

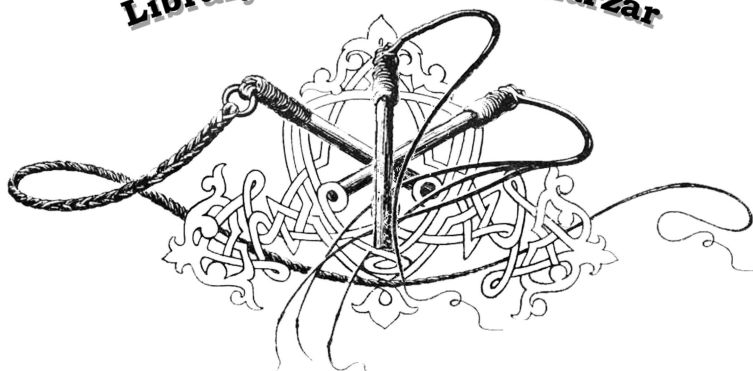


BRILL

H. W. Montefiore

**Josephus
and
the New Testament**

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JOSEPHUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

BY

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The object of this article is to point out similarities between some important events recorded in the canonical Gospels and Acts on the one hand, and a series of prodigies recorded by Josephus in his Jewish War on the other hand, and to suggest a possible connection between them.

The paucity of references to Gospel events in contemporary or near-contemporary non-Christian literature is well known. Apart from brief allusions in Tacitus ¹⁾, Suetonius ²⁾, and some contested passages in Josephus' writings ³⁾, there is almost nothing else ⁴⁾. The Talmud contains some excerpts about Jesus, but these are scant and for the most part late and worthless ⁵⁾. Apart from their

¹⁾ *Annals*, XV, 44.

²⁾ *Claudius*, 25. Suetonius is here referring to the influence of the risen Christ.

³⁾ *Antiquities*, I, 8, 3, 3. Cf. also the relevant passages in the Slavonic version of Josephus, translated by H. St. J. THACKERAY in *Josephus* (London, 1928), Vol. III, pp. 635-58.

⁴⁾ For the relevant texts, cf. C. R. HAINES, *Heathen Contact with Christianity during the first century and a half*, (Cambridge, 1923); to which may be added the letter of Mara ben Serapion (for text cf. W. CURETON, *Spicilegium Syriacum*, (London, 1855), pp. 73 f.), and citations from Thallus and Phlegon (for texts cf. F. JACOBY, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, (Berlin, 1929), Vol. II, pp. 1156 ff., 1159 ff.). The early Chinese sūtras of Christ which were discovered in this century may be dated A.D. 637 and 641 respectively (cf. P. Y. SACKI, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* (Tokyo, 1937), p. 117) and they do not contain reliable *agrapha*. Muslim collections may be consulted conveniently in *Logia et Agrapha Domini Jesu apud Moslemicos Scriptorum, asceticos praesertim usitata*, ed. M. ASIN et PALACIOS, *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. XIII (Paris, 1919), pp. 327-431; vol. XIX (Paris, 1926), pp. 528-624. They are generally considered to be spurious (cf. J. JEREMIAS, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus* (E.T., London, 1957), p. 7).

⁵⁾ J. KLAUSNER, writing in *Jesus of Nazareth* (E.T., London, 1929), summarises the evidence as follows: 'There are reliable statements to the effect that his name was Yeshu'a (Yeshu) of Nazareth; that he 'practised sorcery' (i.e. performed miracles, as was usual in those days) and beguiled and led Israel astray; that he expounded scripture in the same way as the Pharisees; that he had five disciples; that he said that he was not come to take away aught from the Law or to add to it; that he was hanged (crucified) as a false teacher and beguiler on the eve of the Passover which happened

testimony to the death of Jesus (which is hardly questioned today in any case), these non-Christian sources give no help in establishing the key events on which the Christian kerygma is based.

It is, however, hardly surprising that few of the incidents recorded in the Gospels about Jesus found their way into the writings of non-Christian authors of the period. For example, the healing stories, which take up so much of S. Mark's Gospel, would have had, for the non-Christian, only a local interest, and in any case they were not without parallels¹). Similarly, most of the so-called 'nature miracles' would have had only a local interest for the outsider and could be paralleled by other similar stories in the ancient world²). We should hardly expect that the teaching of Jesus would have excited the interest of non-Christian writers. The Jews would have deliberately omitted references to it, and non-Jews would probably not have heard of it. Nor would we expect to find in non-Christian sources accounts of Jesus' clashes with the Jewish hierarchy.

There are, however, a few events in the Gospels and Acts which might be thought to have aroused more general interest. These may be listed as follows:

1. The Star at Jesus' birth.
2. The Rending of the Temple Veil.
3. The Cleansing of the Temple.
4. The Resurrection of Jesus.
5. The Ascension of Jesus.
6. The Descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.

1. *The Star at Jesus' Birth.*

In Matthew's birth stories there is an account of a star which guided men from the East to the infant Jesus in Bethlehem³).

on a Sabbath; and that his disciples healed the sick in his name'. Further statements about Jesus KLAUSNER regarded as of a tendentious or untrustworthy character (*op. cit.* p. 46).

¹) Cf. Matt. xii 27. "The researches of Weinrich and Fiebig leave us in no doubt that in external respects the parallels are remarkably close". (V. TAYLOR, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, (London, 1945), p. 126. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen, 1931), p. 253.

²) E.g., the stilling of the storm in Mk. iv 35-41, with which BULTMANN (*op. cit.*, p. 249) compares Berach. xi 1, Plut. *Caesar* 38, Dio Cassius, XLI, 46; or the turning of water into wine in John ii 1-11, which may be compared with Euripides, *Bacchae*, 704-7; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, I, 34; Pausanias, 6, 26, 1.

³) Matt. ii 1-12.

It has often been suggested that this tale is a religious myth rather than an historical account of actual events. The stories in Matthew are certainly full of religious significance. "He was revealed to the humble and ignorant first, then to the honourable and learned; to the poor first, and then to the rich; to the West first, and then to the East. He was revealed to the astrologers by a method suited to their understanding. And their object in coming to Jesus was not personal advantage but solely to give him homage" ¹).

If the story of the Magi is unhistorical (in the sense that it is not based on what actually happened), then some satisfactory account must be given of the origin and development of the tale. Some scholars have pointed out that legends naturally developed in antiquity around the birth of great men; and parallels have been adduced from the Old Testament ²), rabbinic writings ³) and the works of pagan historians ⁴). Others have regarded the story as a myth which arose to show the fulfilment of Old Testament *testimonia* ⁵), while the suggestion has been put forward that Matthew's account of the Magi grew out of the story of the Magi's visit to Nero in A.D. 66 ⁶). None of these explanations seem to be adequate to explain Matthew's tale, and the possibility must be investigated that Matthew based his story on historical events ⁷).

¹) A. H. McNEILE, *The Gospel According to S. Matthew* (London, 1938), p. 22.

²) E.g., the birth of Samson in Judges xiii.

