to men. Then divinity by the virtue and the breath of the spirit is completely present in him; the son of man becomes the son of God and his living word. In other ages and among other nations there had already appeared sons of God, but since Moses, none had arisen in Israel. All the prophets were expecting this messiah. Who could this elect be and when would he appear before Israel?

23. Jesus passed several years among the Essenes. He learnt under them to develop his spirit, to gain entire mastery over his body. He spent his time in self-questioning and in meditation on the destiny of humanity.

24. About this time John the baptist was preaching on the banks of the Jordan. Driven into the wilderness by a fierce, unyielding piety, he had been living there a life of prayer, fasting and mortification, a life of the strictest asceticism. Over his bare body he wore a camel's hair cloak as a sign of the penitence he wished to impose on himself. Deeply did he feel his country's distress and ardently did he await deli-

verance. He announced to the multitudes who eagerly drank in his words that the time was drawing nigh for the coming of the messiah. According to his national custom of ablution, he looked upon baptism as a visible symbol, a public accomplishment of the inner purification he insisted upon. This new ceremony attracted multitudes to the sacred waters of the Jordan. The populace, attracted by his message, were unwilling to depart after baptism and asked to take up arms under his leadership to commence the holy war. Among the populace was Jesus.

25. Jesus had heard of the wonderful renunciation of the baptist and wished to see him, to listen to his message and to be baptised in public. His desire was to present himself in humble and respectful attitude to the prophet who seemed to possess the courage of his convictions.

26. From a distance he saw the rough ascetic, bearded and with a lion-like head, standing on a wooden pulpit under a rustic tent, and preaching to the multitudes with the voice of thunder, 'Repent ye, prepare ye the way of the lord, make his paths straight.' He called the Pharisees and the Sadducees a race of vipers. He added that 'the axe is already laid at the root of the tree' and said of the messiah, 'I baptise you with water only; but he shall baptise:

you with fire; the latchet of his shoes I am not worthy to unloose."

27. Jesus drew nearer; John did not know him. He saw him, a mere unit in the crowd, enter into the water up to the girdle and humbly bend to receive the baptismal sprinkling. When he raised his head after the baptismal ceremony was over, the savage preacher's fiery eyes met the Galileean's calm and gentle gaze. A quiver ran through the man of the wilderness as he saw the look of wondrous sweetness beaming from the eyes of Jesus, and involuntarily the question escaped his lips, 'Art thou the messiah?' The mysterious Essene made no reply, but with bowed head and crossed hands he awaited the blessing. John extended both his hands and touched him on the head and he disappeared among his companions.

28. The baptist saw Jesus depart with mingled feelings of doubt, joy and sadness. Who and what was he himself in the presence of the light he had seen emanate from the eyes of the unknown Galileean, a light which seemed to illuminate the entire universe. John believed that if only the young Essene could be the expected avatar, oh! then indeed might he retire. He probably felt the gloom and the weariness of an old lion tired of roaring and now silently awaiting the end.

29. But what were Jesus's thoughts? 'Can I be the messiah?' He recognised his own identity with all existence; but the miseries of humanity flashed athwart his thoughtful brain. 'How to save man from misery?' was the one question that tortured him day and night since he took leave of John.

30. Jesus could only answer this question by inmost meditation. He therefore wended his way along the steep footpath that led to the grotto on the mountain-side. Thence one could see below in a gorge vineyards and human dwellings away in the distance, the grey motionless Dead Sea and the lonely mountains surrounding the land. In this sequestered spot grew a few strengthening spices and figs, and across it ran a little stream of sparkling water—sole nourishment to the sage in meditation. Jesus retired to this spot and fixing himself in an easy posture he mentally reviewed the whole of humanity's past life. Rome was in sovereign power and with Rome was the sign of the beast, the apotheosis of evil, the absence of religion. Israel was in her last throes, crushed beneath the might of Rome. Was he to incite the people to rebellion and re-establish by force the temporal sovereignty of his race? Should he declare himself a son of David and in his wrath trample upon the people and overthrow the mighty power of Rome? Could violence overcome violence? Would the sword

put an end to government set up by the sword? Ought he not rather to place before humanity the truth of all religion—to preach the kingdom of heaven and thereby substitute the reign of grace for that of the law? But to accomplish this the hollowness of the human professions had to be exposed. The veil of the temple should be torn away and the emptiness of the sanctuary laid bare. Could he thus fight against the spirit of evil braving at once the anger of Herod and of Cæsar?

