CHAPTER IX.

THE CHILD-LIFE IN NAZARETH

(St. Matt. ii. 19-23; St. Luke ii. 39, 40.)

THE stay of the Holy Family in Egypt must have been of brief duration. The cup of Herod's misdeeds, but also of his misery, was full. During the whole latter part of his life, the dread of a rival to the throne had haunted him, and he had sacrificed thousands, among them those nearest and dearest to him, to lay that ghost. And still the tyrant was not at rest. A more terrible scene is not presented in history than that of the closing days of Herod. Tormented by nameless fears; ever and again a prey to vain remorse, when he would frantically call for his passionately-loved, murdered wife Mariamme, and her sons; even making attempts on his own life; the *delirium* of tyranny, the passion for blood, drove him to the verge of madness. The most loathsome disease, such as can scarcely be described, had fastened on his body, and his sufferings were at times agonizing. By the advice of his physicians, he had himself carried to the baths of Callirhoe (east of the Jordan), trying all remedies with the determination of one who will do hard battle for life. It was in vain. The namelessly horrible distemper, which had seized the old man of seventy, held him fast in its grasp, and, so to speak, played death on the living. He knew it, that his hour was come, and had himself conveyed back to his palace under the palm-trees of Jericho. They had known it also in Jerusalem, and, even before the last stage of his disease, two of the most honored and loved Rabbis - Judas and Matthias - had headed the wild band, which would sweep away all traces of Herod's idolatrous rule. They began by pulling down the immense golden eagle, which hung over the great gate of the Temple. The two ringleaders, and forty of their followers, allowed themselves to be taken by Herod's guards. A mock public trial in the theatre at Jericho followed. Herod, carried out on a couch, was both accuser and judge. The zealots, who had made noble answer to the tyrant, were burnt alive; and the High-Priest, who was suspected of connivance, deposed.

After that the end came rapidly. On his return from Callirhoe, feeling his death approaching, the King had summoned the noblest of Israel throughout the land of Jericho, and shut them up in the Hippodrome, with orders to his sister to have them slain immediately upon his death, in the
grim hope that the joy of the people at his decease would thus be changed into mourning. Five days before his death one ray of passing joy lighted his couch. Terrible to say, it was caused by a letter from Augustus allowing Herod to execute his son Antipater - the false accuser and real murderer of his half-brothers Alexander and Aristobulus. The death of the wretched prince was hastened by his attempt to bribe the jailer, as the noise in the palace, caused by an attempted suicide of Herod, led him to suppose his father was actually dead. And now the terrible drama was hastening to a close. The fresh access of rage shortened the life which was already running out. Five days more, and the terror of Judæa lay dead. He had reigned thirty-seven years - thirty-four since his conquest of Jerusalem. Soon the rule for which he had so long plotted, striven, and stained himself with untold crimes, passed from his descendants. A century more, and the whole race of Herod had been swept away.

We pass by the empty pageant and barbaric splendor of his burying in the Castle of Herodium, close to Bethlehem. The events of the last few weeks formed a lurid back-ground to the murder of 'the Innocents.' As we have reckoned it, the visit of the Magi took place in February 750 a.u.c. On the 12th of March the Rabbis and their adherents suffered. On the following night (or rather early morning) there was a lunar eclipse; the execution of Antipater preceded the death of his father by five days, and the latter occurred from seven to fourteen days before the Passover, which in 750 took place on the 12th of April.

It need scarcely be said, that Salome (Herod's sister) and her husband were too wise to execute Herod's direction in regard to the noble Jews shut up in the Hippodrome. Their liberation, and the death of Herod, were marked by the leaders of the people as joyous events in the so-called *Megillath Taanith*, or Roll of Fasts, although the date is not exactly marked. Henceforth this was to be a *Yom Tobh* (feast-day), on which mourning was interdicted.