³) E.g., the birth of Moses according to haggadic tradition. Cf. R. BLOCH, 'Quelques aspects de la figure de Moïse dans la tradition rabbinique', *Moïse, l'homme de l'alliance* (Paris, 1955), pp. 102-7.

⁴) E.g., the portents which Suetonius records as having occurred at the time of Augustus' birth (*Augustus*, 94), or the bright star which appeared about the time of Alexander's birth and which was noted by the Magi (Cicero, *de Div.* I, (22), 47).

⁵) The most obvious *testimonium* is Num. xxiv 17 (cf. Test. XII Patr., Judah, 24, I). This testimonium was evidently well known, for it has turned up in a Qumran fragment (cf. J. ALLEGRO, 'Messianic References in Qumran Literature', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXV (1956), 182 f.). The Matthean story also suggests other Old Testament passages; Ps. lxxviii 29; lxxii 10 f.

⁶) Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 30, 2, (6), 17; cf. Suetonius, *Nero*, 13; Dio Cassius, LIII, 1 ff.

⁷) It may be noted that subsequent investigation has corroborated the historicity of a not wholly dissimilar portent to that of Matthew. According to Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic Histories of Pompeius Trogus*, XXXVII, 2, a new star appeared at the conception and in the accession year of Mithridates Eupator. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 2, 26, (24), 95, mentions the naming of a new star at this time by Hipparchus. Julius Obsequens, *Liber Prodigiorum* 27 (86), includes a portent at the same period. These celestial phenomena

Attempts have been made to relate the Matthaean account to the known movements of heavenly bodies. KEPLER suggested that the reference to 'the star at early dawn' might be an allusion to three conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn which he had calculated to have occurred in B.C. 7¹). KEPLER's calculations were later confirmed by IDELER²). PRITCHARD, however, undertook a fresh investigation of the matter, and his findings were corroborated subsequently by the Astronomer Royal's staff at Greenwich³). There were indeed three conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces in B.C. 7, but these took place not on the dates which KEPLER had calculated, but on May 29, September 29, and December 4⁴). PRITCHARD showed that a still closer conjunction had taken place in B.C. 66, and that in B.C. 7 the conjunctions were not so close as to give the impression of a single bright star to the naked eye⁵).

These conjunctions in B.C. 7 were certainly noted by contemporary Babylonian astronomers⁶). It is, however, uncertain that they would have been regarded as a portent of a coming world ruler. Certainly Jupiter was the god of the Romans, while Saturn was regarded by some as the tutelary planet of the Jews⁷). Their conjunction in Pisces (the first of the signs of the Zodiac) might possibly have been thought to imply that in the New Order the Jews would engulf the Romans. It is true that in late mediaeval Jewish writings such a conjunction was thought to be specially significant for the Jews⁸). There is, however, no direct evidence that the Jews of Jesus' time attached any special significance to such a conjunction⁹), although there was certainly a belief in ancient

are confirmed by three entries in Chinese records. J. K. FOTHERINGHAM, 'The new star of Hipparchus and the dates of birth and accession of Mithridates', *Monthly Notices of the R. Astr. Soc.* LXXIX (1919), 162 f., has brought together all this evidence to corroborate the date of Mithridates Eupator's birth which REINACH had calculated on independent evidence.

¹) Cf. *De Stella Nova* (Prague, 1606), p. 134 f.

²) *Handbuch der Mathematische und Technische Chronologie* (Berlin, 1825), vol. II, pp. 400 ff.

³) *Monthly Notices of the R. Astr. Soc.*, XVI (1856), 215 f.

⁴) *Memoirs of the R. Astr. Soc.*, XXV (1856), 119.

⁵) Cf. 'Star of the Wise Men', *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, (London, 1863), vol. III, pp. 1374 f.

⁶) Cf. P. SCHNABEL, 'Der jüngste datierbare Keilschrifttext', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, XXXVI (1925), 66-70.

⁷) Cf. Tacitus, *Histories*, V. 4.

⁸) Cf. A. EDERSHEIM, *The Life and Times of Jesus Messiah* (London, 1887), vol. I, pp. 211 f. where the fifteenth century Rabbi Abarbanel is cited.

⁹) For Rabbinic views on the constellation of the Last Days, cf. STRACK

Jewish tradition that a star would appear two years before the birth of the Messiah ¹). There is also evidence of a widely disseminated belief that a world ruler would appear in the East, although in extant writings this belief cannot be shown to have been current until about A.D. 70 ²). But it is not impossible that such a belief was held by Jews earlier than this.

MUNTER first drew attention to the fact that Chinese astronomers had noted the appearance of an evanescent star or comet which appeared in the heavens in B.C. 4 ³). In fact, Chinese records ⁴) refer to an unusual heavenly body visible in B.C. 5, as well as in B.C. 4 ⁵). These stars would have been visible in Palestine and Babylonia ⁶). It is not quite clear from the records whether these celestial bodies were comets or novae, or whether there were two separate stars, or one star which appeared in both years. No comet known us now would have been visible at these times, but if it was in hyperbolic orbit, or in an elliptical orbit of long periodicity, nothing would be known about such a comet now.

The upshot of this cursory investigation must be necessarily inconclusive. It is certain that in B.C. 7 there were three conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces. It is certain that in B.C. 4

and BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (Munich, 1956), vol. IV, pp. 1046, 1049. For Mandaean references, cf. E. STAUFFER, *Jesus and his Story* (E.T., London, 1959), p. 173.

¹) Cf. the so-called Messiah-Haggadah, cited by EDERSHEIM, *op. cit.*, *ibid.*

²) Tacitus, *Histories*, v. 13; Josephus, *Jewish War*, 6, 5, 4; Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 4.

³) *Der Stern der Weisen* (Copenhagen, 1827).

⁴) A summary list of comets and novae mentioned in Chinese records is given by HSI-TSE-TUNG, 'A new Catalog of Ancient Novae', *Smithsonian Contributions to Astrophysics*, II (1958), 114-29. For the accuracy of Chinese astronomical records, cf. W. BAADE, *Astrophysics Journal*, XCVII (1943), 126.

⁵) The references in Chinese records are as follows:

In the 2nd year of the Chien-P'ing reign period (B.C. 5) in the 2nd month there was a *Hui-hsing* (comet or nova) which appeared at *Ch'ien-Niu* ($\alpha\beta\gamma$ *Aquilae*).
(*Chien Han Shu*, XXVI, p. 34b)

In the 3rd year of the Chien-P'ing reign period (B.C. 4) in the 3rd month there was a *po* comet (without a tail) in the *Ho-Ku* constellation ($\alpha\beta\gamma$ *Aquilae*).
(*Chien Han Shu*, XI, p. 6b)

K. LUNDMARK, in 'The Messianic Ideas and their Astronomical Background', *Actes du VIIe Congrès d'Histoire des Sciences* (Paris, 1953), 436 f., regards it as possible that these Chinese references relate to the Star of Bethlehem. I am indebted to Dr. J. NEEDHAM, F.R.S., for these references.