31. And yet it must be done. An unseen voice spoke to him 'Rise and speak!'

32. Jesus struggled for days and nights, at times standing, then again on his knees, or sometimes prostrate upon the ground. Finally he entered that state of ecstasy, that state of communion with the spirit all-pervading, in which the very depth of consciousness awakens, and from which the sage could contemplate the truth that converted his intelligence into a burning furnace.

33. Then came the clash of thunder, the mountain shook to its foundations. A whirlwind came from distant space, and when it had spent itself out, Jesus saw in the heavens a shining constellation of four stars—the sign of the swastika—symbol at once of life, death and of resurrection. The brilliant symbol grew larger and came nearer and Jesus himself



plunged into it for a moment losing his individuality.

34. When Jesus came back to consciousness he found himself surrounded by an inky-black darkness ; the swastika could nowhere be seen. In a moment loud thunderclaps shook the mountains to their foundations ; from the depths of the Dead Sea emerged a dark sombre mountain surmounted with a black cross. On it was nailed a man in the agony of death. Looking close at the figure, Jesus saw it was he himself suffering the tortures of crucifixion. Contemplating on the image for a while, Jesus felt for the awful miseries of humanity which could only land man in the terrible struggle he now saw face to face. A secret voice whispered in his ears, 'Will you take that cross and save humanity ? Without you man is lost. Save man, you who know how to save by the power of your love.' Then did the Galileean slowly arise and with outstretched arms, in an attitude of supreme love, exclaimed, 'Mine be the cross. Let but the world be saved.' Immediately Jesus felt a mighty rending asunder throughout his frame and a terrible groan escaped from his lips. At the same time the dark sombre mountain and the black cross faded away, a gentle radiant beam of divine felicity entered the soul of the seer and from the heights of heaven did a voice descend saying, 'Glory to the son of man, to him who can become the son of God.'

35. When Jesus awoke from this vision, he found himself in his usual environment; but he was no longer the same. In the fathomless depths of his consciousness, he had solved the problem of human misery and had won peace and calmness. He knew he had become the messiah by an irrevocable act of his will.

36. Soon after he descended from the mountain grotto and learned that John the baptist had been seized and imprisoned. Far from showing fear at this omen, he saw therein a sign that the time was ripe and that he must act. Accordingly he began to preach what he called the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. He meant to bring religion to the door of the poor and the lonely, to translate for them the doctrine of love and sacrifice, of *siva* and *seva*. Like boldness had never before been seen since the days of Gautama Sakhya Muni who, moved by mighty compassion, had preached on the banks of the holy Ganges. The same sublime compassion for humanity animated Jesus.



### CHAPTER III.

## The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven

**S**TRONG in the entire gift of his very being, Jesus now began to share with men the kingdom of heaven which he had won in meditation and strife, in torments of pain and boundless joy. He came to rend asunder the veil of human ignorance and reveal to miserable man the future beyond the tomb. He said, 'Let hope be the soul of your deeds: beyond this earth, there is a world of souls, a more perfect life. This I know, for I come therefrom; thither will I lead you. To attain it mere aspiration will not suffice. It must be realised here by love and by charity, by *siva* and by *seva*. Believe me, the kingdom of heaven is within you.' He preached on the banks of lakes, in fishermen's boats, by the fountains and in the oases of verdure abounding in the land. He healed the sick by laying on of hands, a mere look or command, often by his presence alone. Multitudes followed him eagerly drinking the words of wisdom he spontaneously uttered now and then. His followers were mostly recruited from the meek and the lowly, men of upright, unsullied nature, possessed of an ardent faith. A single look enabled him to fathom the depths of a soul. He needed no other test, and

when he said, 'Follow me,' he was obeyed. A single gesture summoned to his side the timid and the unhesitating to whom he said, 'Come unto me, ye that are heavyladen, and I will give you rest.' He divined the innate thoughts of men who in trouble and confusion recognised the master. At times he recognised in unbelief uprightness of heart. From his disciples he required neither oaths nor profession of faith. His doctrine was neither fasting nor maceration nor public penance. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' He unrolled to them the four beatitudes, the marvellous power of humility, of sorrow for others, of the inner goodness of the heart and of hunger and thirst after righteousness. He depicted in glowing colours the active and triumphant virtues, compassion, purity of heart, militant kindness and martyrdom for righteousness's sake. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