Herod had three times before changed his testament. By the first will Antipater, the successful calumniator of Alexander and Aristobulus, had been appointed his successor, while the latter two were named kings, though we know not of what districts. After the execution of the two sons of Mariamme, Antipater was named king, and, in case of his death, Herod, the son of Mariamme II. When the treachery of Antipater was

proved, Herod made a third will, in which Antipas (the Herod Antipas of the New Testament) was named his successor. But a few days before his death he made yet another disposition, by which Archelaus, the elder brother of Antipas (both sons of Malthake, a Samaritan), was appointed king; Antipas tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa; and Philip (the son of Cleopatra, of Jerusalem), tetrarch of the territory east of the Jordan. These testaments reflected the varying phases of suspicion and family-hatred through which Herod had passed. Although the Emperor seems to have authorised him to appoint his successor, Herod wisely made his disposition dependent on the approval of Augustus. But the latter was not by any means to be taken for granted. Archelaus had, indeed, been immediately proclaimed King by the army; but he prudently declined the title, till it had been confirmed by the Emperor. The night of his father's death, and those that followed, were characteristically spent by Archelaus in rioting with his friends. But the people of Jerusalem were not easily satisfied. At first liberal promises of amnesty and reforms had assuaged the populace. But the indignation excited by the late murder of the Rabbis soon burst into a storm of lamentation, and then of rebellion, which Archelaus silenced by the slaughter of not less than three thousand, and that within the sacred precincts of the Temple itself.

Other and more serious difficulties awaited him in Rome, whither he went in company with his mother, his aunt Salome, and other relatives. These, however, presently deserted him to espouse the claims of Antipas, who likewise appeared before Augustus to plead for the royal succession, assigned to him in a former testament. The Herodian family, while intriguing and clamouring each on his own account, were, for reasons easily understood, agreed that they would rather not have a king at all, but be under the suzerainty of Rome; though, if king there must be, they preferred Antipas to Archelaus. Meanwhile, fresh troubles broke out in Palestine, which were suppressed by fire, sword, and crucifixions. And now two other deputations arrived in the Imperial City. Philip,

the step-brother of Archelaus, to whom the latter had left the administration of his kingdom, came to look after his own interests, as well as to support Archelaus. At the same time, a Jewish deputation of fifty, from Palestine, accompanied by eight thousand Roman Jews, clamoured for the deposition of the entire Herodian race, on account of their crimes, and the incorporation of Palestine with Syria - no doubt in hope of the same semi-independence under their own authorities, enjoyed by their fellow-religionists in the Grecian cities. Augustus decided to confirm the last testament of Herod, with certain slight modifications, of which the most important was that Archelaus should bear the title of *Ethnarch*, which, if he deserved it, would by-and-by be exchanged for that of King. His dominions were to be Judæa, Idumæa, and Samaria, with a revenue of 600 talents (about 230,000*l*. to 240,000*l*). It is needless to follow the fortunes of the new Ethnarch. He began his rule by crushing all resistance by the wholesale slaughter of his opponents. Of the High-Priestly office he disposed after the manner of his father. But he far surpassed him in cruelty, oppression, luxury, the grossest egotism, and the lowest sensuality, and that, without possessing the talent or the energy of Herod. His brief reign ceased in the year 6 of our era, when the Emperor banished him, on account of his crimes to Gaul.

It must have been soon after the accession of Archelaus, but before tidings of it had actually reached Joseph in Egypt, that the Holy Family returned to Palestine. The first intention of Joseph seems to have been to settle in Bethlehem, where he had lived since the birth of Jesus. Obvious reasons would incline him to choose this, and, if possible, to avoid Nazareth as the place of his residence. His trade, even had he been unknown in Bethlehem, would have easily supplied the modest wants of his household. But when, on reaching Palestine, he learned who the successor of Herod was, and also, no doubt, in what manner he had inaugurated his reign, common prudence would have dictated the withdrawal of the Infant-Saviour from the dominions of Archelaus. But it needed Divine direction to determine his return to Nazareth.

Of the many years spent in Nazareth, during which Jesus passed from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, the Evangelic narrative has left us but briefest notice. Of His *childhood*: that 'He grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him;' of His *youth*: besides the account of His questioning the Rabbis in the Temple, the year before he attained Jewish majority - that 'He was subject to His parents,' and that 'He increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.' Considering what loving care watched over Jewish child-life, tenderly marking by

not fewer than eight designations the various stages of its development, and the deep interest naturally attaching to the early life of the Messiah, that silence, in contrast to the almost blasphemous absurdities of the Apocryphal Gospels, teaches us once more, and most impressively, that the Gospels furnish a history of the Saviour, not a biography of Jesus of Nazareth.

