

THE ANCIENT  
CHURCH:  
ITS HISTORY, DOCTRINE, WOR-  
SHIP, AND CONSTITUTION,  
TRACED FOR THE FIRST THREE  
HUNDRED YEARS.

By  
W.D. KILLEN, D.D.

RDMc  
Publishing  
FORT WORTH, TEXAS  
2007

# Contents

## PERIOD 1

FROM THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TO THE  
DEATH OF THE APOSTLE JOHN, A.D. 100

### SECTION 1

#### HISTORY OF THE PLANTING AND GROWTH OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

<i>The Roman Empire at the Time of the Birth of Christ</i> .....	11
<i>The Life of Christ</i> .....	21
<i>Supplementary Note</i> .....	37
<i>The Year of Christ Birth</i> .....	37
<i>The Twelve and the Seventy</i> .....	42
<i>The Progress of the Gospel from the Death of Christ to the Death of the Apostle James, The Brother of John. A.D. 31 to A.D. 44</i> .....	53
<i>The Ordination of Paul and Barnabas; Their Missionary Tour in Asia Minor; And the Council of Jerusalem. A.D. 44 to A.D. 51</i> .....	68
<i>The Introduction of the Gospel into Europe, and the Ministry of Paul at Philippi. A.D. 52</i> .....	85
<i>The Ministry of Paul in the Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. A.D. 52 to A.D. 54.</i> .....	94
<i>The Conversion of Apollos, His Character, and the Ministry of Paul in Ephesus. A.D. 54 to A.D. 57.</i> .....	106
<i>Paul's Epistles; His Collection for the Poor Saints at Jerusalem; His Imprisonment There, and at Caesarea and Rome. A.D. 57 to A.D. 63</i> ..	117
<i>Paul's Second Imprisonment, and Martyrdom; Peter, His Epistles, His Martyrdom, and the Roman Church</i> .....	136
<i>The Persecutions of the Apostolic Church, and Its Condition at the Termination of the First Century</i> .....	145

### SECTION 2

#### THE LITERATURE AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

<i>The New Testament, Its History, and the Authority of Its Various Parts.</i>	
<i>The Epistle of Clement of Rome</i> .....	156
<i>The Doctrine of the Apostolic Church</i> .....	166
<i>The Heresies of the Apostolic Age</i> .....	176
<i>Section 3</i> .....	184
<i>The Worship and Constitution of the Apostolic Church</i> .....	184
<i>The Lord's Day—The Worship of the Apostolic Church— Its Symbolic Ordinances and Its Discipline</i> .....	184
<i>The Extraordinary Teachers of the Apostolic Church; And Its Ordinary Office-Bearers, Their Appointment, and Ordination</i> .....	200

<i>The Organization of the Apostolic Church</i> .....	214
<i>The Angels of the Seven Churches</i> .....	227

## PERIOD 2

### FROM THE DEATH OF THE APOSTLE JOHN TO THE CONVERSION OF CONSTANTINE, A.D. 100 TO A.D. 312

#### SECTION 1

##### THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

<i>The Growth of the Church</i> .....	236
<i>The Persecutions of the Church</i> .....	244
<i>False Brethren and False Principles in the Church: Spirit and Character of the Christians</i> .....	268
<i>The Church of Rome in the Second Century</i> .....	282
<i>The Church of Rome in the Third Century</i> .....	293

#### SECTION 2

##### THE LITERATURE AND THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

<i>The Ecclesiastical Writers</i> .....	310
<i>The Ignatian Epistles and Their Claims—The External Evidence</i> .....	330
<i>The Ignatian Epistles and Their Claims—The Internal Evidence</i> .....	348
<i>The Gnostics, The Montanists, and the Manichaeans</i> .....	360
<i>The Doctrine of the Church</i> .....	374

#### SECTION 3

##### THE WORSHIP AND CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

<i>The Worship of the Church</i> .....	388
<i>Baptism</i> .....	396
<i>The Lord's Supper</i> .....	404
<i>Confession and Penance</i> .....	411
<i>The Constitution of the Church in the Second Century</i> .....	418
<i>The Rise of the Hierarchy Connected with the Spread of Heresies</i> .....	436
<i>Prelacy Begins in Rome</i> .....	447
<i>The Catholic System</i> .....	466
<i>Primitive Episcopacy and Presbyterian Ordination</i> .....	477
<i>The Progress of Prelacy</i> .....	488
<i>Synods—Their History and Constitution</i> .....	502
<i>The Ceremonies and Discipline of the Church as Illustrated by Current Controversies and Divisions</i> .....	517
<i>The Theory of the Church, and the History of Its Perversion—Concluding Observations</i> .....	528
<i>Endnotes</i> .....	547