⁶) The part of the sky near $\alpha\beta\gamma$ *Aquilae* is visible from the latitude of Palestine and Babylonia for part of every night except for a period at the end of January and beginning of February, when the sun is in that region of the sky. I am indebted to Dr. P. J. MESSAGE for this information.

and B.C. 5 an unknown star or stars were visible in China and also in Babylonia or Palestine. It is possible that Babylonian astrologers, noting the conjunctions in B.C. 7, and moved by a prophecy of a coming world ruler in the East, possibly knowing the tradition that a star would appear two years before the birth of the Messiah, set out for Jerusalem. It is possible that, confirmed in their expectations by the appearance of a comet in B.C. 5 and guided by local information, they may have found the infant Jesus in a house in Bethlehem ¹). Herod died in March B.C. 4, and Jesus, according to Matthew's story, must have been born before Herod's death. He may well have been born in B.C. 5 or early in B.C. 4 ²).

Whatever weight may be given to the hypothesis outlined above, it is noteworthy that Josephus recorded the appearance of a comet and a star over the city of Jerusalem and regarded it as a portent of its coming destruction. Can there be any possible connection between the two? Could Josephus possibly have recorded a portent concerning the destruction of the Temple which originally had its context in the birth of Jesus?

It is probable that one of the main charges against Jesus that was remembered by Jews after his death was his prophecy of the coming destruction of the Temple ³). Such a prophecy is implicit in the many passages in which Jesus speaks about the coming doom of the capital city ⁴). And Jesus actually speaks of the coming destruction of the Temple itself ⁵). Again, according to John, Jesus said to the Jews: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will

¹) These directions, which seem so vague to Western ears, might seem more feasible to Eastern peoples. Cf. the search for the present Dalai Lama, described by H. HARRER, *Seven Years in Tibet* (London, 1953), pp. 267 f. For a star regarded as a portent which gives direction, cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, ii, 693 ff. The relationship between Virgil's sources and the gospel stories (with special reference to the 4th Eclogue) has been exhaustively studied by G. ERDMANN, *Die Vorgeschieden des Lukas- und Matthaeus-Evangeliums und Vergils vierte Ekloge* (Göttingen, 1932). ERDMANN does not think that there is any direct connection.

²) The usual objection to such an early date is that the census mentioned in Luke ii 1 ff. could not have taken place before the death of Herod the Great. However E. STAUFFER (*op. cit.*, pp. 35-8) has put forward convincing reasons which show that the census could have been taking place, as Luke recounts it, from B.C. 8 onwards.

³) Cf. C. F. D. MOULE, 'Sanctuary and Sacrifice in the Church of the New Testament', *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS. I (1950), pp. 29-41; A. COLE, *The New Temple* (London, 1950), pp. 1-22.

⁴) E.g. Matt. xxiii 38; Luke xix 43 ff.; xxi 20.

⁵) Mk. xii 2; Luke xxi 6.

raise it up" ¹⁾). John adds that Jesus was referring to the 'temple of his body': but this is John's interpretation of the words, and the Jews did not understand them thus ²⁾). It seems that the bystanders at Jesus' crucifixion taunted him with this saying, or with similar words ³⁾). According to Mark, this prophesy formed one of the accusations against Jesus at his trial before the Sanhedrin ⁴⁾); 'nor, in spite of Mark's aspersions on the witnesses, is there any good reason to doubt the substantial authenticity of this saying' ⁵⁾). Furthermore, Stephen's adversaries accused him of saying that Jesus would destroy the Temple, and there is no good reason to doubt either that Stephen did say this, or that he was citing the words of Jesus himself ⁶⁾). During the period between the death of Jesus and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the growing tension between Jews and Romans dominated the Palestinian situation. We know little enough about the attitude of the local Christian Churches towards this mounting tension, but it seems probable that Christians, with their hope on the 'temple not made with hands' ⁷⁾, took up a negative attitude towards the Jewish temple ⁸⁾). They certainly fled to Pella before its destruction ⁹⁾). In view of this probable attitude on the part of Jewish Christians, and in view of the remembered words of Jesus himself, it seems quite possible that events which originally concerned Jesus may have been remembered by Jews as directed against the Temple.

Josephus' record is as follows ¹⁰⁾:

Thus it was that the wretched people were deluded at that time by charlatans and pretended messengers of the deity, while they neither heeded nor believed in the manifest portents which foretold the coming desolation,

¹⁾ John ii 19.

²⁾ John ii 20.

³⁾ Matt. xxvii 40; Mark xv 29.

⁴⁾ Mark xiv 58.

⁵⁾ C. H. DODD, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London, 1935), p. 73.

⁶⁾ Acts vi 13 f.

⁷⁾ The contrast between χειροποίητος and ἀχειροποίητος seems to belong to the tradition of the primitive church (Acts vii 48; xvii 24; 2 Cor. v 1; Heb. ix 11, 24; cf. Mark xiv 58).

⁸⁾ A contrary view is taken by S. G. F. BRANDON (*The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London, 1951), p. 39), with which the present writer cannot agree. While it is true that the primitive church in Jerusalem still participated in Temple worship (Luke xxiv 53; Acts ii 46), this participation could not have lasted for long, except in a few cases.

⁹⁾ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* III, 5.

¹⁰⁾ *Jewish War*, 6, 5, 3. This translation is taken from H. St. J. THACKERAY, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

but, as if thunderstruck and bereft of eyes and mind, disregarded the plain warning of God. So it was when a star, resembling a sword, stood over the city, and a comet which continued for a whole year.

Josephus gives no indication of the date of these celestial phenomena, beyond the statement that they took place before the Jewish rebellion. He does not state that they took place in the same year as the subsequent prodigies which he relates, nor does he record that these two heavenly portents took place at the same time. (Indeed, as WHISTLER notes ¹), it is not even clear whether he intended to record one or two portents.) In view of the precise dating of the other prodigies which he relates, it is a reasonable assumption that these heavenly signs did not occur in the same year as the subsequent wonders which he goes on to describe, but that they took place earlier. It is possible that Josephus is referring to the appearance of one of the comets which Tacitus mentions as having been visible in Rome in A.D. 60 and A.D. 64 ²). On the other hand, it is not impossible that Josephus was referring to the same celestial phenomena as Matthew mentions. There are some point of similarity. Both Josephus and Matthew write of the star 'standing over' a place ³), although Josephus records that the star stood over Jerusalem, while Matthew states that it stood over Bethlehem, a few miles distant. Both regard the star as sent by God. Any connection between the two stories must necessarily be speculative, and the evidence for such a connection is not strong when it stands on its own. It must be considered along with other portents which Josephus records and which Tacitus corroborates.

According to the Matthaean account, the appearance of the Bethlehem star is narrated in conjunction with the tale of the massacre of the Bethlehem children of two years and under. The historicity of the one is bound up with that of the other.