St. Matthew, indeed, summarises the whole outward history of the life in Nazareth in one sentence. Henceforth Jesus would stand out before the Jews of His time - and, as we know, of all times, by the distinctive designation: 'of Nazareth,' {hebrew} (*Notsri*), Ναζωραῖος, the Nazarene.' In the mind of a Palestinian a peculiar significance would attach to the by-Name of the Messiah, especially in its connection with the general teaching of prophetic Scripture. And here we must remember, that St. Matthew primarily addressed his Gospel to Palestinian readers, and that it is the Jewish presentation of the Messiah as meeting Jewish expectancy. In this there is nothing derogatory to the character of the Gospel, no accommodation in the sense of adaptation, since Jesus was not only the Saviour of the world, but especially also the King of the Jews, and we are now considering how He would stand out before the Jewish mind. On one point all were agreed: His Name was *Notsri* (of Nazareth). St. Matthew proceeds to point out, how entirely this accorded with prophetic Scripture - not, indeed, with any single prediction, but with the whole language of the prophets. From this the Jews derived not fewer than eight designations or Names by which the Messiah was to be called. The most prominent among them was that of *Tsemach*, or 'Branch.' We call it the most prominent, not only because it is based upon the clearest Scripture-testimony, but because it evidently occupied the foremost rank in Jewish thinking, being embodied in this earliest portion of their daily liturgy: 'The *Branch* of David, Thy Servant, speedily make to shoot forth, and His Horn exalt Thou by Thy Salvation....Blessed art Thou Jehovah, Who causeth to spring forth (literally: to branch forth) the Horn of Salvation' (15th Eulogy). Now, what is expressed by the word *Tsemach* is also conveyed by the term *Netser*, 'Branch,' in such passages as Isaiah xi,1, which was likewise applied to the Messiah. Thus, starting from Isaiah xi. 1, *Netser* being equivalent to *Tsemach*, Jesus would, as *Notsri* or *Ben Netser*, bear in popular parlance, and that on the ground of prophetic Scriptures, the exact equivalent of the best-known designation of the Messiah. The more significant this, that it was not a self-chosen nor man-given name, but arose, in the providence of God, from what otherwise might have been called the accident of His residence. We admit that this is a Jewish view; but then this Gospel is the Jewish view of the Jewish Messiah.

But, taking this Jewish title in its Jewish significance, it has also a deeper meaning, and that not only to Jews, but to all men. The idea of Christ as the Divinely placed 'Branch' (symbolized by His Divinely-appointed early residence), small and despised in its forthshooting, or then visible appearance (like Nazareth and the Nazarenes), but destined to grow as the Branch sprung out of Jesse's roots, is most marvellously true to the whole history of the Christ, alike as sketched 'by the prophets,' and as exhibited in reality. And thus to us all, Jews or Gentiles, the Divine guidance to Nazareth and the name Nazarene present the truest fulfilment of the prophecies of His history.

Greater contrast could scarcely be imagined than between the intricate scholastic studies of the Judæans, and the active pursuits that engaged men in Galilee. It was a common saying: 'If a person wishes to be rich, let him go north; if he wants to be wise, let him come south' - and to Judæa, accordingly, flocked, from ploughshare and workshop, whoever wished to become 'learned in the Law.' The very neighbourhood of the Gentile world, the contact with the great commercial centres close by, and the constant intercourse with foreigners, who passed through Galilee along one of the world's great highways, would render the narrow exclusiveness of the Southerners impossible. Galilee was to Judaism 'the Court of the Gentiles' - the Rabbinic Schools of Judæa its innermost Sanctuary. The natural disposition of the people, even the soil and climate of Galilee, were not favourable to the all-engrossing passion for Rabbinic study. In Judæa all seemed to invite to retrospection and introspection; to favour habits of solitary thought and study, till it kindled into fanaticism. Mile by mile as you travelled southwards, memories of the past would crowd around, and thoughts of the future would rise within. Avoiding the great towns as the centres of hated heathenism, the traveller would meet few foreigners, but everywhere encounter those gaunt representatives of what was regarded as the superlative excellency of his religion. These were the embodiment of Jewish piety and asceticism, the possessors and expounders of the mysteries of his faith, the fountain-head of wisdom, who were not only sure of heaven