# **PERIOD 1**

## **From the Birth of Christ to the Death of the Apostle John, A.D. 100**

### **SECTION 1**

#### **History of the Planting and Growth of the Apostolic Church**

---

#### **The Roman Empire at the Time of the Birth of Christ**

Upwards of a quarter of a century before the Birth of Christ, the grandnephew of Julius Caesar had become sole master of the Roman world. Never, perhaps, at any former period, had so many human beings acknowledged the authority of a single potentate. Some of the most powerful monarchies at present in Europe extend over only a fraction of the territory which Augustus governed: the Atlantic on the west, the Euphrates on the east, the Danube and the Rhine on the north, and the deserts of Africa on the south, were the boundaries of his empire.

We do not adequately estimate the rank of Augustus among contemporary sovereigns, when we consider merely the superficial extent of the countries placed within the range of his jurisdiction. His subjects probably formed more than one-third of the entire population of the globe, and amounted to about one hundred millions of souls.(Endnote 3:1) His empire embraced within its immense circumference the best cultivated and the most civilised portions of the earth. The remains of its populous cities, its great fortresses, its extensive aqueducts, and its stately temples, may still be pointed

out as the memorials of its grandeur. The capital was connected with the most distant provinces by carefully constructed roads, along which the legions could march with ease and promptitude, either to quell an internal insurrection, or to encounter an invading enemy. And the military resources at the command of Augustus were abundantly sufficient to maintain obedience among the myriads whom he governed. After the victory of Actium he was at the head of upwards of forty veteran legions; and though some of these had been decimated by war, yet, when recruited, and furnished with their full complement of auxiliaries, they constituted a force of little less than half a million of soldiers.

The arts of peace now nourished under the sunshine of imperial patronage. Augustus could boast, towards the end of his reign, that he had converted Rome from a city of brick huts into a city of marble palaces. The wealth of the nobility was enormous; and, excited by the example of the Emperor and his friend Agrippa, they erected and decorated mansions in a style of regal magnificence. The taste cherished in the capital was soon widely diffused; and, in a comparatively short period, many new and gorgeous temples and cities appeared throughout the empire. Herod the Great expended vast sums on architectural improvements. The Temple of Jerusalem, rebuilt under his administration, was one of the wonders of the world.

The century terminating with the death of Augustus claims an undisputed pre-eminence in the history of Roman eloquence and literature. Cicero, the prince of Latin orators, now delivered those addresses which perpetuate his fame; Sallust and Livy produced works which are still regarded as models of historic composition; Horace, Virgil, and others, acquired celebrity as gifted and accomplished poets. Among the subjects fitted to exercise and expand the intellect, religion was not overlooked. In the great cities of the empire many were to be found who devoted themselves to metaphysical and ethical studies; and ques-

tions, bearing upon the highest interests of man, were discussed in the schools of the philosophers.

The barbarous nations under the dominion of Augustus derived many advantages from their connexion with the Roman empire. They had, no doubt, often reason to complain of the injustice and rapacity of provincial governors; but, on the whole, they had a larger share of social comfort than they could have enjoyed had they preserved their independence; for their domestic feuds were repressed by the presence of their powerful rulers, and the imperial armies were at hand to protect them against foreign aggression. By means of the constant intercourse kept up with all its dependencies, the skill and information of the metropolis of Italy were gradually imparted to the rude tribes under its sway, and thus the conquest of a savage country by the Romans was an important step towards its civilisation. The union of so many nations in a great state was otherwise beneficial to society. A Roman citizen might travel without hindrance from Armenia to the British Channel; and as all the countries washed by the Mediterranean were subject to the empire, their inhabitants could carry on a regular and prosperous traffic by availing themselves of the facilities of navigation.