Matthew regards this massacre as the fulfilment of a prophesy of Jeremiah ⁴). However, his citation of Jeremiah at this point is not very apposite, and it is impossible to believe that such a prophesy could have given rise to the tale. Some scholars, noting the analogy between the history of Israel and the life of Jesus in the first

¹) *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (London, 1882), vol. IV, p. 216.

²) Tacitus, *Annals*, XIV, 22; XV, 47.

³) Matthew's word is ἐστᾶθη, while Josephus' is ἔστη.

⁴) Matt. ii 18, where Jer. xxxi 15 is cited.

two chapters of Matthew, regard the tale of the Massacre as a Christian midrash, the object of which is to show 'that the prophesy of Dt. xviii 15 was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus in whom the narrator saw a second and greater Moses' ¹). R. BLOCH has pointed out how, in the haggadic tradition, the birth of Moses is associated with the suffering and death of Israelite infants ²). By the time of Josephus, the legend of the destruction of male children had been combined with an oracular prophesy of a coming birth ³). While it may be conceded that this theme may have influenced Matthew's selection of material, it is extremely difficult to explain how it could have given rise to the story of the massacre itself. It is easier to explain the story on the presumption that it was based on an historical event.

A massacre of this kind is in keeping with what is known from other sources about the behaviour and character of Herod the Great, especially in his last years, when he was suffering from advanced arterio-sclerosis and subject to murderous outbursts ⁴). Josephus records that Herod instituted a police state, insisting that the people took an oath of allegiance to himself and punishing those who refused ⁵). On one occasion he accused over three hundred of his officers and servants ⁶). On another occasion some Pharisees had foretold how God had decreed that Herod's rule must cease, and that his posterity should be deprived of it; and the king put to death the principal men involved in the affair ⁷). (It is not impossible that this incident is in some way connected with the Bethlehem massacre—it occurred towards the end of Herod's life—or that it reflects some similar occurrence.) In his last days, Herod issued an edict of extraordinary ferocity: 'he gave order that one out of every family should be slain, although they had done nothing that was unjust' ⁸).

It has been calculated that there would not have been more than about twenty young children of two years and under living in

¹) G. H. BOX, *The Virgin Birth* (London, 1916), p. 21.

²) *Op. cit.* pp. 102-7.

³) *Antiquities*, 2, 9, 2.

⁴) Cf. S. PEROWNE, *The Life and Times of Herod the Great* (London, 1956), pp. 185 f. According to Macrobius (*Sat.* 2, 4, 11), the Emperor Augustus said that he would rather be Herod's swine than his son.

⁵) *Antiquities*, 15, 10, 4.

⁶) *Op. cit.*, 16, 11, 4.

⁷) *Op. cit.*, 17, 2, 4.

⁸) *Op. cit.*, 17, 6, 6.

Bethlehem ¹⁾. It is quite in keeping with Herod's character that he should have had them murdered in order to eliminate a possible rival ²⁾. The fact that this massacre is not mentioned by Josephus has no bearing on its authenticity ³⁾. Josephus had bigger and better atrocity stories to record about Herod. In particular, the Massacre of the Innocents could hardly have been regarded as a sign of the coming destruction of the Temple. No one could have regarded it as a supernatural event, and in the passage of Josephus' *Jewish War* under consideration here the writer is concerned only with supernatural prodigies.

2. *The Rending of the Temple Veil.*

According to Mark ⁴⁾, followed by Matt. ⁵⁾ and Luke ⁶⁾, the veil of the Temple was rent at the moment of Jesus' death. The Temple veil divided the Holy of Holies from the Sanctuary ⁷⁾. The High Priest alone was permitted to enter through the veil, and that only once a year, on the Day of Atonement ⁸⁾.

If the temple veil really was rent, it is almost incredible that there should be no record in Jewish writings of such a calamitous event ⁹⁾. A catastrophe such as this could hardly have been hushed up.

¹⁾ Cf. A. EDERSHEIM, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

²⁾ Cf. F-M. ABEL, *Histoire de la Palestine depuis la conquête d'Alexandre jusqu'à l'invasion arabe* (Paris, 1952), vol. I, p. 400. ABEL cites two stories from Roman history which have some similarities to Matthew's account of the Massacre of the Innocents: (i) shortly before the birth of Augustus, the Roman Senate, as the result of a public portent that Nature was preparing them a king, attempted to prevent for a whole year the nurture of all male infants (Suetonius, *Augustus*, 94); (ii) Nero, after the appearance of a comet, not only brought to trial those whom he accused of plotting against his life, but also arranged the murder of all the children of the accused (Suetonius, *Nero*, 36).

³⁾ E. STAUFFER (*op. cit.*, p. 43) makes the suggestion that there is a reference to the Bethlehem atrocities in *Ass. Moys.* VI, 5.

⁴⁾ Mark xv 38.

⁵⁾ Matt. xxvii 51.

⁶⁾ Luke xxiii 44.

⁷⁾ Cf. Exod. xxvi 31-3. The Evangelists are referring to the veil between the Holy of Holy and the Holy Places rather than the veil at the entrance of the Holy Place (Exod. xxvii 16). Cf. G. LUNDESKOG, 'The Veil of the Temple', *Conjectanea Neotestamentica* XI (1948), p. 132.

⁸⁾ Cf. Lev. xvi 12. For Rabbinic traditions concerning the veil, cf. Mishnah, *Yoma*, v. 1 ff. For a miraculous story about the veil, cf. *Git.* 56b.

⁹⁾ The references in *Test. Levi* X, 3 and *Test. Benj.* IX, 4 are Christian interpolations. Cf. *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R. H. CHARLES (Oxford, 1913) *ad loc.*

Moreover, if the veil was rent, it is extraordinary that Christians did not make use of such a portent in their apologetic against Jews. What better argument could they have had to show the supersession of the temple 'made with hands' by the death of Jesus? And yet, apart from the synoptic gospels, there is no explicit reference to such an event in the earliest extant Christian writings.

In Mark the rending of the veil forms one of the great climaxes of the gospel. "And Jesus uttered a loud cry and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom". Mark uses the Greek word for 'rending' on only one other occasion in his gospel, and that is at the baptism of Jesus ¹). It is as though at the beginning of the gospel there is a breakthrough from God to men, and at the end of Jesus' ministry there is a breakthrough to God for men ²). Paul seems to refer to the same concept when he writes: "Let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have had access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" ³). The same idea is found in the Book of Revelation ⁴) and also in the Epistle to the Hebrews where its author declares that his readers have 'boldness to enter into the holy place through the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is, his flesh' ⁵). The same conception also underlies the Johannine *logion*: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep" ⁶).

¹) Mark i 10.

²) It is possible to interpret the rending of the temple veil as the mourning of the Temple over its inevitable destruction; cf. Clem. Recog. i, 4: 'lamentans excidium loco imminens'. This is, however, hardly the evangelist's interpretation, despite D. DAUBE, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1956), pp. 23 ff. Cf. R. H. LIGHTFOOT, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (London, 1935), p. 83 f.