themselves, but knew its secrets, and were its very aristocracy; men who could tell him all about his own religion, practiced its most minute injunctions, and could interpret every stroke and letter of the Law - nay, whose it actually was to 'loose and to bind,' to pronounce an action lawful or unlawful, and to 'remit or retain sins,' by declaring a man liable to, or free from, expiatory sacrifices, or else punishment in this or the next world. No Hindoo fanatic would more humbly bend before Brahmin saints, nor devout Romanist more venerate the members of a holy fraternity, than the Jew his great Rabbis. Reason, duty, and precept, alike bound him to reverence them, as he reverenced the God Whose interpreters, representatives, deputies, intimate companions, almost colleagues in the heavenly Sanhedrin, they were. And all around, even nature itself, might seem to foster such tendencies. Even at that time Judæa was comparatively desolate, barren, grey. The decaying cities of ancient renown; the lone highland scenery; the bare, rugged hills; the rocky terraces from which only artificial culture could woo a return; the wide solitary plains, deep glens, limestone heights – with distant glorious Jerusalem ever in the far background, would all favour solitary thought and religious abstraction.

It was quite otherwise in Galilee. The smiling landscape of Lower Galilee invited the easy labour of the agriculturist. Even the highlands of Upper Galilee were not, like those of Judæa, sombre, lonely, enthusiasm-killing, but gloriously grand, free, fresh, and bracing. A more beautiful country - hill, dale, and lake - could scarcely be imagined than Galilee Proper. It was here that Asher had 'dipped his foot in oil.' According to the Rabbis, it was easier to rear a forest of olive-trees in Galilee than one child in Judæa. Corn grew in abundance; the wine, though not so plentiful as the oil, was rich and generous. Proverbially, all fruit grew in perfection, and altogether the cost of living was about one-fifth that in Judæa. And then, what a teeming, busy population! Making every allowance for exaggeration, we cannot wholly ignore the account of Josephus about the 240 towns and villages of Galilee, each with not less than 15,000 inhabitants. In the centres of industry all
then known trades were busily carried on; the husbandman pursued his happy toil on genial soil, while by the Lake of Gennesaret, with its unrivalled beauty, its rich villages, and lovely retreats, the fisherman plied his healthy avocation. By those waters, overarched by a deep blue sky, spangled with the brilliancy of innumerable stars, a man might feel constrained by nature itself to meditate and pray; he would not be likely to indulge in a morbid fanaticism.

Assuredly, in its then condition, Galilee was not the home of Rabbinism, though that of generous spirits, of warm, impulsive hearts, of intense nationalism, of simple manners, and of earnest piety. Of course, there would be a reverse side to the picture. Such a race would be excitable, passionate, violent. The Talmud accuses them of being quarrelsome, but admits that they cared more for honour than for money. The great ideal teacher of Palestinian schools was Akiba, and one of his most outspoken opponents a Galilean, Rabbi José. In religious observances their practice was simpler; as regarded canon-law they often took independent views, and generally followed the interpretations of those who, in opposition to Akiba, inclined to the more mild and rational – we had almost said, the more human - application of traditionalism. The Talmud mentions several points in which the practice of the Galileans differed from that of Judæa - all either in the direction of more practical earnestness, or of alleviation of Rabbinic rigorism. On the other hand, they were looked down upon as neglecting traditionalism, unable to rise to its speculative heights, and preferring the attractions of the Haggadah to the logical subtleties of the Halakhah. There was a general contempt in Rabbinic circles for all that was Galilean. Although the Judæan or Jerusalem dialect was far from pure, the people of Galilee were especially blamed for neglecting the study of their language, charged with error in grammar, and especially with absurd malpronunciation, sometimes leading to ridiculous mistakes. 'Galilean - Fool!' was so common an expression, that a learned lady turned with it upon so great a man as R. José, the Galilean, because he had used two needless words in asking her the road to Lydda. Indeed, this R. José had considerable prejudices to overcome, before his remarkable talents and learning were fully acknowledged.