The conquests of Rome modified the vernacular dialects of not a few of its subjugated provinces, and greatly promoted the diffusion of Latin. That language, which had gradually spread throughout Italy and the west of Europe, was at length understood by persons of rank and education in most parts of the empire. But in the time of Augustus, Greek was spoken still more extensively. Several centuries before, it had been planted in all the countries conquered by Alexander the Great, and it was now, not only the most general, but also the most fashionable medium of communication. Even Rome swarmed with learned Greeks, who employed their native tongue when giving instruction in the higher branches of education. Greece itself, however, was considered the head-quarters of intellectual cultivation, and the wealthier Romans were

wont to send their sons to its celebrated seats of learning, to improve their acquaintance with philosophy and literature.

The Roman Empire in the time of Augustus presents to the eye of contemplation a most interesting spectacle, whether we survey its territorial magnitude, its political power, or its intellectual activity. But when we look more minutely at its condition, we may discover many other strongly marked and less inviting features. That stern patriotism, which imparted so much dignity to the old Roman character, had now disappeared, and its place was occupied by ambition or covetousness. Venality reigned throughout every department of the public administration. Those domestic virtues, which are at once the ornaments and the strength of the community, were comparatively rare; and the prevalence of luxury and licentiousness proclaimed the unsafe state of the social fabric. There was a growing disposition to evade the responsibilities of marriage, and a large portion of the citizens of Rome deliberately preferred the system of concubinage to the state of wedlock. The civil wars, which had created such confusion and involved such bloodshed, had passed away; but the peace which followed was, rather the quietude of exhaustion, than the repose of contentment.

The state of the Roman Empire about the time of the birth of Christ abundantly proves that there is no necessary connexion between intellectual refinement and social regeneration. The cultivation of the arts and sciences in the reign of Augustus may have been beneficial to a few, by diverting them from the pursuit of vulgar pleasures, and opening up to them sources of more rational enjoyment; but it is a most humiliating fact that, during the brightest period in the history of Roman literature, vice in every form was fast gaining ground among almost all classes of the population. The Greeks, though occupying a higher position as to mental accomplishments, were still more dissolute than the Latins. Among them literature and sensuality appeared in revolting combination, for their courtesans were their only females who attended to the culture of the intellect. (7:1)

Nor is it strange that the Roman Empire at this period exhibited such a scene of moral pollution. There was nothing in either the philosophy or the religion of heathenism sufficient to counteract the influence of man's native depravity. In many instances the speculations of the pagan sages had a tendency, rather to weaken, than to sustain, the authority of conscience. After unsettling the foundations of the ancient superstition, the mind was left in doubt and bewilderment; for the votaries of what was called wisdom entertained widely different views even of its elementary principles. The Epicureans, who formed a large section of the intellectual aristocracy, denied the doctrine of Providence, and pronounced pleasure to be the ultimate end of man. The Academics encouraged a spirit of disputatious scepticism; and the Stoics, who taught that the practice of, what they rather vaguely designated, virtue, involves its own reward, discarded the idea of a future retribution. Plato had still a goodly number of disciples; and though his doctrines, containing not a few elements of sublimity and beauty, exercised a better influence, it must be admitted, after all, that they constituted a most unsatisfactory system of cold and barren mysticism. The ancient philosophers delivered many excellent moral precepts; but, as they wanted the light of revelation, their arguments in support of duty were essentially defective, and the lessons which they taught had often very little influence either on themselves or others. (8:1) Their own conduct seldom marked them out as greatly superior to those around them, so that neither their instructions nor their example contributed efficiently to elevate the character of their generation.

Though the philosophers fostered a spirit of inquiry, yet, as they made little progress in the discovery of truth, they were not qualified to act with the skill and energy of enlightened reformers; and, whatever may have been the amount of their convictions, they made no open and resolute attack on the popular mythology. A very superficial examination was, indeed, enough to shake the credit of the heathen worship.

The reflecting subjects of the Roman Empire might have remarked the very awkward contrast between the multiplicity of their deities, and the unity of their political government. It was the common belief that every nation had its own divine guardians, and that the religious rites of one country might be fully acknowledged without impugning the claims of those of another; but still a thinking pagan might have been staggered by the consideration that a human being had apparently more extensive authority than some of his celestial overseers, and that the jurisdiction of the Roman emperor was established over a more ample territory than that which was assigned to many of the immortal gods.