³) Rom. v 1 f.; cf. Eph. ii 18. It would seem that Paul is here using a nautical metaphor. Cf. J. MOULTON and G. MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London, 1930), p. 545.

⁴) Rev. xi-19; xxi. 25.

⁵) Heb. x 19. The meaning of this verse is a *crux interpretationis*. Some scholars (e.g. J. MOFFATT, T. H. ROBINSON) regard the veil here as identified with the flesh of Christ. Others (e.g. B. F. WESTCOTT, C. SPICQ) identify the flesh of Christ not with the veil itself but with 'the new and living way through the veil'. The latter interpretation, despite the testimony of the early fathers, seems more probable. The veil did not give access to God: it hid God, and Jesus through his death has opened up the way to God.

⁶) John x 7. It is probable that this verse reflects Johannine vocabulary rather than *verba Christi*. Cf. J. A. T. ROBINSON, 'The Parable of John x 1-5', *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* XLVI (1955), 233-40; A. T. CADOUX, *The Parables of Jesus* (London, 1931), p. 168 f. The Fourth

In view of the theological implications of the rending of the temple veil, and the lack of support for this incident outside the gospels, it seems probable that the story has assumed its present form under the pressure of theological factors. Either the tale is a "legendary addition, doctrinal in character" ¹⁾, embodying in concrete form the truth that through the death of Jesus the road-block between man and God has been cleared, or the tale has developed into its present form out of some incident connected with the Temple. In view of the fact that in other sources there are accounts of an event not wholly dissimilar from the rending of the temple veil, the latter possibility is to be preferred.

The Talmud contains the following account of a portent of the coming destruction of the Temple ²⁾.

Forty years before the fall of the Temple, the doors of the Temple opened of their own accord, until Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai ³⁾ rebuked them, saying: O Temple, Temple, why troublest thou thyself? I know that thy end is near. Zechariah the son of Iddo has already prophesied concerning thee: 'Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars'.

The Temple fell in A.D. 70, so that this event may be dated in A.D. 30 ⁴⁾. It seems most probable that Jesus died in A.D. 30 ⁵⁾, so

Evangelist is probably recasting into his own idiom the common belief of the early Church that Jesus by his death has effected a breakthrough for man to God.

¹⁾ V. TAYLOR, *The Gospel According to S. Mark* (London, 1953), p. 596; cf. C. H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 425, n. 1.

²⁾ j. Yoma vi, 43c.

³⁾ Jochanan ben Zakkai was a first century Tanna, a pupil of Hillel, who, after the destruction of Jerusalem, became a leader of the Jewish community at Jabneh (cf. W. BACHER, 'Johanan b. Zakkai', *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1904), vol. VII, p. 214 f.).

⁴⁾ S. V. MACCASLAND (*Portents in Josephus and the Gospels, Journal of Biblical Literature*, LI (1932), pp. 322 f.) regarded the Rabbinic dating of this portent as later than that of Josephus and presumed that Josephus dated the prodigy in A.D. 66. Unfortunately his statements were unsupported, and, so far as Josephus is concerned, uncorroborated by the text.

⁵⁾ Many factors must be taken into account in computing the year in which Jesus was crucified, viz., (i) the date of the crucifixion as given by Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria and other early writers; (ii) the year of Jesus' birth and his age when he died; (iii) the year when his public ministry began and its duration; (iv) the period when Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judaea; (v) the period when Caiaphas was High Priest; (vi) the date of the completion of Herod's Temple; (vii) the earliest probable date for a reconciliation between Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas; (viii) the date of Aretas' campaign against Antipas consequent on Antipas' divorce of his daughter and subsequent marriage to Herodias; (ix) the latest date by which Herodias'

that the event recorded in the Talmud may be dated to the very year in which Jesus died. It is possible, however, that the period of forty years mentioned in the Talmud excerpt is meant as a round number rather than as an exact record of time ¹⁾, so that, if Jesus died within a few years of A.D. 30, the Talmudic excerpt may still refer to the year of his death.

This incident is reported not only in the Talmud. There are references to it both in the writings of Josephus and in those of Tacitus. It is most probable that all these authors wrote independently of one another. The Talmud did not attain its written form until long after Josephus wrote his *Jewish War* ²⁾. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Talmudic version of the story ³⁾, but its form is so different from that of the other accounts that it must be held to be independent of them ⁴⁾. Further, there is no evidence that Tacitus used Josephus' *Jewish War* when he wrote his *Histories* ⁵⁾. Both were living and writing in Rome at the same time,

daughter Salome could have married Philip the Tetrarch; (x) the date of Paul's conversion, and the period between Jesus' crucifixion and Paul's conversion; (xi) the astronomical evidence about the possible years when Nisan 14 or 15 could have fallen on a Friday.

The matter is very complex and no certainty can be attained. The four dates which have received most support are A.D. 29, 30, 33 and 36. A.D. 36 seems to be too late to be congruous with much of the gospel evidence. A.D. 29 receives no support from the latest astronomical computations. A.D. 33 is preferred by G. OGG (*The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge, 1940) p. 277), but this year seems to give too late a date for the conversion of Paul (cf. J. JEREMIAS, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (E.T., Oxford, 1955) p. 12), and in the opinion of the present writer A.D. 30 is to be preferred.

¹⁾ For the biblical use of the number forty, cf. E. KÖNIG, 'Number', *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh, 1902), vol. III, p. 563 f.

²⁾ The Jerusalem Talmud was not edited until the third century A.D. Josephus wrote his *Jewish War* towards the end of Vespasian's reign (A.D. 70-9). The Greek version was published c. A.D. 80.

³⁾ No Jew would have invented such a portent, nor would he have invented such words and attributed them to Jochanan ben Zakkai. The prophecy of Zech. xi 1 could not have given rise to the tale.

⁴⁾ Neither Josephus nor Tacitus mention Jochanan ben Zakkai.

⁵⁾ Chapters I-XIII of Tacitus' fifth book of the *Histories* are concerned with the Jewish people, leading up to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. "That he was unacquainted both with the Old Testament and with the work of Josephus is obvious on the face of his narrative itself". (W. A. SPOONER, *Histories of Tacitus* (London, 1891) p. 22). It may be noted that in the passage of Josephus under consideration here, the portents recorded are listed in a different order from that of Tacitus. This seems to make it even more improbable that one borrowed here from the other. E. NORDERN ('Josephus und Tacitus über Jesus Christ und eine messianische Prophetie', *Neue Jahr-*

and no doubt they were acquainted with each other ¹). Yet Tacitus does not seem to have drawn on Josephus' material, although they may well have used common sources ²).

It may therefore be concluded that three independent non-Christian accounts relate that there took place in the Temple a strange event which was commonly regarded as a portent, and one of these sources most probably dates this event to the very year in which Jesus died. Furthermore, Josephus records that this event took place at the Passover ³), so that it seems to be almost coincident with the death of Jesus.