Among such a people, and in that country, Jesus spent by far the longest part of His life upon earth. Generally, this period may be described as that of His true and full Human Development - physical, intellectual, spiritual - of outward submission to man, and inward submission to God, with the attendant results of 'wisdom,' 'favour,' and 'grace.' Necessary, therefore, as this period was, if the Christ was to be True Man, it cannot be said that it was lost, even so far as His Work as Saviour was concerned. It was more than the preparation for

that work; it was the commencement of it: *subjectively* (and passively), the self-abnegation of humiliation in His willing submission;
and *objectively* (and actively), the fulfilment of all righteousness through it. But into this 'mystery of piety' we may only look afar off - simply remarking, that it almost needed for us also these thirty years of *Human Life*, that the overpowering thought of His Divinity might not overshadow that of His Humanity. But if He was subject to such conditions, they must, in the nature of things, have affected His development. It is therefore not presumption when, without breaking the silence of Holy Scripture, we follow the various stages of the Nazareth life, as each is, so to speak, initialed by the brief but emphatic summaries of the third Gospel.

In regard to the *Child-Life*, we read: 'And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.' This marks, so to speak, the lowest rung in the ladder. Having entered upon life as the Divine Infant, He began it as the Human Child, subject to all its conditions, yet perfect in them.

These conditions were, indeed, for that time, the happiest conceivable, and such as only centuries of Old Testament life-training could have made them. The Gentile world here presented terrible contrast, alike in regard to the relation of parents and children, and the character and moral object of their upbringing. Education begins in the *home*, and there were not homes like those in Israel; it is imparted by influence and example, before it comes by teaching; it is acquired by what is seen and heard, before it is laboriously learned from books; its real object becomes instinctively felt, before its goal is consciously sought. What Jewish fathers and mothers were; what they felt towards their children; and with what reverence, affection, and care the latter returned what they had received, is known to every reader of the Old Testament. The relationship of father has its highest sanction and embodiment in that of God towards Israel; the tenderness and care of a mother in that of the watchfulness and pity of the Lord over His people. The semi-Divine relationship between children and parents appears in the location, the far more than outward duties which it implies in the wording, of the Fifth Commandment. No punishment more prompt than that of its breach; no description more terribly realistic than that of the vengeance which overtakes such sin.

From the first days of its existence, a religious atmosphere surrounded the child of Jewish parents. Admitted in the number of God's chosen people by the deeply significant rite of circumcision, when its name was first spoken in the accents of prayer, it was henceforth separated unto God. Whether or not it accepted the privileges and obligations implied in this dedication, they came to him directly from God, as much as the circumstances of his birth. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, the God of the promises, claimed him, with all of blessing which this conveyed, and of responsibility which resulted from it. And the first wish expressed for him was that, 'as he had been joined to the covenant,' so it might also be to him in regard to the 'Torah' (Law), to 'the Chuppah' (the marriage-baldachino), and 'to good works;' in other words, that he might live 'godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world' - a holy, happy, and God-devoted life. And what this was, could not for a moment be in doubt. Putting aside the overlying Rabbinic interpretations, the ideal of life was presented to the mind of the Jew in a hundred different forms - in none perhaps more popularly than in the words, 'These are the things of which a man enjoys the fruit in this world, but their possession continueth for the next: to honour father and mother, pious works, peacemaking between man and man, and the study of the Law, which is equivalent to them all.' This devotion to the Law was, indeed, to the Jew the all in all - the sum of intellectual pursuits, the aim of life. What better thing could a father seek for his child than this inestimable boon?