38. The kingdom of heaven that Jesus went about preaching expanded not in the distant heavens, but in the hearts of his listeners. They exchanged looks of astonishment with one another. Those poor in spirit had of a sudden become so rich. Mightier than Moses, the soul's magician struck their hearts from which rushed up an immortal spring of life. When once he had laid before them the necessity of attaining this unheard-of happiness, he was not afraid

of asking them to do extraordinary things, nor were they astonished at his strange commands. 'Resist not evil; love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which spitefully use you and persecute you.' So powerful was the stream of love with which his heart overflowed that he carried the multitude away along the current. In his presence they found everything easy. Mighty the novelty, singular the boldness of such teaching. The Galileean prophet set the inner life of the soul above all outer practices, the invisible above the visible, the kingdom of heaven above the benefits of the earth. He commanded that the choice be made between God and man. He summed up his doctrine, 'Love your neighbour as yourself, because you are he.' 2

39. In addition to his public teaching, he gave private instruction to his disciples, parallel with and explanatory of the former, showing its inner meaning. This inner meaning is not known to and recognised by the present-day theologians. To those who are conversant with the religious teachings and teachers of ancient India, the philosophy of the Christ is found to animate every act of his life.

40. One example of this private teaching is given in the gospel of John. Nicodemus, a learned

Pharisee, called on Jesus one night and said, 'Rabbi, I know that you are a teacher come from God.' Jesus answered, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus: 'Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again?', Jesus: 'Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

41. Under this evidently symbolic form, Jesus taught the ancient doctrine of spiritual regeneration. To be born of water and of the spirit, to be baptised by water and by fire, purifies the soul and signifies the assimilation of the truth by the soul, the result of which is the complete victory of spirit over matter.

42. Again man is constituted of (1) the material body, (2) the lower self or mind, I, the possessor of the material body and (3) the spirit or the higher self. The physical body is quickly perishable and the lower self leads but a longer existence only to find itself merged into the immortal higher self. According as man obeys the suggestions of the higher self or the lower self, according as he attaches himself to the one or to the other, the material body becomes pure or impure. Jesus taught that baptism by water purified the material body and baptism by fire purified the lower self.

43. Thus spoke Jesus to Nicodemus in the silence of the night. The eyes of the Galileean shone

with a mysterious brilliance, a divine light, which moved his inmost soul and made him remain faithful to Jesus though he continued to live among the Pharisees.

44. Why did Jesus give this doctrine to Nicodemus? The Pharisee was dragged to him because of the miracles he worked. Ordinary medicine combats the evils of the body by acting upon it. Jesus being a centre of spiritual force acted on the soul of the patient and by his soul on his body. The physical cure was only the proof of Jesus's power to pardon and heal the soul, of a moral cure. Jesus's wonderful power of humanity alone constituted the magic of his miracles.

45. Thus did hundreds of disciples come to him to take part in his inner teaching, to take *mantram*, as it were, from the great teacher. Still, in order to give lasting power to the resurrected word of the lord, there was needed an active group of chosen ones who would renounce all their earthly concerns at the call of the Master and become the pillars of the spiritual temple Jesus wished to erect in the place of the empty sanctorum of Jerusalem. Hence the institution of the apostles. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John, fishermen by occupation, belonging to respectable families, formed the first apostles. Though eight others were admitted later

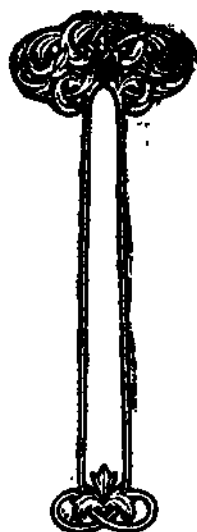
on, John alone constituted the son of thunder, for he was of a deep hidden nature, his ardent soul was always concentrated on itself. To his apostles Jesus was known as the son of man, which meant that he was the messenger of suffering humanity. These simple apostles for a long time believed the kingdom of heaven to be a political kingdom of which Jesus was to be the crowned king and they themselves his ministers. But Jesus convinced them that they were wrong.

46. Nor did Jesus fail to minister to women who came to him in search of positive knowledge. The Christ is the liberator and restorer of women in spite of St. Paul and the fathers of the church who by lowering woman to the role of man's servant have wrongly interpreted the master's thoughts. She has been glorified in India since the Vedic times. Jesus raised her by restoring her mission of love and divination.