But the multitude of its divinities was by no means the most offensive feature of heathenism. The gods of antiquity, more particularly those of Greece, were of an infamous character. Whilst they were represented by their votaries as excelling in beauty and activity, strength and intelligence, they were at the same time described as envious and gluttonous, base, lustful, and revengeful. Jupiter, the king of the gods, was deceitful and licentious; Juno, the queen of heaven, was cruel and tyrannical. What could be expected from those who honoured such deities? Some of the wiser heathens, such as Plato, (9:1) condemned their mythology as immoral, for the conduct of one or other of the gods might have been quoted in vindication of every species of transgression; and had the Gentiles but followed the example of their own heavenly hierarchy, they might have felt themselves warranted in pursuing a course either of the most diabolical oppression, or of the most abominable profligacy. (9:2)

At the time of the birth of our Lord even the Jews had sunk into a state of the grossest degeneracy. They were now divided into sects, two of which, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, are frequently mentioned in the New Testament. The Pharisees were the leading denomination, being by far the most numerous and powerful. By adding to the written law a mass of absurd or frivolous traditions, which, as they

foolishly alleged, were handed down from Moses, they completely subverted the authority of the sacred record, and changed the religion of the patriarchs and prophets into a wearisome parade of superstitious observances. The Sadducees were comparatively few, but as a large proportion of them were persons of rank and wealth, they possessed a much greater amount of influence than their mere numbers would have enabled them to command. It has been said that they admitted the divine authority only of the Pentateuch, (10:1) and though it may be doubted whether they openly ventured to deny the claims of all the other books of the Old Testament, it is certain that they discarded the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, (10:2) and that they were disposed to self-indulgence and to scepticism. There was another still smaller Jewish sect, that of the Essenes, of which there is no direct mention in the New Testament. The members of this community resided chiefly in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, and as our Lord seldom visited that quarter of the country, it would appear that, during the course of His public ministry, He rarely or never came in contact with these religionists. Some of them were married, but the greater number lived in celibacy, and spent much of their time in contemplation. They are said to have had a common-stock purse, and their course of life closely resembled that of the monks of after-times.

Though the Jews, as a nation, were now sunk in sensuality or superstition, there were still some among them, such as Simeon and Anna, noticed in the Gospel of Luke, (10:3) who were taught of God, and who exhibited a spirit of vital piety. "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul," and as the books of the Old Testament were committed to the keeping of the posterity of Abraham, there were "hidden ones" here and there who discovered the way to heaven by the perusal of these "lively oracles." We have reason to believe that the Jews were faithful conservators of the inspired volume, as Christ uniformly takes for granted the accuracy

of their "Scriptures." (11:1) It is an important fact that they did not admit into their canon the writings now known under the designation of the *Apocrypha*. (11:2) Nearly three hundred years before the appearance of our Lord, the Old Testament had been translated into the Greek language, and thus, at this period, the educated portion of the population of the Roman Empire had all an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the religion of the chosen people. The Jews were now scattered over the earth, and as they erected synagogues in the cities where they settled, the Gentile world had ample means of information in reference to their faith and worship.

Whilst the dispersion of the Jews disseminated a knowledge of their religion, it likewise suggested the approaching dissolution of the Mosaic economy, as it was apparent that their present circumstances absolutely required another ritual. It could not be expected that individuals dwelling in distant countries could meet three times in the year at Jerusalem to celebrate the great festivals. The Israelites themselves had a presentiment of coming changes, and anxiously awaited the appearance of a Messiah. They were actuated by an extraordinary zeal for proselytism, (11:3) and though their scrupulous adherence to a stern code of ceremonies often exposed them to much obloquy, they succeeded, notwithstanding, in making many converts in most of the places where they resided. (12:1) A prominent article of their creed was adopted in a quarter where their theology otherwise found no favour, for the Unity of the Great First Cause was now distinctly acknowledged in the schools of the philosophers. (12:2)