Tacitus merely writes with characteristic brevity: "Exapertae repente delubri fores" ⁴). Josephus has a more extended account ⁵):

Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner court — it was of brass and very massive, and, when closed towards evening, could scarcely be moved by twenty men; fastened with ironbound bars, it had bolts which were sunk to a great depth into a threshold consisting of a solid block of stone — this gate was observed at the sixth hour of the night to have opened of its own accord. The watchmen of the temple ran and reported the matter to the captain, and he came up and with difficulty succeeded in shutting it. This again to the uninitiated seemed the best of omens, as they supposed that God had opened to them the gate of blessings; but the learned understood that the security of the temple was dissolving of its own accord and that the opening

bücher für das Klassische Altertum XXI (1913), p. 655) notes against HARNACK and SCHÜRER (both of whom thought that Tacitus is dependent upon Josephus) that Tacitus places the portents in the right place (not, like Josephus, after a description of the War), and, secondly, that Tacitus' account is much more compressed than that of Josephus.

¹) Josephus lived in Rome from c. A.D. 70 until he died (c. A.D. 100). Tacitus seems to have lived in Rome from his birth (c. A.D. 55) until his death (c. A.D. 120), apart from an absence from the capital between c. A.D. 89-93.

²) M. FRIEDLAENDER ("Les prophéties sur la guerre judeo-romaine, *Rev. des études juives* XXX (1895), pp. 122-4) held that both Tacitus and Josephus drew on the Sybilline Oracles. E. NORDERN agreed (*op. cit.*, p. 658). A. M. A. HOSPERS-JANSEN (*Tacitus over de Joden* (Groningen, 1949)) gives a summary of views held in the past century about Tacitus' sources, to which should be added R. SYME, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958). It seems probable that both Tacitus and Josephus used the imperial commentaries (cf. A. M. A. HOSPERS-JANSEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 159 f.; E. NORDERN, *op. cit.*, pp. 652 ff.).

³) Although the Passover is not explicitly mentioned in connection with the opening of the temple doors, the context makes it quite clear that this portent, together with two others, occurred at the Passover.

⁴) *Histories*, v. 13. Similar portents can be found in Roman history, e.g., Julius Obsequens, *Liber prodigiorum*, 13 (72); 67 (127); Suetonius, *Julius*, LXXXI; *Nero*, XLVI; Dio Cassius, LX, 35, 1; LXVIII, 26, 2; LXV, 8, 2; LXVI, 17, 2.

⁵) *Jewish War*, 6, 5, 3. The translation is from H. St. J. THACKERAY, *op. cit.*

of the gate meant a present to the enemy, interpreting the portent as indicative of coming desolation.

There is no good reason to doubt that Josephus' account, with its precise details and its setting in the Passover season, is based upon a real historical event. Might not this event be the source of the gospel story of the rending of the temple veil? May there not be a connection in thought between the belief of the uninitiated—the common people—that this portent meant that 'God had opened to them the gate of blessings' and the Christian conviction that through the death of Jesus the way to God had been opened up? The portent in the Temple as Josephus describes it would not have been quite so calamitous for Jews as the rending of the temple veil would have been. It would not have been so invaluable for Christian apologetic. On the other hand, some record of this event might be expected to have survived in Talmudic writings and in the work of a Jewish historian.

Some reconstruction of the event itself and the development of tradition about it is possible, although necessarily it must remain hypothetical. Matt. records that there was an earthquake in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death. "And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent and the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints were raised" ¹⁾. While Matt. undoubtedly adds some apocalyptic details to his Marcan source in his account of Jesus' death and resurrection, yet he is careful not to associate this earthquake with paranormal phenomena, for he records that it was not until the resurrection itself that many bodies of the saints came forth from the tombs and entered into the Holy City and appeared unto many ²⁾. Mark, although he does not record an earthquake, does allude to atmospheric disturbances at about this time ³⁾. Luke, alone among the evangelists, directly connects the darkness with the rending of the temple veil ⁴⁾.

In view of this evidence it may be held that an earthquake, accompanied by a thunderstorm and unnatural darkness ⁵⁾ took place

¹⁾ Matt. xxvii 51.

²⁾ Cf. R. H. LIGHTFOOT, *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels*, (London, 1938), p. 68.

³⁾ Matt. xxvii 52.

⁴⁾ Luke xxiii 44 f.

⁵⁾ The darkness is strongly emphasised in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter 5 (15). It is attested also by pagan writers; by Thallus and by Phlegon (for

during the afternoon of the day on which Jesus was crucified. The earthquake could have dislodged some of the stones which secured the tombs outside the city walls. It could also have disturbed some of the temple buildings with the result that, during the night, the east door of the temple was affected. Tacitus had heard about this, and it was included among his list of portents about the Temple. The author of the Gospel to the Hebrews had heard of a somewhat similar tradition, for, according to Jerome ¹), it is recorded in that gospel that a lintel of the Temple, of immense size, was broken and fell. The canonical evangelists—or perhaps the traditions which they represent—record a more developed tradition about a rending of the temple veil, under the influence of the theological factors outlined above.

If such a hypothetical reconstruction be accepted, then a real connection may be seen between the different accounts in the synoptic gospels, the Gospel to the Hebrews, the Jerusalem Talmud, Josephus' Jewish War and Tacitus' Histories. All may record the same event in different forms and under the influence of different traditions. The case for such a connection does not rest upon this reconstruction alone. It is strengthened by further correspondences between the New Testament records and the other portents recorded by Josephus and Tacitus.

3. *The Cleansing of the Temple.*

It is not easy to calculate the exact date when Jesus cleansed the Temple at Jerusalem. The Fourth Gospel, probably influenced by theological factors ²), places the cleansing at the beginning and

texts, cf. F. JACOBY, *op. cit. supra*, *ibid.*). Phlegon dates this in Ol. 202. 4 (A.D. 32-3) but his reference to 'the sixth hour' when darkness fell makes it probable that he is drawing on Christian sources, and his dating may well reflect the source of his tradition.

¹) In Matt. xxvii 51; cf. Epp. xviii 9; cxx 8. According to Jerome, the Gospel to the Hebrews read at this point: 'superliminare templi infinitae magnitudinis fractum esse atque divisum'. M. R. JAMES has suggested that this change in the account has been made under the influence of Isa. vi 4, 'the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried' (*The Apocryphal New Testament*, (Oxford, 1924), p. 5), and NESTLÉ (*Expositor*, V, vol. II (1895), 310 ff.) has suggested the possible Hebrew word which Jerome translated by 'superliminare'. If however the Gospel to the Hebrews has really been influenced by an Isaianic testimony, it is hard to understand why its version of the tale is not more like those of Josephus and Tacitus.

²) Cf. C. H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 300 ff.; H. W. MONTEFIORE, 'The position of the Cana Miracle and the Cleansing of the Temple', *Journal of Theological Studies*, O.S. L (1949), 183-6.

not at the end of the ministry¹). The Synoptic Gospels, although they are most probably correct in placing the cleansing at the end of the ministry, differ about the *day of the week* on which this took place. Moreover the matter is further complicated by the divergence between the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel over the *day of the month* on which Jesus was crucified.