47. As he went about preaching, he would sometimes become passive and a veil would overshadow his illumined countenance. He thought of the difficulties of his work, of the uncertain faith of the apostles, of the hostile powers of the world. The temple, Jerusalem, humanity itself, with its crime and ingratitude, seemed to overwhelm him beneath a living mountain.



48. Would his arms upraised to heaven be strong enough to grind this mountain to powder? One evening, a star of mystery—a fear—shone in Jesus's eyes. He was lamenting over all mankind.



## CHAPTER IV.

### The Struggle and the End

**J**ESUS'S preaching and increasing popularity stirred the Jewish religious authorities whose sense of pride and prestige had by this time become deeply wounded. The struggle long foreseen by the messiah had at last come, creating consternation and terror in the minds of his disciples.

50. The opposition which Jesus had to face and overcome was mainly twofold. The Pharisees, who were of a lofty and a heroic but a narrow and a haughty patriotism, were the chiefs of the democratic party, holding the people under their control. Strict observers of the letter of the law, they were quite opposed to the spirit of religion, which to them consisted mainly of rites and ceremonies, fasts and public penance. They would often pray aloud in the open streets, with contrite mien and sooty faces, ostentatiously distributing unwilling alms. But their social life was one of luxury and they indulged largely in the search after authority and power.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, represented the sacerdotal and the aristocratic party. Priests by heredity, they accepted nothing but the letter of the

law and denied even the existence of a future life. To them religion meant sacerdotal ceremonies in their entirety. In society they were stern and hard-hearted men, possessed of a single faith, that of their own superiority.

51. What else could Jesus meet with from men such as these except bitter and strenuous opposition? Jesus, the Christ, the initiate, the inheritor of the prophets, the great seer, found in the temples of the Jews materialistic ignorance and priestly imposture, in the Jewish schools and synagogues hypocrisy—interested morality under the guise of formal worship. High above, on a throne of beastly power, sat the apotheosis of evil and the deification of matter, almighty Caesar, the sole God of the Roman empire, only possible master of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Like all the great reformers who had preceded him, Jesus proceeded to directly attack the doctrines and the institutions of the Jews setting aside the men who, as individuals, might be excellent. The challenge was unhesitatingly delivered and war openly declared against the powers that threatened the whole Jewish nation with everlasting ruin.

52. Jesus was generally on the defensive side; he preferred to reply to the attacks of his enemies who were jealous of him by reason of his popularity and his healing of the sick. His whole career was

throughout characterised by prudence and boldness, by meditative reserve and impetuous action. His enemies accosted him with mocking urbanity as to why he had dealings with publicans and sinners. With hypocritical gentleness, he was asked why he and his disciples dared to pluck ears of corn on the holy sabbath day. They reproached him for healing the sick on the day of rest. With magnanimous gentleness Jesus replied to them by means of tender and courteous words. When his gospel of the kingdom of heaven, his speech of the love of god, his parables of the lost sheep and of the prodigal son, fell on barren soil, a flash of deep indignation illuminated his eyes and he spoke, "Hypocrites, do you not on the sabbath day remove the chain from your own oxen's necks and lead them away to the water trough? May not the children of god be therefore delivered from disease and death?" Not knowing what else to say, the Pharisees accused Jesus of being an agent of the evil one. This was a direct declaration of war; he was called an agent of Beelzebub, an arrant blasphemer. "Hypocrites, generation of vipers, your sin against me might be forgiven, but that intellectual perversity, that denial of the good and the true, will certainly land you in irremediable vice and evil."

58. Thus, in course of time, Jesus began to change tactics. Instead of merely defending himself he replied to the charges of his offenders by more

vigorous charges. "Why do you, by reason of your boasted superiority, transgress the laws of God? God commanded, 'Honour thy father and thy mother.' You dispense with that if as an alternative money flows into the temple. You serve God with your lips, but your piety is devoid of heart." As the attacks grew in vehemence, Jesus began to emphatically proclaim himself as the messiah. He uttered in so many plain words the ills that Israel would have to undergo and appealed to other nations saying that the lord would send other labourers into his vineyard. The Pharisees had no effective refort to offer; so they resolved to lay hands on him as a blasphemer in the name of the laws of Moses. They induced him to utter heretical sayings. They questioned him about the adulterous woman and about Cæsar's coin. His wonderfully psychological and skilfully strategical replies could create no impression in their venomous hearts.