The first education was necessarily the mother's. Even the Talmud owns this, when, among the memorable sayings of the sages, it records one of the School of Rabbi Jannai, to the effect that knowledge of the Law may be looked for in those, who have sucked it in at their mother's breast. And what the true mothers in Israel were, is known not only from instances in the Old Testament, from the praise of woman in the Book of Proverbs, and from the sayings of the son of Sirach (Ecclus. iii.), but from the Jewish women of the New Testament. If, according to a somewhat curious traditional principle, women were dispensed from all such positive obligations

as were incumbent at fixed periods of time (such as putting on phylacteries), other religious duties devolved exclusively upon them. The Sabbath meal, the kindling of the Sabbath lamp, and the setting apart a portion of the dough from the bread for the household, these are but instances, with which every 'Taph,' as he clung to his mother's skirts, must have been familiar. Even before he could follow her in such religious household duties, his eyes must have been attracted by the *Mezuzah* attached to the door-post, as the name of the Most High on the outside of the little folded Parchment was reverently touched by each who came or went, and then the fingers kissed that had come in contact with the Holy Name. Indeed, the duty of the *Mezuzah* was incumbent on women also, and one can imagine it to have been in the heathen-home of Lois and Eunice in the far-off 'dispersion,' where Timothy would first learn to wonder at, then to understand, its meaning. And what lessons for the past and for the present might not be connected with it! In popular opinion it was the symbol of the Divine guard over Israel's homes, the visible emblem of this joyous hymn: 'The Lord shall preserve thy going out and coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.'

There could not be national history, nor even romance, to compare with that by which a Jewish mother might hold her child entranced. And it was his own history - that of his tribe, clan, perhaps family; of the past, indeed, but yet of the present, and still more of the glorious future. Long before he could go to school, or even Synagogue, the private and united prayers and thedomestic rites, whether of the weekly Sabbath or of festive seasons, would indelibly impress themselves upon his mind. In mid-winter there was the festive illumination in each home. In most houses, the first night only one candle was lit, the next two, and so on to the eighth day; and the child would learn that this was symbolic, and commemorative of the *Dedication of the Temple*, its purgation, and the restoration of its services by the lion-hearted Judas the Maccabee. Next came, in earliest spring, the merry time of *Purim*, the Feast of Esther and of Israel's deliverance through her, with its good cheer and boisterous enjoyments. Although the Passover might call the rest of the family to Jerusalem, the rigid exclusion of all leaven during the whole week could not pass without its impressions. Then, after the Feast of Weeks, came bright summer. But its golden harvest and its rich fruits would remind of the early dedication of the first and best to the Lord, and of those solemn processions in which it was carried up to Jerusalem. As autumn seared the leaves, the Feast of the New Year spoke of the casting up of man's accounts in the great Book of Judgment, and the fixing of destiny for good or for evil. Then followed the Fast of the Day of Atonement, with its tremendous solemnities, the memory of which could never fade from mind or imagination; and, last of all, in the week of the Feast of Tabernacles, there were the strange leafy booths in which they lived and joyed, keeping their harvest-thanksgiving; and praying and longing for the better harvest of a renewed world.

But it was not only through sight and hearing that, from its very inception, life in Israel became religious. There was also from the first positive teaching, of which the commencement would necessarily devolve on the mother. It needed not the extravagant laudations, nor the promises held out by the Rabbis, to incite Jewish women to this duty. If they were true to their descent, it would come almost naturally to them. Scripture set before them a continuous succession of noble Hebrew mothers. How well they followed their example, we learn from the instance of her, whose son, the child of a Gentile father, and reared far away, where there was not even a Synagogue to sustain religious life, had 'from an infant known the Holy Scriptures,' and that in their life-moulding influence. It was, indeed, no idle boast that the Jews 'were from their swaddling-clothes...trained to recognise God as their Father, and as the Maker of the world;' that, 'having been taught the knowledge (of the laws) from earliest youth, they bore in their souls the image of the commandments;' that 'from their earliest consciousness they learned the laws, so as to have them, as it were, engraven upon the soul;' and that they were 'brought up in learning,' 'exercised in the laws,' 'and made acquainted with the acts of their predecessors in order to their imitation of them.'