The latter problem, however, may perhaps have been resolved by a recent hypothesis²) which, although it has not yet been subjected to the searching criticism which it deserves³), yet seems, to one writer at least, to give a satisfactory explanation of the chronological differences between the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel over the date of Jesus' death.

It has been suggested that, during the New Testament period, there were two different calendars in use among the Jews. One was the official calendar, based on a lunar-solar year, which was used by the temple authorities and which eventually superseded the other calendar. According to this reckoning Passover always fell on the evening of 14/15 Nisan, as the Mosaic law directs⁴), but, dependent on the state of the moon, it might fall *each year on a different day of the week*. In the particular year in which Jesus died,

¹) T. W. MANSON argued that Jesus cleansed the Temple at the feast of Tabernacles, some six months before his death (*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 33 (1951), 171-82). His argument is based on (i) the proper interpretation of Mark x 1; (ii) the time of year when a fig-tree in Palestine may be expected to have leaves but no fruit; (iii) the cutting down of branches recorded in Mark xi 8; (iv) the chronology of the Fourth Gospel. None of his arguments is conclusive, and their cumulative force is not so strong as the probability that Jesus' cleansing of the Temple led *directly* to his death.

²) The details of this hypothesis, can be found in the following works by A. JAUBERT, 'Le calendrier des Jubilés et de la secte de Qumran. Ses origines bibliques.' *Vetus Testamentum* III (1953), pp. 250-64; 'La date de la dernière Cène', *Revue de l'Histoire et de la Religion* CXLVI (1954), pp. 140-73; 'Le calendrier des Jubilés et les jours liturgiques de la semaine', *Vetus Testamentum* VII (1957), pp. 35-61; *La Date de la Cène* (Paris, 1957). Jesus et le calendrier de Qumrân, *New Testament Studies* VII (1960), pp. 1-30. Cf. also E. VOGT, 'Antiquum Kalendarium Sacerdotale', *Biblica* XXXVI (1955), pp. 403-8; 'Dies ultimae Coenae Domini', *ibid.*, pp. 408-13.

³) Cf. J. BLINZLER, 'Qumran-Kalender und Passionschronologie', *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* XLIX (1958), pp. 238-51; M. BLACK, 'The Arrest and Trial of Jesus', *New Testament Studies* ed. A. J. B. HIGGINS (Manchester, 1959), pp. 19-33; B. GÄRTNER, 'John 6 and the Jewish Passover', *Conjectanea Neutestamentica* XVII (1959), pp. 43 ff. J. A. WALTHER, 'The Chronology of Passion Week', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXVII (1958), pp. 116-22, includes an useful bibliography; cf. also *New Testament Abstracts* IV (1960), pp. 285 ff.

⁴) Exod. xii 8; Lev. xxiii 5; Num. ix 3, xxviii 16.

Passover would have fallen on a Friday evening, as the Fourth Gospel records ¹⁾; so that Jesus' body would have been removed from the Cross before the festival began at sunset. But there was also another calendar observed by some Jews, older in origin than the official calendar and connected with the priestly tradition in the Old Testament. According to this older reckoning, the calendar was so arranged that the first day of each month (and therefore the Great Festivals) fell each year *on the same day of the week*. Passover was celebrated on 15 Nisan, as the Mosaic law directs, but according to this older calendar this festival always fell on a Tuesday evening. It has been suggested that this older calendar was observed by the Qumran covenanters and that it can be detected in some inter-testamental literature. It has been further surmised that Jesus himself observed this older calendar.

According to this hypothesis, the Last Supper was indeed a Passover meal, celebrated on Tuesday in Holy Week. According to the old calendar, this was Tuesday 14/15 Nisan, but according to the official calendar it was Tuesday 11/12 Nisan. According to this theory, the Fourth Gospel is correct in recording that Jesus died on the day of the Passover (Friday 14/15 Nisan, official calendar), while the Synoptic Gospels are also correct in recording that the Last Supper was a Passover meal (Tuesday 14/15 Nisan, old calendar). In the following attempt to date the cleansing of the Temple this hypothesis will be used, and any dates mentioned will refer to the Jews' official calendar, unless otherwise stated.

The date of the cleansing of the Temple must be approached by reference to the date of Jesus' arrival in Bethany, since this is the way in which the Synoptic Gospels refer to it. But it is John who dates Jesus' arrival in Bethany, 'six days before the Passover' ²⁾. It would seem that this simple statement could easily be translated into the corresponding day of the month Nisan, but in fact there is considerable disagreement among commentators about its proper interpretation. We shall assume that John, by referring here to the Passover, intends his readers to regard Friday 14 Nisan as the day of the Passover (although the feast did not actually start until after sunset on that day, which by that time had technically become

¹⁾ John xix 14, 31.

²⁾ John xii 1.

Friday 15 Nisan). 'Six days before the Passover' would then refer to Saturday 8 Nisan ¹).

According to Matt. ²) and Luke ³), Jesus cleansed the Temple on the same day as that on which he arrived at Bethany, while according to Mark this event took place on the following day ⁴). Since the Markan account is probably the source of the other two synoptic accounts ⁵), and since Mark's date seems intrinsically more probable ⁶), it will be assumed that Jesus cleansed the Temple on Sunday 9 Nisan ⁷).

¹) This is the view of LOISY, WESTCOTT, BERNARD, HOSKYNs, DAVEY, VOGT. (Unless Jesus disregarded the Jewish law about sabbath journeys. it must be presumed that he was lodging close to Bethany on the night of Friday 7 Nisan, and that he made a short journey to Bethany on the Sabbath.) Other interpretations of 'six days before the Passover' are possible: (i) *Sunday 9 Nisan*. This presupposes that the Fourth Evangelist regarded *Saturday 15 Nisan* as the day of the Passover. This seems improbable. This date does, however, seem to reconcile John's date of the anointing in Bethany with that of Mark and Matt. According to John xii 2 ff. this occurred on the evening of Jesus' arrival at Bethany, i.e. Sunday 9/10 Nisan. According to Mark xiv 1 and Matt. xxvi 2, this incident may be dated 'two days before the Passover' (old calendar), that is, two days before Tuesday 11/12 Nisan, i.e., Sunday 9/10 Nisan. However, neither Mark nor Matt. explicitly state that the anointing took place two days before the Passover: they introduce this date in connection with the authorities' plot to have Jesus killed. (ii) *Monday 10 Nisan*. This is the view of BACON, SCHMIEDEL, MACARTHUR, MAGREGOR. Dates were often calculated by the Jews by including both the first and the last dates of a period. It has been suggested by some who hold this date that John intended the incident of the anointing in Bethany to be regarded as the antitype of the selection of the Passover Lamb in accordance with Exod. xii 3 (cf. B. W. BACON, 'After Six Days', *Harvard Theological Review*, VIII (1915), 101 ff.; A. A. MACARTHUR, *The Evolution of the Christian Year* (London, 1953), pp. 84 f.). This typology seems rather far-fetched: it is certainly not emphasised by the Evangelist.