54. Worked on and excited by a tyrannical priestcraft and by the accredited leaders of the people, annoyed at every turn, tracked and disheartened everywhere by wily countenances, spies and treacherous emissaries, deserted by the multitude who began to turn away from him because he was not founding any political kingdom on earth, Jesus thought of leaving the country. Meanwhile John the baptist had been executed; Jesus recognised his own fate in the death of his precursor. He had no doubt of it since-

the vision of the crucified man who rose from the Dead Sea, and he grew more and more certain of his fate as time advanced. A presentiment of the future came over him. His prophetic vision saw the whole country of Judæa change into a wilderness and in anguish, 'Woe unto thee, Capernaum, woe unto thee, Bethsaida,' escaped his lips. He and his chosen band soon left the country.

55. As the thirteen proceeded by the long route that led away from the holy city, Jesus plunged in silent meditation. He reflected on the impossibility of the triumph of his gospel of the kingdom of heaven over the unremitting plotting of his enemies. His thoughts dwelt with anxiety on his spiritual children who had left everything to follow him—family, profession and fortune. Could he leave them to themselves? Had they sufficiently understood his message of peace and goodwill? Would they believe in him, at least in his doctrine at all events? He questioned them, 'Whom say men that I am and whom say ye that I am?' Peter answered, 'I know that you are the Christ, the son of the living God.'

56. Jesus felt an immense joy. His disciples, one at least among them, had understood him. His spirit would live in them and his people might yet be saved, though he himself might be no more. The apostle Peter had now become the stone on which the

Christ wished to build his church and against which the gates of hell should not prevail.

57. The messiah and his apostles reached the pagan city of the Caesarea, near the source of the Jordan. Entering into the temple of Pan, Jesus contemplated that symbol of divinity with an indulgent smile. He recognised in it the effigy of the divine beauty, whose radiant model he bore within his own soul. He did not come to utter maledictions against the heathen; his heart was large enough and his doctrine sufficiently vast to embrace all people, and to say to men of every religion, "Raise your heads and learn that you all have one same father."

58. One day, while in the temple of Pan, Jesus's mind went to bygone times, to the vision of the crucified man. Once again did he see the terrible phantom of the cross spring forth from the depths of the Dead Sea. The hour of the great sacrifice had at length come. A secret voice whispered in his ear, "The path of victory passes through the gate of anguish." And he determined to choose that path.

59. Jesus knew the power of prayer, the greatest of all forces man could command. The Vedic sages had declared, "Prayer upholds heaven and rules the gods." And the Jewish messiah certainly knew the truth of the declaration of the Vedic sages of India. So he and three of his dis-

ciples retired to the summit of a lofty mountain. While there, the disciples saw the master's form shine like the sun; his garments became brilliant as the solar light. Trembling at the strange sight, they prostrated themselves before the vision when lo! they themselves fell into a profound sleep which simultaneously seemed to them an intense waking state. A short time after, at the touch of the messiah, they were restored to full consciousness.

60. But Jesus himself, in what state was he? As he plunged into that state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* all earthly things were effaced from his vision and he returned along the depths of his consciousness into some previous existence, a spiritual and a divine one. He was conscious of but one homogeneous atmosphere, one fluid substance, one eternal light. Within that radiance legions of celestial beings, with many mouths and eyes, with many visions of marvel, with many ornaments, with many upraised weapons, wearing necklaces and vestures, anointed with unguents, with faces turned everywhere, formed a moving vault, a firmament of ethereal bodies.\* Suddenly he heard the roar of thunder; there yawned a black abyss, and Jesus plunged into the pit. No further doubt was possible. The time was at hand. Heaven had spoken and earth cried aloud for help.

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\* Cf. *Viśvarūpadarsana* in the *Bhagavad Gita* Chapter XI verses 15 and 16.



Jesus descended from the mountain top and retraced his way to Jerusalem.

61. As he entered by the eastern gate of Jerusalem, he was welcomed by the people, he who would soon be crowned king. Even his apostles still shared this illusion. He alone knew that he was advancing to death. Resolutely was he offering himself, fully conscious of the end. He appeared in the temple and drove out the cattle-dealers and the money-changers saying, "Ye have converted my father's house into a den of thieves." A deputation from the temple priests waited on him and he was asked, "By what authority dost thou these things?" Jesus answered, "By the same authority whence came the baptism of John." His former prophecy concerning the temple and his affirmation that he was the messiah, had already sealed his fate; his death had already been determined upon; when it was to take place was only a question of time. All his enemies were hesitating as to the manner of seizing in public this 'seducer of the people.' As the struggle continued with increasing bitterness on the part of his persecutors, he manifested a mighty energy and uttered terrible maledictions against those debasers of religion. "Woe unto you who shut up the kingdom of heaven against such as wish to enter in! You fools and blind, who pay tithes and neglect justice, pity and fidelity; you are like unto whited sepulchres

which appear beautiful from without, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." Seeing Herod's temple of Jehovah and judging its duration by the moral worth of those who ruled therein he spoke to his disciples, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