From the preceding statements we may see the peculiar significance of the announcement that God sent forth His Son into the world "*when the fulness of the time was come.*" (12:3) Various predictions (12:4) pointed out this age as the period of the Messiah's Advent, and Gentiles, as well as Jews, seem by some means to have caught up the expectation that an extraordinary personage was now about to appear on the

theatre of human existence. (12:5) Providence had obviously prepared the way for the labours of a religious reformer. The civil wars which had convulsed the state were now almost forgotten, and though the hostile movements of the Germans, and other barbarous tribes on the confines of the empire, occasionally created uneasiness or alarm, the public mind was generally unoccupied by any great topic of absorbing interest. In the populous cities the multitude languished for excitement, and sought to dissipate the time in the forum, the circus, or the amphitheatre. At such a crisis the heralds of the most gracious message that ever greeted the ears of men might hope for a patient hearing. Even the consolidation of so many nations under one government tended to "the furtherance of the gospel," for the gigantic roads, which radiated from Rome to the distant regions of the east and of the west, facilitated intercourse; and the messengers of the Prince of Peace could travel from country to country without suspicion and without passports. And well might the Son of God be called "The desire of all nations." (13:1) Though the wisest of the pagan sages could not have described the renovation which the human family required, and though, when the Redeemer actually appeared, He was despised and rejected of men, there was, withal, a wide spread conviction that a Saviour was required, and there was a longing for deliverance from the evils which oppressed society. The ancient superstitions were rapidly losing their hold on the affection and confidence of the people, and whilst the light of philosophy was sufficient to discover the absurdities of the prevailing polytheism, it failed to reveal any more excellent way of purity and comfort. The ordinances of Judaism, which were "waxing old" and "ready to vanish away," were types which were still unfulfilled; and though they pointed out the path to glory, they required an interpreter to expound their import. This Great Teacher now appeared. He was born in very humble circumstances, and yet He was the heir of an empire beyond comparison more illustrious than that of the Caesars.

“There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”  
(13:2)

## The Life of Christ

Nearly three years before the commencement of our era, (14:1) Jesus Christ was born. The Holy Child was introduced into the world under circumstances extremely humiliating. A decree had gone forth from Caesar Augustus that all the Roman Empire should be taxed, and the Jews, as a conquered people, were obliged to submit to an arrangement which proclaimed their national degradation. The reputed parents of Jesus resided at Nazareth, a town of Galilee; but, as they were "of the house and lineage of David," they were obliged to repair to Bethlehem, a village about six miles south of Jerusalem, to be entered in their proper place in the imperial registry. "And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that Mary should be delivered, and she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." (14:2)

This child of poverty and of a despised race, born in the stable of the lodging-house of an insignificant town belonging to a conquered province, did not enter upon life surrounded by associations which betokened a career of earthly prosperity. But intimations were not wanting that the Son of Mary was regarded with the deepest interest by the inhabitants of heaven. An angel had appeared to announce the conception of the individual who was to be the herald of his ministry; (15:1) and another angel had been sent to give notice of the incarnation of this Great Deliverer. (15:2) When He was

born, the angel of the Lord communicated the tidings to shepherds in the plains of Bethlehem; “and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying—Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (15:3) Inanimate nature called attention to the advent of the illustrious babe, for a wonderful star made known to wise men from the east the incarnation of the King of Israel; and when they came to Jerusalem “the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.” (15:4) The history of these eastern sages cannot now be explored, and we know not on what grounds they regarded the star as the sign of the Messiah; but they rightly interpreted the appearance, and the narrative warrants us to infer that they acted under the guidance of divine illumination. As they were “warned of God in a dream” (15:5) to return to their own country another way, we may presume that they were originally directed by some similar communication to undertake the journey. It is probable that they did not belong to the stock of Abraham; and if so, their visit to the babe at Bethlehem may be recognised as the harbinger of the union of Jews and Gentiles under the new economy. The presence of these Orientals in Jerusalem attracted the notice of the watchful and jealous tyrant who then occupied the throne of Judea. Their story filled him with alarm; and his subjects anticipated some tremendous outbreak of his suspicions and savage temper. “When the king had heard these things he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” (15:6) His rage soon vented itself in a terrible explosion. Having ascertained from the chief priests and scribes of the people where Christ was to be born, he “sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under.” (16:1)

Joseph and Mary, in accordance with a message from heaven, had meanwhile fled towards the border of Egypt, and thus the holy infant escaped this carnage. The wise men,

on the occasion of their visit, had "opened their treasures," and had "presented unto him gifts, *gold*, and frankincense, and myrrh," (16:2) so that the poor travellers had providentially obtained means for defraying the expenses of their journey. The slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem was one of the last acts of the bloody reign of Herod; and, on his demise, the exiles were divinely instructed to return, and the child was presented in the temple. This ceremony evoked new testimonies to His high mission. On His appearance in His Father's house, the aged Simeon, moved by the Spirit from on high, embraced Him as the promised Shiloh; and Anna, the prophetess, likewise gave thanks to God, and "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." (16:3) Thus, whilst the Old Testament predictions pointed to Jesus as the Christ, living prophets appeared to interpret these sacred oracles, and to bear witness to the claims of the newborn Saviour.