But while the earliest religious teaching would, of necessity, come from the lips of the mother, it was the father who was 'bound to teach his son.' To impart to the child knowledge of the Torah conferred as great spiritual distinction, as if a man had received the Law itself on Mount Horeb. Every other engagement, even the necessary meal, should give place to this paramount duty; nor should it be forgotten that, while here real labour was necessary, it would never prove fruitless. That man was of the profane vulgar (an *Am ha-arets*), who had

sons, but failed to bring them up in knowledge of the Law. Directly the child learned to speak, his religious instruction was to begin - no doubt, with such verses of Holy Scripture as composed that part of the Jewish liturgy, which answers to our Creed. Then would follow other passages from the Bible, short prayers, and select sayings of the sages. Special attention was given to the culture of the *memory*, since forgetfulness might prove as fatal in its consequences as ignorance or neglect of the Law. Very early the child must have been taught what might be called his birthday-text - some verse of Scripture beginning, or ending with, or at least containing, the same letters as his Hebrew name. This guardian-promise the child would insert in its daily prayers. The earliest hymns taught would be the Psalms for the days of the week, or festive Psalms, such as the *Hallel*, or those connected with the festive pilgrimages to Zion.

The regular instruction commenced with the fifth or sixth year (according to strength), when every child was sent to school. There can be no reasonable doubt that at that time such schools existed throughout the land. We find references to them at almost every period; indeed, the existence of higher schools and Academies would not have been possible without such primary instruction. Two Rabbis of Jerusalem, specially distinguished and beloved on account of their educational labours, were among the last victims of Herod's cruelty. Later on, tradition ascribes to Joshua the son of Gamla the introduction of schools in every town, and the compulsory education in them of all children above the age of six. Such was the transcendent merit attaching to this act, that it seemed to blot out the guilt of the purchase for him of the High-Priestly office by his wife Martha, shortly before the commencement of the great Jewish war. To pass over the fabulous number of schools supposed to have existed in Jerusalem, tradition had it that, despite of this, the City only fell because of the neglect of the education of children. It was even deemed unlawful to live in a place where there was no school. Such a city deserved to be either destroyed or excommunicated.

It would lead too far to give details about the appointment of, and provision for, teachers, the arrangements of the schools, the method of teaching, or the subjects of study, the more so as many of these regulations date from a period later than that under review. Suffice it that, from the teaching of the alphabet or of writing, onwards to the farthest limit of instruction in the most advanced Academies of the Rabbis, all is marked by extreme care, wisdom, accuracy, and a moral and religious purpose as the ultimate object. For a long time it was not uncommon to teach in the open air; but this must have been chiefly in connection with theological discussions, and the instruction of youths. But the children were gathered in the Synagogues, or in School-houses, where at first they either stood, teacher and pupils alike, or else sat on the ground in a semicircle, facing the teacher, as it were, literally to carry into practice the prophetic saying: 'Thine eyes shall see thy teachers.' The introduction of benches or chairs was of later date; but the principle was always the same, that in respect of accommodation there was no distinction between teacher and taught. Thus, encircled by his pupils, as by a crown of glory (to use the language of Maimonides), the teacher - generally the *Chazzan*, or Officer of the Synagogue - should impart to them the precious knowledge of the Law, with constant adaptation to their capacity, with unwearied patience, intense earnestness, strictness tempered by kindness, but, above all, with the highest object of their training ever in view. To keep children from all contact with vice; to train them to gentleness, even when bitterest wrong had been received; toshow sin in its repulsiveness, rather than to terrify by its consequences; to train to strict truthfulness; to avoid all that might lead to disagreeable or indelicate thoughts; and to do all this without showing partiality, without either undue severity, or laxity of discipline, with judicious increase of study and work, with careful attention to thoroughness in acquiring knowledge - all this and more constituted the ideal set before the teacher, and made his office of such high esteem in Israel.