62. The writers of the Synoptic gospels have handed down to humanity the apocalyptic sayings of Jesus amid a confusion which renders them almost impenetrable and unintelligible. Orthodox theology depicts him as a very ordinary visionary instead of the sage initiate, the sublime *seer* that he was, every word of whose teaching and every action of whose life proclaim him to have been.

63. As the end drew near the master felt that he must give a few words of advice to his chosen band. He accordingly took them to the top of a mountain and spoke to them of four increasing spheres of planetary and cosmic life. The first of these, the individual psychic life, signified the ultimate destiny of the individual soul after death. This destiny is determined by its own nature and the acts of its earthly life. "Take heed, lest you at any time become drunken, so that death shall come upon you unawares. Be you ready, for at such an hour as you think not, the Lord of Time does come." The

second sphere of life that Jesus spoke of was the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem and the end of Israel. "Nation shall rise against nation; They shall deliver you up to be afflicted; This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." The third sphere of life that Jesus mentioned was the terrestrial evolution and end of humanity. This end orthodox theology finds at some definite epoch, but according to the messiah, it must be reached by a graduated series of successive realisations, the attainment of *Jivanmuktatvam* after numberless births. The fourth and the last sphere of life that Jesus informed his disciples of was the divine evolution of humanity. Hindu philosophy had named it the complete reabsorption of matter by spirit or the end of a day of Brahma. The Buddhists knew it as Nirvana or the complete annihilation of the individual. After millions of centuries, through series of births and deaths, incarnations and regenerations, all human individuals must enter a definite spiritual state. Thus did Jesus reveal to his disciples his identity with the prophets of the earth who had gone before him, messengers of life and of the eternal word. In this sentiment of unity and solidarity with immutable truths, he addressed to his afflicted disciples these pregnant words, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.'

64. While the master was thus instructing his

disciples, the Sanhedrim had already discussed his fate and decided on his death. Judas Iscariot, a type of cold egoism and absolute positivism, incapable of the faintest idealism, a disciple of the Christ merely from a spirit of worldly speculation, who was relying on the earthly and immediate triumph of the prophet and consequently of his own gain, had already promised to deliver his master into the hands of his persecutors. Jesus, in his boundless charity and universal love had received him as one of his disciples in the hope of changing his nature. When he saw that matters were not proceeding as he wished, his deception became converted into a feeling of rage and the wretch denounced the man who in his conception was only a false messiah who had deceived him.

65. It was the eve of Easter and an unknown friend invited the thirteen for supper. The floor was covered with a rich carpet; and the guests in a truly oriental fashion squatted themselves on the carpet. As they began their meal, Jesus, seated between John and Peter, said 'I have desired to eat this passover with you before my end: for I shall not eat any more thereof.' Then Jesus took some bread and broke it and distributed it among his disciples saying, "This is my body which is given for you." He also took the wine cup and said, "which is shed for you."

66. This symbolic act is the conclusion and *resumé* of the entire teaching of the Christ; it is the consecration and rejuvenation of a very ancient custom. Through the bread and the wine Jesus extends to humanity fraternity and initiation formerly limited only to a few. The profoundest mystery, the greatest force, of his own sacrifice formed the invisible but infrangible chain of love between himself and his followers. His glorified soul thereby gained a divine power over their hearts, as well as over the hearts of all mankind in general. The cup of truth, the golden nectar of immortality, the *Payasa* of sacred love, in which he saw his own blood reflected, he gave over to his well-beloved disciples with ineffable tenderness. The supper over they all retired to the mountain top to spend the rest of the night in meditation and prayer.

67. Confused cries, torches flashing beneath the gloomy mountain trees, and the clash of arms testified to the approach of a band of soldiers entrusted with the warrant for his arrest. Judas Iscariot kissed the master in the presence of the soldiers so that he might be recognised. Jesus returned the kiss with a look of supreme tenderness. The soldiers with rude cruel hands seized the Galileean rabbi. The terrified disciples fled after a brief resistance. Jesus accompanied by Peter and John was led before the

Sanhedrim at midnight. Priests and sacrificers were solemnly seated round the illustrious accused, who was absolutely undefended.