Though the Son of Mary was beyond all comparison the most extraordinary personage that ever appeared on earth, it is remarkable that the sacred writers enter into scarcely any details respecting the history of His infancy, His youth, or His early manhood. They tell us that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit," (17:1) and that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man;" (17:2) but they do not minutely trace the progress of His mental development, neither do they gratify any feeling of mere curiosity by giving us His infantile biography. In what is omitted by the penmen of the New Testament, as well as in what is written we must acknowledge the guidance of inspiration; and though we might have perused with avidity a description of the pursuits of Jesus when a child, such a record has not been deemed necessary for the illustration of the work of redemption. It would appear that He spent about thirty years on earth almost unnoticed and unknown; and He seems to have been meanwhile trained to the occupation of a carpenter. (17:3) The obscurity of His early career must doubtless be

regarded as one part of His humiliation. But the circumstances in which He was placed enabled Him to exhibit more clearly the divinity of His origin. He did not receive a liberal education, so that when He came forward as a public teacher “the Jews marvelled, saying — How knoweth this man letters *having never learned?*” (17:4) When He was only twelve years old, He was “found in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions; and all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” (18:1) As He grew up, He was distinguished by His diligent attendance in the house of God; and it seems not improbable that He was in the habit of officiating at public worship by assisting in the reading of the law and the prophets; for we are told that, shortly after the commencement of His ministry, “He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and *stood up for to read.*” (18:2)

When He was about thirty years of age, and immediately before His public appearance as a prophet, our Lord was baptized of John in Jordan. (18:3) The Baptist did not, perhaps, preach longer than six months, (18:4) but it is probable that during his imprisonment of considerably upwards of a year, he still contributed to prepare the way of Christ; for, in the fortress of Machaerus in which he was incarcerated, (18:5) he was not kept in utter ignorance of passing occurrences, and when permitted to hold intercourse with his friends, he would doubtless direct their special attention to the proceedings of the Great Prophet. The claims of John, as a teacher sent from God, were extensively acknowledged; and therefore his recognition of our Lord as the promised Messiah, must have made a deep impression upon the minds of the Israelites. The miracles of our Saviour corroborated the testimony of His forerunner, and created a deep sensation. He healed “all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease.” (19:1) It was, consequently, not strange that “His fame went throughout all Syria,” and that “there followed

him great multitudes of people, from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan." (19:2)

Even when the Most High reveals himself there is something mysterious in the manifestation, so that, whilst we acknowledge the tokens of His presence, we may well exclaim— "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." (19:3) When He displayed His glory in the temple of old, He filled it with thick darkness; (19:4) when He delivered the sure word of prophecy, He employed strange and misty language; when He announced the Gospel itself, He uttered some things hard to be understood. It might have been said, too, of the Son of God, when He appeared on earth, that His "footsteps were not known." In early life He does not seem to have arrested the attention of His own townsmen; and when He came forward to assert His claims as the Messiah, He did not overawe or dazzle his countrymen by any sustained demonstration of tremendous power or of overwhelming splendour. To-day the multitude beheld His miracles with wonder, but to-morrow they could not tell where to meet with Him; (19:5) ever and anon He appeared and disappeared; and occasionally His own disciples found it difficult to discover the place of His retirement. When He arrived in a district, thousands often hastily gathered around Him; (19:6) but He never encouraged the attendance of vast assemblages by giving general notice that, in a specified place and on an appointed day, He would deliver a public address, or perform a new and unprecedented miracle. We may here see the wisdom of Him who "doeth all things well." Whilst the secrecy with which He conducted His movements baffled any premature attempts on the part of His enemies, to effect His capture or condemnation, it also checked that intense popular excitement which a ministry so extraordinary might have been expected to awaken.

Four inspired writers have given separate accounts of the life of Christ— all repeat many of His wonderful sayings—