Roughly classifying the subjects of study, it was held, that, up to ten years of age, the Bible exclusively should be the text-book; from ten to fifteen, the Mishnah, or traditional law; after that age, the student should enter on those theological discussions which occupied time and attention in the higher Academies of the Rabbis. Not that this progression would always be made. For, if after three, or, at most, five years of tuition - that is, after having fairly entered on Mishnic studies - the child had not shown decided aptitude, little hope was to be entertained of his future. The study of the Bible commenced with that of the Book of Leviticus. Thence it passed to the other parts of the Pentateuch; then to the Prophets; and, finally, to the Hagiographa. What now

constitutes the Gemara or Talmud was taught in the Academies, to which access could not be gained till after the age of fifteen. Care was taken not to send a child too early to school, nor to overwork him when there. For this purpose the school-hours were fixed, and attendance shortened during the summer-months.

The teaching in school would, of course, be greatly aided by the services of the Synagogue, and the deeper influences of home-life. We know that, even in the troublous times which preceded the rising of the Maccabees, the possession of parts or the whole of the Old Testament (whether in the original or the LXX. rendering) was so common, that during the great persecutions a regular search was made throughout the land for every copy of the Holy Scriptures, and those punished who possessed them. After the triumph of the Maccabees, these copies of the Bible would, of course, be greatly multiplied. And, although perhaps only the wealthy could have purchased a MS. of the whole Old Testament in Hebrew, yet some portion or portions of the Word of God, in the original, would form the most cherished treasure of every pious household. Besides, a school for Bible-study was attached to every academy, in which copies of the Holy Scripture would be kept. From anxious care to preserve the integrity of the text, it was deemed unlawful to make copies of small portions of a book of Scripture. But exception was made of certain sections which were copied for the instruction of children. Among them, the history of the Creation to that of the Flood; Lev. i.-ix.; and Numb. i.-x. 35, are specially mentioned.

It was in such circumstances, and under such influences, that the early years of Jesus passed. To go beyond this, and to attempt lifting the veil which lies over His Child-History, would not only be presumptuous, but involve us in anachronisms. Fain would we know it, whether the Child Jesus frequented the Synagogue School; who was His teacher, and who those who sat beside Him on the ground, earnestly gazing on the face of Him Who repeated the sacrificial ordinances in the Book of Leviticus, that were all to be fulfilled in Him. But it is all 'a mystery of Godliness.' We do not even know quite certainly whether the school-system had, at that time, extended to far-off Nazareth; nor whether the order and method which have been described were universally observed at that time. In all probability, however, there was such a school in Nazareth, and, if so, the Child-Saviour would conform to the general practice of attendance. We may thus, still with deepest reverence, think of Him as learning His earliest earthly lesson from the Book of Leviticus. Learned Rabbis there were not in Nazareth - either then or afterwards. He would attend the services of the Synagogue, where Moses and the prophets were read, and, as afterwards by Himself, occasional addresses delivered. That His was pre-eminently a pious home in the highest sense, it seems almost irreverent to say. From His intimate familiarity with Holy Scripture, in its every detail, we may be allowed to infer that the home of Nazareth, however humble, possessed a precious copy of the Sacred Volume in its entirety. At any rate, we know that from earliest childhood it must have formed the meat and drink of the God-Man. The words of the Lord, as recorded by St. Matthew and St. Luke, also imply that the Holy Scriptures which He read were in the original Hebrew, and that they were written in the square, or Assyrian, characters. Indeed, as the Pharisees and Sadducees always appealed to the Scriptures in the original, Jesus could not have met them on any other ground, and it was this which gave such point to His frequent expostulations with them: 'Have ye not read?'

But far other thoughts than theirs gathered around His study of the Old Testament Scriptures. When comparing their long discussions on the letter and law of Scripture with His references to the Word of God, it seems as if it were quite another book which was handled. As we gaze into the vast glory of meaning which He opens to us; follow the shining track of heavenward living to which He points; behold the lines of symbol, type, and prediction converging in the grand unity of that Kingdom which became reality in Him; or listen as, alternately, some question of His seems to rive the darkness, as with flash of sudden light, or some sweet promise of old to lull the storm, some earnest lesson to quiet the tossing waves - we catch faint, it may be far-off, glimpses of how, in that early Child-life, when the Holy Scriptures were His special study, He must have read them, and what thoughts must have been kindled by their light. And thus better than before can we understand it: 'And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.'