68. The high priest accused Jesus of being a seducer of the people. A few sham witnesses were examined and Jesus was called on to say whether he was or was not the Christ, the son of the living God. He replied "He whom you now see as a criminal in your presence shall be seen in future sitting on the right hand of God." The Sadducee agnostic was incapable of understanding the messiah. He meant, "With me is religious law. Mysteries shall in future be revealed by other means. Religions and acts of worship which cannot be demonstrated and vivified by one another shall be void of authority." In addressing his accuser and judge Jesus spoke to the whole world.

69. The high priest then proceeded to deliver judgment. He called on his men saying, "You have heard his blasphemy." A gloomy murmur rose in reply, "He is guilty and deserves capital punishment." The guards spat upon him and struck him in the face. He was led before the Roman governor Pilate whose sanction was required before the penalty could be imposed. Pontius Pilate asked him, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world." Pilate was puzzled

and again came the query, "Art thou a king at all?" Jesus again replied, "To this end was I born—that I should bear witness unto the Truth." Pilate understood him not and questioned him, "What is Truth?" The Roman governor received no answer and thought he might liberate the Jew. But the mob grew furious and madly exclaimed, 'Crucify him.'

70. Pilate, who throughout his life had seen so much bloodshed, was amazed at the stoic suffering of the Galileean prophet. He was overcome with emotion and was on the point of pronouncing a sentence of acquittal. The priests of the Sanhedrim saw his emotion and were filled with consternation. They all exclaimed in one voice, "He has made himself the son of God. We have no king but Cæsar. If you set free this man, you are no friend of Cæsar's." Irresistible argument! Denying God is of little import, but conspiring against Cæsar is the crime of crimes. Pilate was therefore compelled to pronounce sentence of condemnation much against his personal inclination. The shadow of Cæsar at last sent him to be crucified.

71. The impatient mob followed the executioners to where the gentle messiah had to undergo the death penalty. The few followers who remained faithful to the end were scared away. The defender of the poor, the feeble and the oppressed had to end

his earthly career in that state of abject martyrdom. The prophet, consecrated by the Essenes, must be nailed to the cross. The son of God must descend into the depths of all earthly horror. The stern hard-hearted soldiers drove with mighty hammer-blows nails into his feet, objects of passionate reverence, and through those hands, never raised except in blessing. Amid the convulsions of pain and internal anguish the saviour pleaded for his executioners, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

72. The death-agony lasted from noon to sunset. The powers of the messiah having been abdicated, Jesus became a mere man, no longer able to endure the physical tortures of his body. The man of sorrows lost sight of his heaven and fathomed the depths of human suffering. There stood the victim, nailed on the cross, taunted by those he loved, hated by those he helped, insulted by those he wished to save. In terrifying prophetic vision Jesus saw the crimes of fanatical priests and unjust potentates committed for the suppression of the virtue and the truth. The brilliant light of the heavens was now lost to humanity and Jesus wept, "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?"

73. Sublime Nazarene, divine son of man, human son of God, even now, the victory was his.



Doubtless his soul had once again found in light more dazzling than before the heaven of his earliest dreams. Down through the ages, his word has made a victorious march and the uplifted hands and eyes of those he has healed and comforted is the only glory he desires. But, even as these lines are written, a shudder of dread comes over the contemplation of his physical tortures ; but his Roman and Jewish persecutors would understand him not. They turned their cruel gates on his tranquil corpse and spoke in wonder to one another, " Could this have been a God?"



## CHAPTER V.

### The Resurrection

**I**N spite of the Romans and the Jews, the drama was not really finished. The formidable struggle between divine love and the forces of evil was indeed at an end, but where was the victor? Were the self-satisfied Jewish priests, who returned home well-pleased at having seen the messiah breathe his last, triumphant? At least so thought the few faithful weeping women whom the Roman legionaries had permitted to approach the foot of the cross, as well as the terror-stricken disciples who were now seen nowhere. They saw with open eyes that their messiah had instead of being enthroned at Jerusalem died an infamous death on the cross. A gloomy silence of deep despair hung over the spiritual children of the Christ. Even Peter and John were overwhelmed with grief. Darkness was all around. Not one ray of divine felicity illumined their souls. And yet, in the gospels, this deep despair is succeeded by a sudden miraculous joy, and a cry of ecstasy, resounded throughout Judæa, ‘*The dead has risen.*’

