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become a blessed fact, and peace and goodwill our abiding possession.

But the special message of the text for to-day is that Christ has mediated among nations and that in the long-run all national jealousies and suspicions and hates will go down before Him. There is but one mediator between nation and nation, and that is the man Christ Jesus; and He shall mediate

until war shall no more be named amongst us.¹

When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

¹ J. D. Jones, *The Hope of the Gospel*, 299.

The Apocryphal Gospels.

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II.

FROM the second to the fifth century, or even later, Apocryphal Gospels were very numerous, as is manifest from what has come down to us, and from the mention of other items by various writers. But what has come down to us is so miscellaneous, and (in the main) so fragmentary, that classification is not easy.

Various methods have been suggested. The simplest seems to be that which is based upon the *Period covered by their contents*.

Those which treat of (I.) *the Birth and Infancy of Jesus*; (II.) *His whole Life to the Resurrection*; (III.) *His Passion and Resurrection*.

I. (a) The first in this class (in more ways than one) is the *Protevangel of James (Protevangelium Jacobi)*. It is very early in origin, and is comparatively free from details which shock one. It maintains the absolute virginity of Mary, and it was evidently widely read and liked. Lipsius and others have remarked that it exhibits an extraordinary mixture of intimate knowledge and gross ignorance of Jewish thought and custom, showing that the legends of which it is composed come from various sources. It contains the following account of the death of Zacharias, father of the Baptist.

Herod wished to kill John with the other infants; and Elisabeth tried to hide him. She cried: 'O mountain of God, receive mother and child'; and the mountain was cleft and received her. Herod ordered Zacharias to surrender his son. He refused, and was murdered in the Temple. When he did not come out to give the usual blessing, a priest at last ventured to go in, and he saw blood beside

the altar. A voice said: 'Zacharias has been murdered, and his blood shall not be wiped up till his avenger comes.' The priest went out and brought other priests in. Then the panellings (*τὰ φανώματα*) of the Temple wailed, and the priests rent their garments from top to bottom. His body they found not; but they found his blood turned to stone.

(b) *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, a title given to it by Tischendorf. The first seventeen chapters treat of Mary from her birth to the birth of Christ. At the age of three she was mature. The birth of Christ took place in a cave. Only angels were present, and He was able to stand as soon as He was born. Salome, the midwife, would not believe in the miraculous birth until she had made examination herself. Her hand was withered, and remained withered, until she adored the Child and touched His clothing. When He was moved into the stable, the ox and the ass adored Him, in fulfilment of Is 1⁹. The star was the largest that had ever been seen.

The next seven chapters treat of the stay in Egypt, and have some pleasing features.

The concluding portion (26-42) deals with the return to Palestine, and attributes shocking miracles to the Child Jesus, who several times strikes other boys dead for interfering with His play, and thus provokes the wrath of the populace. Mary beseeches Him to behave otherwise. 'He, not wishing to grieve His mother, kicked the hinder parts of the dead boy, and said to him: Rise, thou son of iniquity.' The dead boy rose up and went away. And then Jesus *with a word* restores the playthings for injuring which He had killed

the boy. In a similar case, 'Jesus seized the dead boy by the ear and lifted him up from the earth . . . and he revived.' An angry schoolmaster struck Jesus, and immediately fell down dead. In this portion also there are a few benevolent miracles, such as healing the hand of his brother James when a viper bit him. Being early in origin, it became widely diffused, and was greatly liked in the East. Athanasius twice quotes the legend (ch. 23) that when Mary went into a temple in Egypt with the Child, all the idols prostrated themselves and were broken to pieces (*De Incarn.* 36 ; *Ep.* lxi. 4).

(c) *The Gospel of Thomas* (τὰ Παιδικὰ τοῦ Κυρίου) exists in three forms of different lengths, two Greek and one Latin. They repeat a number of the incidents, both pleasing and shocking, found in the *Pseudo-Matthew*, and add others ; e.g. those who complained of Him to Joseph for killing children are struck blind, and are afterwards healed.

(d) *The Arabic Gospel of the Saviour's Infancy* supplies abundant material for our purpose. Contrasts to our Gospels are numerous and glaring. A woman took the Child's navel-string¹ and put it in a jar of nard. Her son sold unguents, but she charged him never to sell this jar. 'And this is that jar which Mary (Jn 12³) the sinner (Lk 7³⁷) bought and poured upon the head and feet of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Mary gives the Magi one of the swaddling-bands. They take it home to their kings and chief men. They light a fire and worship it, and into it they throw the swaddling-band. It is found uninjured when the fire goes out. The water in which Mary had washed the Child's clothes works a variety of miracles. A young man was turned into a mule. Mary put the Child on the mule's back, 'and the mule became a young man, free from every defect.' Some boys were changed into kids. The Child said to the kids : 'Come, boys, let us go and play.' And immediately the kids were changed into boys.'

(e) *The History of Joseph the Carpenter* is a late representative of this class. It professes to have been told to the Apostles by Christ on the Mount of Olives (Mk 13³, Mt 24³, Lk 21⁵) and is extant in both the Coptic dialects and in Arabic.

¹ This is the less revolting of the two traditions. The passage runs thus : *Itaque circumciderunt illum in spelunca ; sumsisque anus illa Hebræa pelliculam istam, dicunt vero alii eam sumsisse nervum umbilicarem, eamque in ampulla olei nardini vetusti recondidit* (cap. v.).

II. The class of Gospels which treat of the whole life of our Lord is represented by various fragments and by titles of lost Gospels, which occur in Christian writers. The often-mentioned *Gospel of the Egyptians* (κατ' Ἀιγυπτίους), i.e. used by Egyptian converts, belongs to this class, but it need not be discussed in connexion with our subject. Much the same may be said of *The Gospel of Peter*, an intensely interesting fragment of which was dug up at Akhmîm (Panopolis) in Upper Egypt in the winter of 1886-87. In opposition to the Canonical Gospels it represents our Lord as free from pain at the moment of Crucifixion, and as being deserted by His 'Power' at the moment of Death, when He was 'taken up' (ἀνελήφθη). This implies that the Divine Christ joined the human Christ at His Baptism, and departed from the human Christ at His death on the Cross. *The Revelation of Peter* has many other strange features, but it is an Apocalypse and not a Gospel.

III. The third class of Apocryphal Gospels, like the second, is represented mainly by fragments and titles. One complete document must be noticed on account of its importance and the title which seems to have been given to it in the Middle Ages—*The Gospel of Nicodemus*. A great deal of it has the title *Acts of Pilate*, and it is his Acts in reference to Christ which are described. We have it in three forms, two Greek and one Latin. Appended to the second Greek form is an account of Christ's Descent into Hell, two forms of which are extant in Latin. The *Acts of Pilate* are based on the four Gospels, with many apocryphal additions. The Roman standards twice bow down and adore Christ. Two remarkable replies are put into the mouth of Pilate. When the Jews said that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, he replied : 'Has God said that you are not to put to death, but that I am ?' When they said that demons were subject to Jesus, he said : 'Why, then, were not your teachers also subject to Him ?' One MS. describes the suicide of Judas. He went home to get a rope to hang himself. His wife was roasting a cock. He tells her to prepare a rope : he has betrayed his Master, who will rise on the third day and punish His enemies. His wife replied : 'It is as likely that this cock will crow as that Jesus will rise.' Immediately the cock crowed and flapped its wings. Judas then made the halter and hanged himself.