²) Matt. xxi 12.

³) Luke xix 45.

⁴) Mark xi 12, 15.

⁵) Matt. is plainly dependent on Mark for his narrative of the Last Week. Luke's narrative is based here also on Mark (cf. VINCENT TAYLOR, *Behind the Third Gospel* (Oxford, 1926), pp. 95 f.), but his notes of time during the Last Week are noticeably and perhaps intentionally vague (cf. R. H. LIGHTFOOT, *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels* (London, 1938), p. 141).

⁶) If Jesus had supper with Martha and Mary on the evening of his arrival in Bethany, it is improbable that he also went into the capital that day as Mark states. For if he arrived in Bethany on the Saturday, he would have broken the Sabbath law by a further journey into the capital. If Jesus had cleansed the Temple on the Sabbath, it is strange that no reference to the Sabbath remains in the narratives.

⁷) It is held by some that any attempt to find the precise date of such an event is impossible from the gospel records, as the narratives have been

The Fourth Gospel, as already noted, places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It is however noteworthy that John does record Jesus' visit to the Temple on the same day as we have calculated that, according to Mark, he cleansed it. As we have noted, Jesus arrived at Bethany according to John six days before the Passover, i.e. Saturday 8 Nisan. John further records that on the next day (Sunday 9 Nisan) Jesus was teaching in the Temple and drawing great crowds to hear him ¹). The Fourth Gospel gives the substance of Jesus' words to the crowds: "Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not; and he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become children of light" ²). Jesus is then reported to have hidden himself, and a few verses later, after the Evangelist has cited a *testimonium* from Isaiah, Jesus' speech is continued on the same theme without any indication of a difference of time: "I have come a light into the world that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" ³). Thus on the very day that, according to Mark, Jesus cleansed the Temple, he also claims, according to John, to be the true light ⁴).

Is there any connection between the Synoptic Gospels' account of the cleansing of the Temple and the Fourth Gospel's record of Jesus' speech in the Temple? The Gospel to the Hebrews might seem to provide a link. According to Jerome ⁵), it is recorded in that gospel that, when Jesus cleansed the Temple, 'a certain fiery and starry light issued from his eyes'. In the Aurora Manuscript ⁶) there appears the gloss: 'At the cleansing of the Temple: in the

adapted to liturgical needs in the churches whence they emanated, or because the evangelists, being uninterested in historical accuracy of this kind, put together their material without knowledge about or concern for chronology. The present writer, however, believes that it is not impossible to recover the dates of some of the gospel events.

¹) John xii 12, 18, 29, 34.

²) John xii 35 f.

³) John xii 46.

⁴) The present writer does not regard the Fourth Gospel as lacking in details which are historically accurate, and even if the Fourth Evangelist has here selected his material to fit in with the master-plan of his gospel (cf. C. H. DODD, *op. cit.*, p. 368-83), this does not necessarily imply that these words of Jesus are not here placed in their true historical context.

⁵) In Matt. xxi 12. Cf. E. HENNECKE, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, ed. W. W. SCHNEEMELCHER, (Tübingen, 1959), vol. I, p. 97.

⁶) Petri de Riga Aurora, Fitzwilliam Museum (McLean Collection) Ms. 31, f. 161b. Cf. M. R. JAMES, 'Notes on Apocrypha', *Journal of Theological Studies*, O.S. VII (1901), 564 ff.

books of the Gospels which the Nazarenes use it is read that rays issued from his eyes whereby they were terrified and put to flight'.

Both Tacitus and Josephus, in their lists of portents presaging the Temple's destruction, mention a supernatural light in the Temple. Tacitus writes: 'subito nubium igne conlucere templum' ¹). Josephus, immediately after his reference to the star and the comet standing over the city, and immediately before his account of the temple door opening of its own accord, has the following passage:

So again, when, before the revolt and the commotion that led to war, at the time when the people were assembling for the feat of unleavened bread, on the eighth of the month Xanthicus, at the ninth hour of the night, so brilliant a light shone round the altar and the sanctuary that it seemed to be broad daylight; and this continued for half an hour. By the inexperienced this was regarded as a good omen, but by the sacred scribes it was at once interpreted with after events ²).

Josephus here uses the month Xanthicus as the equivalent of Nisan ³). It will be seen that he records a portent of light in the

¹) *Histories*, V, 13. Similar portents can be found in Roman history, (cf. Julius Obsequens, *Liber Prodigiurum*, 38 (98), 44 (104), 70 (130)); Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* II, 17; Suetonius, *Augustus*, XCIV, 5.

²) *Jewish War*, 6, 5, 3. The translation is taken from H. St. J. THACKERAY, *op. cit.*

³) Xanthicus is the name of a Macedonian month with corresponded roughly to the Roman month Aprilis. It is found in Greek secular literature (Diod. XVIII, 56) and also in the Apocrypha (2 Macc. xi 30, 33, 38) where the references are to the Macedonian calendar. Josephus in his *Antiquities* uses Xanthicus seven times. In five of these he explicitly identifies the Macedonian Xanthicus with the Hebrew Nisan (1, 3, 3; 2, 14, 6; 3, 8, 4; 3, 10, 5; 11, 4, 8) and in the remaining two instances the identification is intended (2, 15, 2; 4, 4, 6). Josephus also uses Xanthicus five times in his *Jewish War* (4, 9, 12; 5, 3, 1; 5, 13, 7; 6, 5, 3; 7, 9, 1). Josephus does not explain here, as he does in his later work, that Xanthicus is used as equivalent to Nisan, nor is there any way of checking his use of the word, as he alone records the dates which contain it. There is however no reason to think that Josephus' usage in his *Jewish War* differs from that in his *Antiquities*. As Dr. ABRAHAMS rightly pointed out, 'that Josephus frequently uses the Macedonian names as equivalent to the Hebrew Babylonian names does not imply that he thought that the two series of months began on identical days' ('Time', *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh, 1900), Vol. IV, p. 765a). Yet the difference between the two months does not seem to have deterred Josephus from using them as synonymous when dealing with events of Jewish history. B. NIESE comments on his usage in *Jewish War*, 5, 6, 3: 'Xanthici 8 dies est 25 Aprilis (VII k. Mai.) anni Iuliani, si solitam Iosephi rationem sequimur; sed hic antiquiore Iudaeorum computo usus esse videtur' (*Flavii Iosephi opera* (Berlin, 1889), vol. V, p. 551); but he does not explain this note.

Temple within a day of or, (if Nicephorus' reading of 9 Xanthicus be accepted) on the very same day¹) as Jesus' cleansing of the Temple and his speech about light. Although it is not possible to discover any direct connection between Josephus and the gospels here, it would seem possible that there is a connection of some kind.

¹) W. WHISTON, (*op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 216, n. 3), points out that Nicephorus read here 9 Xanthicus.

(to be continued)