75. Mary Magdalene was in the excess of her grief wandering near the scene. She was the first

to see the master risen from the dead and to recognise him by his voice as he called her by name. She fell at his feet and was about to kiss his garments when lo ! the apparition vanished. Jesus was then met by certain women whom he directed to go and tell his brethren to proceed to Galilee where they should see him. Elsewhere, as the eleven—the reason for the disappearance of the twelfth must be known by this time—were met in private to discuss about the future, Jesus appeared to them and commanded them to *go into all the world and preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven*. He suddenly disappeared into thin air and was seen by about five hundred people on a mountain. He was seen once again by the eleven, after which the apparitions ceased. Faith, however, had been created and the first impulse was given to the spread of Christianity.

76. Three years later, Saul, a young Pharisee, violently opposed to the new religion, whose defenders he persecuted with all the violence he could command, was proceeding on a journey, accompanied by several friends. On the way he was enveloped in a flame of fire and fell to the earth. An aerial voice spoke, "I am Jesus; will you cease to persecute my followers?" The Pharisean agnostic, at once converted to the faith of Christ, became St. Paul the apostle.

77. A complete revolution was effected in the souls of the apostles. The resurrected Christ was living in glory; he had spoken to them; the heavens had opened and the kingdom of God took a firm hold of their minds. They were now eager to be persecuted and felt joy in martyrdom. Christianity had become a living force.

78. The absurd idea of the resurrection of the body is the greatest stumbling-block of Christian dogma. Nothing has been known about the disappearance of Jesus's body. It may be that his disciples destroyed it by cremation to prevent its pollution by his enemies. The material and absurd idea of the reconstitution of the decomposed corpse of the master was finally adopted by the Christian church. The gross materialism and absurdity of this conception have misinterpreted for the orthodox theologians the entire philosophy of the Christ; hence the failure of churchianity to redeem man from ignorance and sin. To those who are conversant with oriental philosophy, the resurrection of Jesus's body signifies the purification and regeneration of the etherial body, the soul of Jesus. As St. Paul says, 'Man possesses an animal body and a spiritual body.' The more Jesus's soul was spiritualised, the farther away it went from earth and could manifest itself to man only when he was in a state of ecstasy or profound

slumber. It also sometimes happened that a mighty prophet like Jesus, a veritable son of God, manifested himself to his chosen band, in the waking state of consciousness. Thus there is nothing supernatural in the reappearance of Jesus. Man in his corporeal state can scarcely believe the reality of the miracle. But in the spiritual state, matter appears unreal and non-existent to him. The early Christians, however, were so much dazzled and blinded that they interpreted the master's teaching too literally and misunderstood the meaning of his words.

79. The Brahmins of India, on the other hand, had found the key of the past and the future lives, formulating the organic law of reincarnation and the alternation of life and death. Jesus the Christ, as is seen from his life, taught man more a Brahmin philosophy than a distinct and separate religion seeking to proselytise the Brahmins themselves! The magic of Jesus's doctrine was the ardent faith in the life eternal and the necessity he felt of living it in the world of action—a reaffirmation of the Hindu idea of Dharma-Artha-Kama-Moksha. The Christ said to the human soul, "Rise, heaven is thy fatherland." The Hindu Advaitin rises a step higher and says, "You are one with God."\*

80. "In three days will I destroy the temple and in three days will I build it up again," thus had Jesus spoken. Did he fulfil this promise? The temple referred to is the moral temple of regenerate humanity. Jesus's whole moral teaching, his unending brotherly love and a universal human alliance is an ideal sought to be inculcated in the consciousness of mankind during nineteen centuries of Christianity. Whether man has been able to live up to the ideal or not, it is certain that throughout the civilised world there lives none who does not realise the greatness of the ideal. Hence it may be inferred that Jesus's moral temple, if not finished, is at least based on a strong and indestructible foundation. Rising above the church which is too small to contain him, above politics which deny him, above society which is governed by instinct, by passion and by might, above science which only half understands him, the moral temple of regenerate man will and must in the distant future bring solace and comfort to all humanity. But this temple would only be the shadow of the greater temple, the god in which spoke ages ago "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss, even ye that reside in higher spheres, I have found the ancient one who is beyond all darkness and delusion. Knowing him you shall be saved from death again."

शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्रा  
आये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः ॥

वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तम्  
आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ॥

तमेव विदित्वाऽतिमृत्युमेति  
नान्यः पन्था विशतेऽयनाय ॥



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